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wiki.auroville.org.in/wiki/SAIER_2018-19
The Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) is now in its 35th year. The SAIIER building which a few years ago felt outsized for our small team, is now a more full and active place, with various Auroville projects generally related to SAIIER filling the desks. Auroville’s 50th anniversary year (28th February 2018 to 28th February 2019) brought an influx of new projects and creative energy to many fields in Auroville including sports and education. It has been a year of growth and progress.

SAIIER, as a hub for schools, sports and cultural activities, continued its work of managing grants and donations, allocating projects for research and activities, coordinating construction projects, publishing books, participating in organisation, and exchanging and collaborating with others in the field of education.

Highlights of the year:
A minor restructuring took place through which several projects which had been administratively under SAIIER moved to different trusts. These include Auroville Archives, Pitanga Cultural Centre and Arka. This was part of an ongoing effort to focus SAIIER more strongly on educational research. SAIIER now has 41 sub-units in all, including Auroville schools, Outreach schools and others. Agni Veda Research, a unit doing research on Sanskrit in Vedic mantras, was added as an activity of SAIIER this year.

2018-19 was the second year that Bajaj Auto Ltd CSR granted funds to Auroville, administered by SAIIER. Support this year was to build new classrooms at two Outreach schools: Isai Ambalam and Udavi School. These classrooms will increase the student capacity of each school.

Several dynamic collaborations took place this year, where educators from outside Auroville came to offer their skills and experience to Auroville teachers and students. These include “Development Through Drama” with Tracy Evans, “Neuro-Dramatic Play” with Dr. Sue Jennings, and “Music classes at Udavi School” with Katarina. Some of the innovative ongoing projects are the development of games built and designed in Auroville to increase focus, concentration and attention in children, and the focus in schools on developing specific qualities relating to human unity and Auroville’s higher purpose.

Construction projects:
SAIIER oversaw the completion of the following projects in 2018-19 supported by the Government of India grant:
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Phase I - Block A (8 lakhs)
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Phase II - Block B (12 lakhs)
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Privacy Wall (5 lakhs)
- Kuilapalayam Cultural Centre building (8 lakhs)
- Dehashakti School of Physical Education – Covered play area, Phase 02 (6 lakhs)
- Kindergarten – Parking shed (8 lakhs)
- Auroville Tinkering Lab building (2 lakhs)
- Aha! Kindergarten – Water tank (0.5 lakhs)
The following projects are still ongoing:

- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Prosperity Phase I (30 lakhs)
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Phase III – Block C (41 lakhs)
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Phase IV – Block D (31 lakhs)
- Auroville Sports Resource Centre – Toilet block (4 lakhs)
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Wastewater treatment and electrical (31 lakhs)
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Prosperity Phase II (59 lakhs)
- SAIIER Staff Quarters – Prosperity – Corridor (2 lakhs)
- Aranya Forest – Classroom and kitchen, toilet (14 lakhs)
- Dehashakti School of Physical Education – Climbing wall (4 lakhs)
- Auroville Botanical Gardens – Herbarium (15 lakhs)
- Kalabhum Art Studio – Store room (6 lakhs)
- Unity Pavilion – Toilet block (14 lakhs)

Outcomes:

This year SAIIER helped support the 250 Aurovilians working in education-related activities, and allocated funds to 56 projects proposed by members of the community. SAIIER also supported the functioning of its 41 sub-units throughout the year, including approval and sponsorship of Rs. 39 lakh worth of equipment. Through its new and ongoing construction projects SAIIER contributed toward the physical manifestation of Auroville, in anticipation of the needs and possibilities of the future.
Teachers' Center

The Teachers’ Center is a place for teachers from all the different schools in Auroville. It is made for them, to help them in any way possible implement integral education in Auroville. The Teachers' Center offers to help teachers find or make the material they need, and help them prepare their school year by offering advisory services, professional development, courses, a resource library, and linking with other schools and educational services.

Activities of the year:

This year we consolidated and developed our relation with Udavi School, Deepanam School, Thamarai, Lilaloka, Aikiyam School, Isai Ambalam School, Kindergarten, Nandanam Kindergarten and Transition School.

Having more presence in the Teachers' Center room, we had interesting visitors not only in search of information on Auroville schools and education but also wanting our help to realize their educational projects in Auroville or outside.

We also finished our Science project and opened ways online for teachers to communicate.

- Thamarai Learning Centre requested that one of our team observe their groups and give support in English and Behaviour Management. This was successfully done and follow-up plans were made. Fantastics Phonics, a literacy program, was introduced at Thamarai and a new class of children will use it.
- Udavi School, in the beginning of July, requested some teacher training sessions. These took place two mornings a week in liaison with other facilitators in Auroville.
- Isai Ambalam School asked to be introduced to the Fantastics Phonics program, and this was done with the help of Aikiyam School teachers.
- At Aikiyam School, the library program and the English as a Second Language (ESL) program which were initiated and maintained by members of our team is developing well. The teachers have been trained and the students are progressing.
- Aikiyam School felt the need to upgrade its crèche and kindergarten program. One of us, having the knowledge and experience in this field proposed her services. She listened to the teachers and started with them to define areas where progress has to happen and how to do it. The teachers were open to new ideas and ready to collaborate, and work is going on next school year.
- In Kindergarten and Nandanam Kindergarten, the involvement of the Teachers’ Center was focused on helping teachers to support students in need of Supportive Learning. This included liaising with other schools, Deepam, Lilaloka, pediatricians and parents.
- Teachers from Deepanam School approached the Teachers’ Center for support. Our team tried to answer the needs through workshops, individual consulting, books and materials.
- In Transition School the new teachers had weekly meetings to closely follow their integration in the school: their understanding of the program and readiness to take responsibility for their class.
- One of our Teachers' Center team members led 11 geography classes as well as field trips
with women of Life Education Center, from October 2018 through April 2019. This will continue next school year.

- A course on Neuro Dramatic Play (see detailed report) was offered in October/November 2018 for 5 days. The founder of the Neuro Dramatic Play (NDP) movement came to Auroville and ran the course. Twenty-four Auroville teachers, therapists and facilitators dealing with children took part in the course. Twelve children from Nandanam Kindergarten joined for practical application and exploration of the NDP programmes and activities.

- We received many teachers from inside and outside of Auroville. All wanted more information on Integral Education and how practically schools in Auroville integrate the principles of Integral Education into their program and running of the schools. Most of these visitors were teachers in their own countries and wanted to bring changes in their way of approaching Education.

  Some needed guidance on a project, others we simply connected with the right people in their field of interest. We continue to offer support when requested.

- We were requested to help a school in Chennai improve their Math curriculum. One of us went over there, observed classes and gave feedback to teachers. This will continue next school year.

- The comprehensive Sciences material which the Teachers' Center has been working on has been completed. We now have a full curriculum from Kindergarten to 6th grade, including teachers' manuals, books, activities, and student folders. We are sending the curriculum to class teachers in different schools, offering to show the material during the school holidays, and are getting positive answers.

- We have created an Edmodo site for the Teachers' Center online. It is a resource available to all teachers with links, materials and webinars to view. At the moment it holds two groups: a Pre-K Math Hub and one for Professional Development for teachers in various field of Education. Teachers who wish to join these groups or create new ones can also upload and share resources, promoting a space for co-creation and dialogue across schools.

**Outcomes:**

When professional development embedded in the Integral Education philosophy answers closely the needs of the teachers in their work, helping them solve the many problems of running a class in all its complexity, progress happens for the teachers as well as for the students. There is increased confidence, and learning breakthroughs for both teachers and students, and this is a joy.

We are beginning to consider training the next generation of Teacher Trainers, and some teachers have been approached to consider this next step.

Participants on the Neuro Dramatic Play course wanted to follow up the work and to this end there have been meetings once a month of what has become the “AuroNDP” group. These meetings take place in the Tibetan Pavillon and are led by different participants each session, exploring and extending the themes of NDP while sharing experiences and applications in school and workplaces. Many participants took this work into schools and other facilities where it is developing and becoming part of the participants’ skill sets. The Teachers’ Center bought some Sue Jennings books and is sharing the material to help the participants deepen their knowledge in that field.

The completion of the Science material will help teachers develop their own approach to Sciences.
Reflections:

Adding two new younger members to our Teachers' Center team has brought new ideas and fresh energy. The Teachers' Center room has been opened from October to end of April, 5 days a week.

It is not easy to fulfill all the Teachers' Center mission statements. We have to prioritize what is the most important now and also keeping openings for the unexpected requests. We are also experiencing a gap between our intentions, projects and what we are ready to do. What we learned is to listen carefully, observe, evaluate what the situation needs so that our answers are meaningful.
This project was a Drama course for teachers exploring approaches to developing the whole human being using Drama in the classroom. The course ran from January 5th to 19th, 2019. Workshops took place at the Conference Centre in SAIIER. Approximately 60 teachers expressed an initial interest in the course and 41 of them took up a place. The course was delivered in 7 x 3hr workshops, and 3 x 2hr seminars. This was supported by meetings with individual teachers and class visits, which are detailed in this report.

“Development through Drama” is a book written by Brian Way, a British theatre director and educationist who pioneered the use of Drama in the classroom to develop the whole child. The course was devised based on my training and experience as a Drama teacher over the past 20 years.

Workshops
The 7 core workshops were each based on an aspect of the human being as set out by Brian Way:

1) Concentration – we explored a range of exercises that can be used to help develop concentration so that pupils may be able to engage more fully in activities. We used stories as the basis for creating opportunities for structured participation. Stories are vital for, and a good first step towards drama as they are deeply concerned with imagination.

2) The Senses – in Drama we are using the senses to stimulate imagination and to enrich our own personal lives (live more fully) and to develop sensitivity to others’ private experiences. Many of the initial exercises are similar to Awareness Through the Body (ATB) exercises, but generally they are further developed to link the imagination to the senses, for example imagining a story behind the sound we hear or object we see.

3) Imagination – “Every human being is born with an imagination.” Although it is often ascribed to those who use it to make art, and therefore people are labelled as more or less imaginative, in fact “Imagination is closely interwoven with the fabric of life as a whole: home and environment; clothes and cooking; activity and relaxation; the capacity for full enjoyment of all kinds and, possibly most important of all, every aspect of personal friendship and sensitivity to others.” (Brian Way) We started the session with the participants ‘brainstorming’ what imagination meant to them. Groups could respond imaginatively and while some chose to write lists others drew and doodled to find their responses. We continued to explore how sensory experiences can be a stimulus for imagination before moving on to whole class drama (Teacher in Role). In this technique the teacher presents the opportunities for learning through the drama/story in which they are also playing a role. It is a fun and engaging way of working with a class.

4) Physical Body – As teachers, we are working towards developing consciousness of self and not self-consciousness, so we are reminded to work in response to the abilities and interests of the children we are working with. We explored a variety of exercises that use the body to stimulate imagination and the imagination to stimulate movement. This was a breakthrough session in which many individuals stepped over personal barriers. This was tangible in the high spirits and laughter in the group.

5) Emotions – “By being themselves in other circumstances, by being other people in either familiar or new circumstances, children and young people develop, first at the intuitive and
unconscious level and then at a full conscious level, a sympathy and understanding and compassion for others which is rooted in the emotional, physical and spiritual self as well as in mere intellectual knowledge; this is the ultimate raison d’être of drama as training for life.” (Brian Way)

Drama allows us to legally explore illegal behaviour, as well as types of characters we might find it easy to dismiss as being dissimilar to ourselves. Characterisation is therefore a key aspect in exploring emotions in Drama. Early characterisation, and in younger years will be largely of ‘types’ with little or no detail characteristics and will often be from the world of fantasy. As children grow older and more confident in using drama they will engage more with real-life scenarios with a deepening capacity for playing different emotions.

6) Speech – When we explore speech we are: (a) developing personal confidence to speak at all, and (b) putting one’s own thoughts, ideas and feelings into one’s own words in a wholly uncritical atmosphere.

Until this point we had very little speech in the stories we had created that could be described as performative. Once we started to focus on it in this session participants were more confident themselves to dive in.

7) Intellect – Drama fosters and requires a range of mental activities including: Attention and concentration; Imagination; Organising & ordering one’s thoughts and ideas; Analysing characters and scenes; Reflecting, evaluating and changing scenes (rehearsing); Recording, recalling using memory; Choosing ideas and rejecting others; Synthesis; Problem-solving; Decision-making; Evaluating.

This full range can be practised when we engage in the full cycle of play-making from exercises to develop concentration, the imagination and sensory awareness and then moving onto movement-based and spoken improvisations (individually, in pairs and then in groups).

During these sessions we began to draw correlations with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s 5 planes of being. Although there was a primary focus on the ways that Drama might help to guide and develop the Vital aspects of a person, in fact we also discovered that it is a very effective tool to develop the Mental faculties at the same time.
Seminars

These were organised in a more informal way with the agenda being set by participants. It was a way to bring any questions or reflections to discuss, as well as being an invaluable space for practising some of the techniques.

Some of the items we discussed and explored through activities:

- What does it mean to FAIL? Examples of our perception of failing as teachers when the class do not take on our ideas. Sometimes, with courage, we can let go of the/our plan and follow the children.
- Finding a balance between giving freedom alongside boundaries so pupils feel safe.
- Focus not on the teaching, but on what is being learned – this allows us to move away from the teacher-led model towards a more self-managed classroom.
- How do we find ways to help the pupils to become hungry to learn, and move away from a model where we are feeding them all the time... how do we teach them to reach out to be fed, and eventually to be able to feed themselves.
- How do we work with the fact that many children, especially boys want to fight all the time?
- There is a difference between drama as process and drama for the end of term show – different pressures on the teacher and class. But there are benefits to both approaches for the development of confidence for the pupils.
- Theatre in education – creating short scenes/plays in order to teach a class about a certain topic or issue, e.g. bullying. The ‘play’ is followed by discussion with the class/audience who are able to explore the ‘concept’ of bullying in a more concrete way linked to the characters and plot in the play.
- How do we use drama to support pupils to be more able to communicate their emotions?
- How can we match the stories to the right developmental ages of the pupils?
- What are the benefits of using Direct vs. Indirect speech in storytelling?

Many teachers wanted to find more creative ways to address fighting between children so we looked at Brian Way’s chapter on “Fighting & Violence in Drama”.

We began the session exploring what are the challenges we face as teachers regarding children fighting and violence in schools. Some general concerns/observations were:
• Children (especially younger ones) are testing each other / each other’s powers.
• Older pupils have more articulated fights – they begin with verbal exchanges and if not resolved through words they can build up to a physical fight.
• Some fights are from a sense of possessiveness: ‘this is mine’ and claiming territory.
• Some children become more violent when they are resistant to change.
• Bullying to show dominance over others.
• Lots of physical energy and exertion naturally falls into fighting.
• Children play at fighting.
• If we set up a system of having classroom leaders/monitors are we creating a hierarchy?

Outcomes

Attendance remained very high throughout the course, with a slight drop-off over the Pongal holidays. In total there were 244 attendances over the 7 workshops and 52 attendances over the 4 seminars. Although the seminar numbers were lower, this allowed teachers who had specific questions, or wanted to practice new skills the opportunity to work in a smaller group.

Based on the feedback from participants, it is clear that many new skills and techniques have been learned. Within days of the first workshops teachers were already trying out some of these techniques. Many teachers have requested further resources in order to continue learning (a book list has been distributed to the group).

In response to whether the course material will support the teachers back in the classroom, every teacher said that it would. Some teachers mentioned how they can integrate activities into their daily work, or into their specialist session if they are an ATB teacher. Others, particularly Science and Maths teachers or teachers at high school ages said they would spend some time finding the best ways to integrate the new techniques into their work.

“I was not a big fan of drama but I found it is really helpful and effective.”
“Very rich and practical.”
“I learned many simple, useful exercises to use in my classroom. I practiced some and it was already amazing to see the results with the children.”
“I didn’t have any idea about drama before but I’ve learnt many ideas and techniques through the workshop.”
“I felt each day was very rich in what was offered. The balance between non-verbal – verbal; personal – interactive was truly effective, allowing for embodying of each exercise. The exercises were very applicable; simple yet very effective. It was very rich and beautifully held.”

Many teachers also commented on how the course was an opportunity to reflect on their own development, to meet and connect with new people and to have fun! There was a tangible sense of community and collectiveness that grew over the course of the two weeks.

“Affirmative and nourishing.”
“Excellent – Enriching.”
“It’s been a great opportunity to observe myself on many different levels.”
“This experience was enriching and very positive. I loved laughing together and connecting with new people.”
“Each session is an exploration and a very connecting experience for all – with each other and with ourselves.”
Outreach visits

Throughout the two weeks I also visited a number of schools, taught classes and met with teachers in: Isai Ambalam, Kindergarten, Nandanam Kindergarten, Udavi School, Aikiyam School, TLC, and Thamarai after school club.

Many teachers commented on how useful it was to see some of the techniques being used with their own class groups.

“While watching the techniques being applied on children in your class visit, I understood the significance of this approach.”

“The session that at Udavi School proved how well children respond to the exercises and get actively engaged in learning.”

Next steps

Many of the teachers expressed an interest in developing the work further. And although I visited many teachers in their school settings there were many who I did not have time to visit. In the closing session we had a discussion about how this work might be developed. The main suggestion was to create an expanded drama programme (including Brian Way’s approach but also including other practitioners’ work since 1967). Ideally this would be undertaken in conjunction with Auroville teachers who would be willing to try out, test and evaluate certain activities within their classroom settings to ensure that they work well in Auroville schools. The new programme could be delivered in a second training course in 2020 working with a small group of committed teachers who might be willing to lead in this area, and whom I could mentor more closely. There could be a partner-curriculum developed to use in community projects.

My personal reflections on the course were that the potential for creating a meaningful, useful toolkit/curriculum has great potential based on the enthusiasm the teachers showed. However, as with all courses, after the initial optimism, teachers can often find it difficult to commit to an ongoing programme especially if I am not there to keep the motivation going. Marion from the Teachers’ Center has experience in using Drama and would be a key ally in developing something in the schools, so any future developments could work well if she was on board to support and keep the momentum going.

I was surprised and delighted that so many teachers expressed an interest in being part of a working group although I think it would be very challenging to facilitate a group of more than 6-8 teachers from a distance. I think the working group would need to be made up of experienced teachers who also want to go on a journey with learning more about Drama (and themselves through Drama). If this core group could then act as the centre of a Practice Group that meets every 2-3 months, they could begin to pass on the new exercises we have been testing in the classrooms to other teachers who want to learn more.

Delivering the course brought me immense joy. Although it has taken a couple of years to bring about, it felt so well received that I am hugely grateful to Sanjeev for persevering in making it happen and to those organisations who provided the funding to support it. I hope it will be the seed of more to come!
Neuro-Dramatic Play, a 5-day certificated course
A project of the Teachers' Center

by Marion

This was a course to increase the skill set of teachers and therapists dealing with children who have learning, behavioural or socio/emotional difficulties.

Dr. Sue Jennings, dramatherapist and founder of the Neuro-Dramatic Play (NDP) movement, came to Auroville in October/November 2018 to run a 5-day course in NDP.

"Neuro-Dramatic-Play is the attachment based play that occurs six months before and after birth. It is characterized by sensory and messy play, rhythmic and dramatic play. It is the basis for an infant developing healthy attachments, the capacity for empathy, and social resilience in the real world of contrasting roles and relationships.

Many children and teenagers have missed out on these play-stages and have difficulties managing their feelings and behaviour in the school room or social world. The application of NDP in the schoolroom or communal based groups, with age-appropriate activities has shown improvements in behaviour management, anger reduction, and increased collaboration and cooperation. It is important to ‘follow the child’.

It is important for teachers and therapists alike to have a basic knowledge of neuroscience in order to understand the importance of ‘nurture’ on brain function and to be able to impart this to parents too. I teach simple brain function to children.” – Dr. Sue Jennings

The course took place at the Unity Pavilion. Twenty-four Auroville teachers, therapists and facilitators dealing with children took part in the course. There was 100% attendance and punctuality.

The main delivery was in the morning, and in the afternoon 12 children from Nandanam kindergarten joined for practical application and exploration of the NDP programmes and activities.

Outcomes:
Some feedback from participants:

“The way the NDP course was designed and the rich content of the course itself, contributed to creating a very deep and enriching experience for me. The workshop was very relevant both to therapists and facilitators and it was very revealing for me to see it from both angles.

The workshop helped me make sense of my own childhood and give words to certain experiences, as I had never done before. It also helped me fill up gaps in my understanding of early childhood development.”

“I learnt how much attachment is important for children. How improper, or missing attachment impacts a child and can cause life-long trauma and maladjusted behaviour.

I learnt the importance of free play and creative play.”

“I felt guided and coached and walked out with excellent practical tools for learners of all ages.
As this was the foundational course, I am looking forward to advancing with the knowledge. It feels quite aligned with how we aspire teach and learn, here in Auroville.”

“This course opened my eyes to how to care for the children and observe their ability to achieve what they want. It is amazing for me to follow the child with patience to know their skills.

I was reminded of my young age when I learnt many stories through my aunt and my parents. Today because of materialization we are all away from the joint family and living in the single family which can struggle with many issues. I am interested to continue with the NDP team to carry this knowledge to the population.”

“For me the NDP training was a real and unique opportunity to put myself ('the educator') into the shoes of the children and feel what it’s like to listen to stories, create and play together. Initially, and on the surface, it felt like child's play but very quickly I realised that every exercise we did had a deeper meaning which had repercussions at deeper levels of my being. I had several vivid dreams at night and realised that such therapeutic play was taking deeper effect even in my adult world.”

Participants in the course wanted to follow up the work and to this end there have been meetings once a month of what has become the ‘AuroNDP’ group. Meetings take place in the Tibetan Pavilion and are led by different participants each session, exploring and extending the themes of NDP while sharing experiences and applications in schools and workplaces.

Many participants took this work into schools and other facilities where it is developing and becoming part of the participants' skill set.

Reflections:

This course added another dimension to the way that participants view the concept of play and storytelling by linking to their own experiences and early experiences.

Dr. Sue Jennings reflects: “I think the hardest part of the course was to be able to ‘follow the child’ as many participants were used to more directive styles of learning. However they soon saw results when they allowed the child to take the lead! There were many creative art and craft skills in the group and there was a good atmosphere of collaboration and skill sharing. I suggested that the adults in the group could ‘role-model’ sharing and caring as an example to the children. Overall it was a very successful course, both for the adult participants and the children.”

Conclusion:

In my capacity as Teacher Trainer and School Support I have seen and also heard reports of the way in which NDP training has influenced teachers and therapists. Although this course stood alone it was, in fact, the first part of a two-part course leading to a qualification in NDP with some added coursework and child study. Dr. Jennings has been invited back and will be funded by the Foundation for World Education to run the second part of this course, which also stands alone for new participants, in October 2019.
Rainbow Circus Project (Green Group, ages 5 ½ to 6 ½)

This year we started our circus classes early in the year, in September. The work with this batch of children turned out to be a real challenge, even though there were only 11 children in the group. They individually had many skills, but they lacked focus and had no team sense or spirit. They also displayed a lot of immaturity. We chose the theme of ‘friendship’ to counteract these problems.

For the children the rehearsals really only began in earnest after they saw the performance of the Nandanam kids. While discussing with them what they had seen, we stressed the need to become a team. This slowly emerging team spirit was reinforced when they got to practice with their rainbow decorated costume. We told them they were each a colour of this rainbow but had to cooperate to make it appear.

On the day of the performance, though most children were nervous and we gave everyone rescue remedy, they rose to the occasion and gave a focussed, joyful performance. Also as the Circus had been beautifully decorated with coloured cloths, ribbons, plenty of flowers and balloons, and they felt the mood of celebration.

The opening scene of the performance, which was gym floor work consisting of rolls, cartwheels and arches was the hardest because it included everyone simultaneously. Continuously one or the other was not ready and as timing was important this created a lot of frustration.

The second scene had 4 children on 4 silks. Everyone had to move at the same time and we used a bell to achieve this.

The third scene involved 6 children with bouncing balls. This was so impossibly messy we decided to turn it into a clown act at the last moment by giving each one a big red clown nose! The audience of mainly children responded with the appropriate laughter. A few children did not dare to wear the clown nose in the end saying they did not want their parents to laugh at them.

The fourth scene was a set of moves with a shoulder stand contraption called a chair. They had to hold themselves head down and do moves with their legs in the air. Again this involved timing and we used the bell to coordinate it. We added an element of friendship here by including the theme of one child being late and being impatiently awaited and then happily welcomed into the group. While balancing, because they were facing outward and could not see each other they got mixed up. Still they moved simultaneously at the sound of the bell each doing a different move which also looked great!

The fifth scene was simply climbing on a rope. Only four children were good at this and they got a lot of applause.

By then the children were confident and enjoying themselves.

The most exciting scene was the next which was jumping through the hoola hoop. The children loved this and it was easy to adjust to each individual capacity. It also meant only one at a time was performing which made it easier.

The last act was the most easy to create and took the least time to learn. We asked the children to skip around the large mattress and then come to the centre and pause relaxing with their head on their elbows on the mattress. Next they went in partners to do something of their own choice such as splits, push ups, arches and candles. Then they finished by striking a symmetrical pose around and on the mattress. It seemed that this act was easy to co-create because now the team spirit was there and they wanted to do great show together.

We were really proud of our children and what they had been able to achieve!
After the show we continued the celebration and enjoyed ourselves with balloons, scarves and music. We also treated ourselves to pizzas, chocolate cake, and a smoothy.

Gardening with Moong Dhal (Yellow Group, ages 2 ½ to 3 ½)

The aim of this project was to show the children how and where plants grow, and to encourage them to eat moong sprouts (raw food). We chose moong dhal because it grows fast. It takes only 6 weeks from seed to seed. Small children don’t have patience to wait too long.

We chose a spot in our compound where the sunlight comes. The gardener prepared the soil with compost. Each child held some sprouts in their hand and planted them with help from the teacher. The children watered the sprouts every day. In a few days new leaves started to come. The children were happy to see their plant grow. After a few weeks they saw the flowers. Then came the seed pods. They liked to show their parents how their plants were growing.

When the seeds were ready for harvesting we plucked them. They all sat together and joyfully peeled and ate the seeds. They were also happy to show their parents and to take some home to share with their brothers or sisters. Even after we had harvested, the children were still checking on their plants. Finally we made sprouts with what was left and showed the children how it all began. By then the children ate the sprouts eagerly and they even went to share them with the older children in the school.

Doll House Corner

The aim of the Doll House Corner was to make time and space for free play so as to encourage role play, sharing, care for each other and materials, and general emotional development.

We created a space with plenty of play-kitchen toys, such as an oven, stove, fruits and vegetables and utensils to prepare and save food. We also put up a dollhouse and hung up some dress-up clothes. We displayed an assortment of dolls, animals and both soft and wooden toys. We bought some cupboards, trays and baskets, to store all these items.

Once the corner was set up, all the children were able to come once a week for half an hour to play. They were attended by one of the teachers who was observing, recording and ensuring order and harmony in the space. Their favourite game was to cut and cook vegetables and to serve their friends and the teacher. Dressing up as mother and father, brother and sister and taking care of the baby was another favourite.

The children were eager and happy to come and participate in this activity. It enriched the program offered; but only half an hour a week was not enough! We hope to be able to increase the time they can spend with this kind of play.
Nandanam Kindergarten is a space for experiencing Integral Education in practice for the teachers, children and parents.

We begin with the understanding that “The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught” and that “The teacher is not an instructor or a task master but a helper and a guide.” We frequently work through projects because it is a very effective and holistic educational tool, starting with topics that children are interested in and then, widening the learning horizon each time. We essentially and strongly feel that the children should have the freedom to explore the world within and around them and to grow at their own pace and in their own way, trying always to come in contact with their psychic being and being guided by it. We therefore, try to balance between these two ways of working as we also try to balance between group activities, where they learn to coordinate with their friends and develop social qualities, as well as individual activities where they have the freedom to do things in their own way.

Jalam Group (2 ½ to 3 ½ years old)

This year Jalam was a full group of 15 children, with predominantly Indian nationality but a good gender balance. In the beginning we were two class teachers (instead of three) assisted by helpers coming in on rotation. Because of this constant change in helpers it took a longer time for the group to settle. To add to this we had children who had not attended pre-crèche and also a delayed learner who required one-to-one attention.

Our aims this year were:

1. To create a harmonious, loving and nurturing environment for children to trust and settle in.
2. To give children a variety of sensorial experiences for their developmental growth at this stage.
3. Develop their language skills, particularly English.
4. To help children emerge from parallel play to playing together in small groups, developing a first sense of a collective.
5. To have a good communicational rapport with the parents so that together we create a beautiful understanding for the integral growth and development of our children.

Our class is set up with various activity corners like sand play, Legos, play dough, puzzles and craft corner. Children can move freely from one corner to the other. The facilitators flow with the needs of the children.

We also proposed activities to develop sensorial and social skills, so that the mingling happened naturally which helped us to move towards some group activity.

We tried to communicate in simple small sentences in English and repeated them several times till children were familiar with them. Children practiced speaking English especially during circle times, snacks and lunch time.

Some of the parents were involved in the projects that we did. We shared a lot with them every day to understand the needs of the children.
Garden project

We created a garden with the children so that they could satisfy their need to work and play with the soil; digging, making it wet, smelling the soil and planting saplings and sowing seeds. When our garden emerged the children enjoyed the flowers.

Farm animals project

We did an enjoyable project on farm animals, by visiting Alipsa farm in Kottakarai and looking at the different farm animals, touching, feeling and feeding them. We went on a tractor ride. We collected eggs and feathers. We worked on this project for over a month in our group with related crafts, songs, language games and puzzles.

Outcomes:

Children learned to become responsible for themselves and for the environment especially for the materials that they were using. The children improved their vocabulary and were able to communicate and to express their needs to us, showing signs of discernment and independence.

They became more aware of their surroundings and explored the environment around them with confidence; They developed a deeper relationship with Nature – plants and animals.

It was very joyful to observe how they had grown over in a year’s time.

Reflections:

As we were short of a teacher in the beginning of the year we really understood value of stable environment and did our best to offer it, learning to be more resourceful. Working with a special needs child was a challenge that led to us learning many valuable things. Seeing his progress was very satisfying and gave us confidence in our work and capacity.

We encouraged parents to allow children to meet after school hours in Certitude playground or at home. This helped families to open up to each other beyond language and cultural barriers, allowing children to open as well.

In the beginning of the year we observed a lack of focus in children mostly during craft activities. We realized that this was due to a lot of time spent on mobile games and television by the children. So, we had individual meetings with parents to create awareness about the negative impact of such entertainments. At the end of the year we could see the change; children were able to focus more.

As we did a lot of one to one craft activities with children this year, we observed that it took a lot of time of the teachers away from the group. Next year we would like to create a balance between the group activities, free choice and independent work, and one-to-one activities.
Prithvi Group (3 ½ to 4 ½ years old)

Prithvi group had 9 children this year: 5 boys and 4 girls. Our aims for this year were:

1. To provide a safe, happy and interactive environment for the children by setting up in the classroom different activity corners that they could explore in a regular manner, according to their interest.
2. To provide many enriching experiences to the children, through activities and projects proposed, that would help the growth of each child according to his/her need and rhythm.
3. To have a close communication with each set of parents to understand each child better and help him/her cope with socializing needs and their integral growth.

We started our school year by setting up lots of creative activity corners for the children to discover freely, alone or with friends and express their joy and curiosity. This helped us to build a relation of trust and harmony with each child and understand his / her uniqueness. The corners set up in the classroom which the children had easy access to were play dough corner, craft corner, games corner, puzzles corner, doll house and cooking corner, storybook corner, sandpit with easy access to water and nature, outdoor painting corner, outdoor games corner.

Circle time:

Circle time consisted of songs in different languages, action games, sensorial activities (exploring taste, smell, sight, touch and hearing), making mandalas with different materials, language games and conversations about whatever mattered to the children in their daily life, which was always very interesting to hear. We also had meditative activities like candle passing, placing fresh flowers around and lighting a small fire etc. All this exposure to various activities nourished and nurtured all of us.

Physical development:

Every day we had different kinds of activities and games to help the physical development of the children, along with yoga for kids, Awareness Through the Body, swimming and nature walks.

Outings:

We went on many outings to widen the awareness of our children. Solar Kitchen, PTDC, Auroville Papers, Mahalakshmi park, Bharat Nivas, Svaram, Windarra farm, spirulina farm, Srima beach, Sacred Groves, Auroville Bakery, Bhrahmanaspati Kshetram, Botanical Gardens and a few Ashram farms are some of the places our children explored this year along with weekly visits to the Matrimandir.

According to the need and interests of our children the following projects were taken up in the class:

Gardening:

1. Onion sprouting in glass bottles to see the roots grow downward and the shoots grow upward. Children were curious to see how the onion was growing every day. Each day we arranged the bottles according to the height of the onion plant – tallest to shortest. This was very interesting for the children.
2. Sprouting of different seeds: the onion sprouting led to the children placing different types of seeds to sprout and observing them.
3. We created a kitchen garden and we harvested our precious crops and cooked them. Cooking was done many times to enrich the sensorial exploration for our children.
Rainbow project:
There was a period when there were rainbows very often seen in the sky, which led us to explore deeper with our children the topic of rainbows.

We created a song on the rainbow and created a little play that we presented to the parents. In the play each child represented different colour for which, with the children, we made our own sashes, bands and crowns.

We did many crafts including a big collective rainbow, explored numbers, shapes, flowers which led us to the butterflies, fishes, birds finally a rainbow tree!

Musical instruments:
Children explored the sounds of different musical instruments. Each made his own instrument and created music with it. We visited Svaram twice during this project. We also created lots of sounds and rhythms with our bodies.

Number books:
We made number books with children. This came about because they showed interest in numbers and through this project not only did they get the sense of numbers but other skills were cultivated during the making of the books.

Farm animals project:
We visited many farms, made animal masks, animal sounds, animal movements, animal songs, puppets, stories of mama and baby animals, used flash cards for animal recognition, sandbox activities etc.

Parent teacher rapport:
Communication with all the parents was very good. We insisted that they come to leave and pick up their children in the first two terms. This helped develop relationship with the parents as well as helped us to see how each child is with the parents. Individual and collective parents' meetings including a potluck were held to build the community.

Research highlights – Puppet Show:
The many benefits of drama, role play and stories is well known for the social emotional development of children.

This year teachers observed very closely what was happening within each child and how it was impacting the group. Based on what they observed they created stories or selected well known stories and offered puppet shows twice a week as means of addressing the social, emotional, psychological needs in children and helping them manage their behavior, in a beautiful, harmonious, joyful manner, bringing magic in their life.

The puppet show was repeated several times till the children felt motivated to narrate the same story with their own imagination and in their own way. It was extremely interesting to observe how and what the children had grasped through the puppet shows. During story time it was observed that the children came forward with confidence to narrate stories which were narrated through the puppet shows. (Three little pigs, Lost sparrow, Giant turnip, Bear who wanted to be a bird, Carrot and the rabbit, Pongal and other festival and nature stories).

The puppet shows were helpful in building concentration, stillness, imagination, experiencing various emotions, developing language skills, coordination and many other qualities in the children.
Teachers closely observed how these puppet shows were received by the children.

Outcomes:

Nine children developed integrally in their body, emotions, sensory perceptions and in their mental faculties. They development social skills, concentration, confidence, sense of beauty and harmony, and the joy of learning and being together. They widened the awareness of themselves and their surroundings.

Two teachers deepened their understanding of children and discovered various ways of supporting their learning needs.

Through regular interaction with the teachers nine parents could closely follow their children and support their integral growth.

All our aims were fulfilled and we truly had a wonderful year of progressive growth and learning, embracing all the children, parents and teachers.

Reflections:

Seeing how children enjoyed the puppet show and amply benefited by it, we would like to continue working this way next year and enrich it further.

We also observed that as we had a small group of children and a very good mutual understanding amongst the teachers, it was a very joyful harmonious and creative year for us all.

Next year, though we will have a much bigger group, we aspire to maintain the same peaceful and harmonious way of working.

Agni Group (Age: 5 ½ to 6 ½ years)

This year Agni group had 14 children: 4 boys and 10 girls. Agni group focused mainly on creating a learning atmosphere where each child could find his/her own area of interest and express his/her uniqueness in work and grow integrally.

The children participated in regular activities like learning alphabets – sounds, words, rhymes plus numbers and basics of Tamil language. They had Awareness Through the Body, Blocks, Play of Painting, Write dance, Swimming, Music, Role play in class and in the dollhouse and many Montessori sensorial and practical life games in the Children’s House. Many outings and nature walks were part of the program. We did two projects and the Circus along side the above mentioned the regular activities.
Water project:

Our first project was on water. We started with telling stories, playing games and a discussion about the importance of water in day-to-day life, its sources and how to conserve water.

Observing the children’s interest to know more about water, we gradually introduced the concepts of the water cycle, sinking & floating, dissolving versus non-dissolving substances, the three states of water etc. We devoted four weeks for all the practical experiments.

Then, in a natural way, the children’s interest took them to the various modes of water transport and water animals. Children had fun playing with water-filled balloons and making a tap with bottles and straw.

We undertook various field trips to see different sources of water. In Discipline Farm we could see the open well, and children came in contact with a big water-irrigation tank, drip-irrigation method, preservation of rain-water and the use of cow-urine as manure. They saw different fruits and vegetables as well as the farm’s dairy.

We went to Usteri Lake to see a lake body. It was amazing for them to watch the different kinds of local and migratory birds which were resting, swimming and flying. They also saw tourist boats and beds of lilies and lotuses.

At Sadhana Forest they had great fun in the mud-pool and understood that the mud pool is a rain water catchment. Having mud-baths and covering each other with mud and then the process of washing off the mud was an extremely fulfilling sensorial experience. They also saw the dry toilets and how they use minimum water in their day to day life at Sadhana Forest.

Lastly, they visited Sri Ma Beach and happily engaged themselves in making sand-castles, collecting the sea-shells, playing with waves and watching the fishing boats. They compared and experienced the differences between the ocean and the lake, the difference in vastness, the life on the water bodies etc.

They also explored some skill-related work with this project. They made clouds by stitching two pieces of cloth and filling it with cotton-wool. They hung rain-drops made of paper mache on this ‘cloud’. They shaped different sea-creatures with clay and painted them. Drawing, painting, cutting & pasting, paper-folding work were used to make different water related objects like water bodies, water transport and water animals. We grew sprouts to see how water helps life. We completed the project by making a landscape and made a 3D model of the water cycle, displaying it to share it with the parents.

Fire project:

In the second term, as the children were connecting to volcanoes naturally, we worked on the second element ‘Fire’ as a project. Initially, we spent time in discussing the usefulness and the sources of fire. Since light is one of the important aspects of fire, children’s attention slowly moved more towards the light. We spoke about other sources of light, the need of light and natural light versus artificial light. Gradually the subject shifted to light and shadow. They played with shadows, making different forms of animals, birds and butterflies using the movements of hands and fingers.

The children were introduced to the idea of a sun-dial to identify the time according to the shadow of a stick and the movement of the sun. They first marked the sundial at each hour then compared it with actual time. They were excited and surprised to see how time is related to the movement of the sun.

Seeing their inquisitiveness to play with light and shadow effect, we introduced them to ‘shadow puppet theatre corner’ by making various types of shadow-puppets. It was a kind of magic to them to see the beautiful effect of the shadows. Every day they used to spend their time making their own stories and playing with the puppets.
Observing the children’s enthusiasm in telling the stories using the puppets, we planned to make a story for a shadow puppet show. During circle time, each child had a chance to create a part of the story relating it to the previous child’s content and thus a chain story was born. This story was named “Krishna and His Friends”. Each child illustration of the part of the story he had created, together it made story book for them to keep as a memory.

Children moved on to making shadow puppets for the story, taking up roles and narrating the part that they had created. They practiced the story using their own puppet. It was interesting to see how they were developing hand-eye coordination along with the dialogue. It was totally a new and challenging experience for them because they could not see what was happening on the screen of the theatre. In the end they presented their story, as a the shadow-puppet show, to their parents and to the other classes of the school.

Children painted the shadow of their own face with black color. It was an amazing discovery for them and an interesting challenge for parents to identify their child’s face. The children had a great time making candles, paper lamp shades, drawings and paintings related to light and fire.

Circus:

In the last term we focused on Circus with Kalou at Miracle where children learnt several skills of co-ordination and collaboration. At the end of the year they presented a show for the kindergarten children and their parents.

Outcomes:

Project ‘Water’ provided the children with the space to develop basic understanding about water and build a deeper relationship with it. The science experiments helped them to explore and experience the properties of water in a hands-on manner. The field trips exposed them to water utilization and conservation. Spending time in and near the mud-pool, lake and sea helped them familiarize themselves with water birds, boats and a feeling of different types of water bodies. They became aware of the necessity of water for Life.

Project ‘Fire’ provided the children with the idea of sources and usefulness of fire and light. They came to know the practical effect of light and shadow and its relation with the movement of the sun. They learned how to create different figures using hand movement and light. The whole process of shadow puppet show helped them enhance their ability of forming a story together and working in a team. They increased their language skills and developed the eye-speech-hand coordination, delivering dialogues and holding the puppets at the same time. They developed patience and behind the screen they learnt to contain excitement in the presence of parents.
Children learnt to light a candle using match sticks and passing it around during circle time. This helped them overcome their fear of fire.

The Circus helped them to develop flexibility and self confidence. Initially they felt that the movements were difficult & challenging but slowly, after practicing a lot, they could see the welcome changes in their bodies. They learnt to follow instructions, help and support each other and develop a team spirit. Finally the show gave them the confidence to perform in public.

In general, throughout the year, they improved their language, fine & gross motor skills, observation and reasoning. It was amazing to see their creativity, imagination and clarity of expression. The projects helped each one of them to become more independent in his/her learning process and more skillful in his/her work. They also learnt how to work in groups and improved their social skills.

Reflections:

This group was very responsive to things offered to them and so it was a pleasure to explore and work with them. They were very enthusiastic about things that they were learning and were also very sure of what they did not want to explore. Thus we could go into the depths of a topic which was very meaningful for the children and the teachers. Each child was confident in his/her own space and to meet all their needs was challenging. It was just because this group was so eager to learn and receptive that a very in-depth work with projects was possible.

Conclusion:

The year was a very smooth and balanced journey together, where the children had space to explore and learn according to their own nature. As facilitators, we feel that the field trips added much value to the learning experience and we will concentrate more on it next year. Our prime emphasis will be both to address the needs of the group and to be creative and flexible in determining strategies to meet these needs.
Aha! Kindergarten

Aha! Kindergarten is for children from 2.5 years to 7 years of age, exploring free progress approach and methodology of learning.

Aha!’s vision is to create and hold a loving and accepting child-centered space that nurtures the free inner will of each child to grow into a self-determining individual, consciously striving to blossom to his or her full potential physically, emotionally, intellectually, aesthetically and spiritually.

We aim to imbibe and put into practice the principle that ‘nothing can be taught’, deeply trusting that children already carry within them both the will and the creative resources needed for them to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

Activities & Outcomes of the year:

1. **Summer program:** This year Aha! took the initiative of participating in the Summer program with other kindergartens.

2. **New team:** This year two new facilitators have joined Aha!. We are spending time after school hours, to reflect on the day and develop a common understanding about progress of children as well as facilitators.

3. **New support group members:** We have formed a support group of 5 members with 3 new members this year. We meet whenever required and share updates.

4. **New space:** We are in the process of creating a small space for craft work. It will serve as a dedicated area where children can be engrossed in the activity without interruption.

5. **Playground:** We are planning to create a natural playground using trees and other natural materials. The playground will also have a round path for cycle and bobby cars. We are also creating goalposts for football and a basketball hoop. We have identified few simple gymnastic apparatus for children to explore on their own and develop physical balance and coordination.

6. **New outdoor educational material:** Aha! invested in more outdoor toys like bobby cars, wooden rocking horse and hopping inflatable deer; it was a delight to watch children engage with them and to see them explore in different ways (for example, keeping the car upside down, observing the movement of the wheels when the steering wheel is moved).

7. **Joy and Beauty of Sharing:** With this activity children bring their own toys from home and
share with everyone. This has led many times to children keeping the toys back in Aha! with the thought to share and play next time with their friends. The joy and beauty of sharing is that children believe that the toys are not personal but for all the friends to share. Children are taking toys from Aha! to their home and they also remember to bring them back to school. We see that in a very natural way they are learning discipline and responsibility.

8. **Creating Familiarity:** We continue the practice from last year of inviting the new children to come in the afternoon along with their parents. This gives them an opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with the space and also gives the parents an opportunity to converse with the facilitators and to understand the methodology practically. Equally, the facilitators get to observe and understand the new children through a more relaxed process. Through this activity both the children and parents build their trust in the school and are better prepared to join in with the bigger group in the school time, making the transition process very smooth.

9. **Sharing time with parents:** We invite the parents for individual meetings to share about their child’s progress and to develop mutual understanding between facilitators and the parent. This helps in harmonizing the child’s environment in school as well as home.

10. **Group activity:** During circle time (before snack and lunch) is also a space which provides children the opportunity to spontaneously create their own songs and stories.

11. **Potlucks:** This is year we had two potlucks, one in each term. These are a great opportunity for parents to spend time together and share their experience about the progress of their children in Aha! It was wonderful to see the diversity of culture in Aha! family, the acceptance and respect for each other while enjoying delicious dishes.

**Research highlights:**

After our meeting and discussion with child psychologists Jerry and Gopa, we were delighted to know that much of their scientific studies / child brain scan study resonated with Aha!’s philosophy based on the integral education concepts of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Gopa also conducted a few sessions with parents of Aha!. Parents found the sharing very good and helpful in developing better understanding of their children.

**Reflections:**

We have been able to see the growth and progress in each child’s physical, emotional, mental aspects. This growth is reflected in their spirit of cooperation, increased patience and perseverance, in the nurturing, growth and engrossment in their own interests, both collective and individual. We have been witness to the struggles and successes of the mixed age group. It has been a joy to see the natural growth and development of each child.

We have grown in our mutual understanding – between the parents and the facilitators and between the Aha! Kindergarten team. We have been able to observe how the children find their own flow in the presence of this understanding.

**Conclusion:**

We will continue to grow the opportunities for a variety of experiences with the creation of new physical spaces for the children. We hope to extend the space so that the children can immerse themselves into the activities without the need for undue interruption.

We will continue to focus on team work and team spirit as we go forward. We look forward to exploring the aspect of integration – connecting all subjects. We can continue to clarify our idea of free progress and our role in creating this opportunity in Aha!
Lilaloka

The vision of Lilaloka (“the universe of Play”, in Sanskrit) is to be a Self-Learning and Resource Centre for the Child. Lilaloka offers various activities based on self-discovery and spontaneous self-learning through Play, which allow the child to reveal himself as an individual and amongst others, without competition or judgement.

Lilaloka is open to all children, schooled or not, having difficulties or not, beyond all categorizations and allowing mixes of ages. The team of Lilaloka works in collaboration with schools and parents, considering each child as an evolving being. In the field of children with special needs we work close together with Marion.

Activities of the year:

Individual activities:

Individual work is concentrated in the mornings from 8:30 am till 12 am. The sessions are provided to the Auroville schools and Auroville home schoolers. The facilitators describe their work below:

Marianne

Working with Shiatsu and reflex therapy points are a means to connect with the children and gain their trust through a non-verbal communication. We start with a small alignment where we connect the sky and the earth to join into the heart.

The full session takes about 1 hour and happens once a week. The relaxation takes between 5 and 30 minutes. It can take 5 or 6 classes with active children to get to manage a 15 min. relaxation.

The rest of the session is tailored to the needs of each child through cognitive or physical games.

The aim is to release the body of the day to day tensions and increase confidence. It gives also tools to the children to learn how to cope with their emotions. Improvements in the behaviour of the children have been noticed by parents and teachers.

Jitta – Individual play sessions

The sessions aim to provide the opportunity for children to explore themselves, to be themselves, to find their joy that connects to a deeper layer inside, in the presence of an adult. To contribute to a balanced unfolding of children’s potentials by allowing them to face challenges and find their own way in dealing with them.

The sessions are centred on the child, meaning that he/she is the one who leads the play. There is an atmosphere created for the child to feel safe and accepted as he is, feel as comfortable and free as possible to do/ express what he needs to. We are there to acknowledge and reflect to the child some of the facts and feelings he expresses so that he gets insight into his behaviour, feels accepted and free to change or continue. Each way is according to the child and the moment. We do not direct the play or conversation. The only limitations set to make the child aware of his/her responsibility in relationship with the adult are no destruction of play material, room or furniture, and no violence towards the adult or him/herself.
Margarita – Communication through sound

Music and movement activities for self-discovery and self-expression.

The individual activities are focused on sound dialogs: one hour where the child can freely explore sounds, instruments and elements. At first the adult is the witness and I will observe, and then start an imitation/mirroring process to start a dialog, based on sounds. In the middle of the mirroring process, some sound/rhythmic variations are added by the adult and the reaction of the child are observed and transform in a playful communication through sound and movement. These activities are mainly based on the awakening and stimulation of the mirror neurons: a brain cell that reacts both when a particular action is performed and when it is only observed. They underlie imitative action and awareness and understanding of another person’s act, intention or emotion.

The main aim is to give more self-confidence and awareness to children, let them freely explore themselves through sounds and movements, so that they will have a more free and clear way of expressing themselves, to discover, understand and change their patterns and keep their imagination and dreaming world awake. This will have a better development of intuition and empathy too.

Group activities:

Group activities at Lilaloka take place on 2 mornings per week from 9:30 till 12:00, and 4 afternoons from 2:00 till 4:00.

Tuesday mornings

An open morning for Aurovillians and visitors. This activity was mainly offered in the second and third term.

When we realized that we had to deal with a lot of interest in the project, people popping in at any time, we decided to offer an open morning where always one member of the team would be available to answer questions and tell the story of Lilaloka. It was an interesting experience and added a lot in getting clarity which roles we, as a supportive educational center, can play.

During these sessions we offered activities including: discovering local medical plants, rhythmic sounds and movement, art, play, and games in the game room.

Friday mornings

A weekly session for toddlers and their parents. This activity was offered on request to a group of Auroville parents and children up to three years old. It was an existing group who would come together to have collective activities for their children three mornings a week. Activities at Lilaloka included art/painting, gardening, sound and movement.

It was an interesting experience which gave us a lot of clarity of certain areas we could offer within Lilaloka. We will not continue next year with a toddler group, but instead will focus more on what we can offer in the field of support for parents.

Afternoons with Jitta

We learn the use of mainly local medicinal plants. The activity is based on teamwork; together we honour Mother Earth, each other and the world around us, explore and learn how we can support each other.

We do this by exploring the land around us and learn to recognize many medical plants just growing around us who can help us, our body and mind to be healthy and comfortable.
We learn how to prepare remedies (the children call them magic potions) – simple home remedies for rashes, burns, dehydration, common cold, body coolers, anxiety, nightmares, anger, shyness.

The preparation of our plant creations and their application invites communication, sharing and team work. We share stories of our experiences related to the plants' healing abilities. This builds trust among the children; we become aware of our inner self, about the other and the world around us.

In the second part of the activity we put our hands in the earth to make an offering for Mother Earth and show her our love and gratitude. We use clay and natural materials. This helps to develop the senses, experience the different textures, smells, to experience the joy of sharing and discover how all has its place and function. And the children themselves are part of this giving positive life energy.

My main objective is to build confidence, respect and ownership of oneself and one's feelings. To help the children to learn to express and respect themselves and the world they live in. I do this with the help of medicinal plants and how they live in coexistence with other living things.

Afternoons with Margarita

For group activities (not more than 10): I let the children explore freely the instruments and their sounds; starting from their inputs, I propose games, stories and movements, always connecting them with sounds and movement.

Afternoons with Mousumi

Story telling, games and role play. In this activity we offer books, hand puppets, games and dress-up props. It is a collective activity where we go on a journey into our imagination. We read and create stories and play games. This activity encourages communication and verbal expression.

Afternoons with Anna

In Lilaloka we follow the flow of the children and provide the space they need. In the afternoon sessions we observed that there were always some children who did not feel like participating in the particular activity that afternoon, they just wanted to be in Lilaloka and play. Anna offers this space, where children can play with toys like Playmobil, Legos, wooden train, dollhouse, kitchen and art material. The sessions go very much in the direction of building worlds and playing in them. Making houses, mountains, animals, puppets. Building a world together and live in it through play. The only strict rules we have are that we do not hurt each other, do not damage material or invoke disharmony. Each child has the right to play alone and we have to learn to respect each other’s space. We all like to feel safe.

Outcomes:

We created a space for children and parents and tried as best as we could in a raw building to answer to the needs.

The age group who benefited from this were the ages 5 to 10 years old. Mainly children from the kindergartens, home schoolers, and children of long-term guests.

It was interesting to notice that most children who attended Lilaloka were in need of some special attention. Some because of the arrival of a new sibling, a best friend leaving Auroville, and other reasons.

Children of long-term guests made contact with another way of education.
Reflections:

This was the first year that Lilaloka functioned full time. To function in an unfinished raw building with mostly voluntary facilitators without maintenance it was quite a challenge. It brought limitations in the amount of participants we could enroll: the demand was larger than what we could offer given the circumstances. The positive side of starting slow with small groups of 5 to 10 children was that our focus could be mainly on the quality of our work. With facilitators participating on a voluntary basis it turns out a lot of times that there is not enough dedication and consistency.

It was very meaningful for us to experience the positive reaction of the schools and parents and the joy in which the children attended.

Through our open mornings we realized that there is a need among Auroville parents to have a place to go to where they can share their concerns, and where they can be guided towards help. The issues which are brought to us are mostly very temporary-seeming and small, but at that point it’s an issue which disturbs harmony, and being assisted in finding solutions can help prevent escalation.

Conclusion:

Next year we will extend our team of facilitators. Some activities will be offered on Saturday and Sunday. Lilaloka aims to be in close contact with the schools and the team of facilitators who focus on help for children with special needs. We are also in the process of establishing contact with the outreach schools. We get requests and sadly we cannot always answer to this need.

Fundraising will have to be a big part of the work to be able to finish the first building, so we can offer more activities at the same time and receive a larger amount of participants.
Transition School

Transition School opened in 1985 with about 40 children. This year there are about 160 students ranging in age from 6-14 in the school. Over the years the physical development and the program of the school have adapted and developed due to the growth in Auroville, thanks to Auroville and the individual and group efforts of many involved and dedicated Aurovilians. The school program is often reviewed and modified to meet the requirements of the students, and it is based on a commitment to developing the whole child and the uniqueness of each child. Individual learning styles, interests, strengths and weaknesses are addressed through the implementation of different methodologies such as: whole class work, individual work, cooperative/collaborative learning groups, interdisciplinary subjects, outings and project work. We have observed that incorporating projects into the program can be an inspiring way to motivate children to do what lifelong learners do: ask questions, use a variety of resources to seek answers, and take control of their learning in terms of process, direction, and progress.

The program includes subjects such as reading, writing, math, science, computer, environmental and social studies, music, physical education, and arts and crafts, as well as Awareness Through the Body, and “logic and strategic games”. The languages of Auroville are part of our program: English is the medium of instruction, French and Tamil are taught as first and second languages, and Sanskrit in the form of songs. Our children learn subject matter, and equally important, they learn how to be together, to share, to express themselves, and to be responsible for their actions. We believe that this approach and focus helps our students to become effective, self-directed learners who can function both independently and cooperatively. Learning activities are interdisciplinary, long term and build on children’s individual strengths, and create a learning experience and classroom environment that is interesting, motivating and challenging for the children.

Highlights of the year:
1. Environmental Awareness and Sustainability
2. Collaborative and Cooperative Learning
3. Arts and Crafts
4. Music
5. Awareness Through the Body

1. Environmental Awareness and Sustainability:

Children love nature and here in Auroville we are fortunate to live in a beautiful natural environment. This is the result of reforestation. They live and grow in/amidst a large ongoing effort with much experimentation and forward methods in environmental regeneration, as well as sustainable living as a lifestyle.

Children are also not unaware of some of the environmental issues that threaten our planet. Environmental education offers opportunities for the children to learn more and realize that they can make changes and acquire skills that can help them make informed and responsible decisions that can help to build a healthy future.

At the beginning of the school year, The Eco-Service gifted Transition School 3 brightly colored barrels to encourage our efforts in conscious waste disposal. This was a good way to start the school year.
Throughout the year we have emphasized the importance of sustainable living. The children get the chance to go on outings to see the work that Aurovilians are doing in this field and to learn from them.

Below are a few reports from teachers of different age groups:

**Habitats project, Grades 1-3**

As part of our Habitats project we visited Eternity Beach. We were met by a young Aurovilian who spoke to and did activities with the children. We made mini habitats in trays with findings from the beach.

Back at school, we made dioramas. There was a class diorama of the Ocean and individual pyramid dioramas to represent the desert habitat. The children also made flip books of the different layers in the rain forest, which parents and friends enjoyed at the Open House.

**Activities around Auroville, Grades 1-3**

We also worked hand in hand with the WasteLess team and visited places such as The Probiotic house (where we learned how to make Eco-friendly soap and laundry powder). At the end of the school year we participated in a litter clean up day and a visit to Eco-Service.

**‘kNOw PLASTICS’ Programme, Grades 5-6**

During the third term, the 5th and 6th grade students learned about the plastics they use in their daily lives through the ‘kNOw PLASTICS’ programme from WasteLess. This was covered in eight sessions.

They learned about resin codes, safer and unsafe plastics, additives, the impacts of disposable plastics and their alternatives, landfills, plastic pollution, microplastics, and the impact of plastics on the health of humans and animals. They also learned about alternatives which could be used instead of plastic items.

During the programme, the 5th grade students studied some of these topics, individually or in groups, and presented what they had learned to their class and shared it with their parents. They also made posters which they put up in their classroom. The whole programme is organised so that the students share their learning with others: other classes and parents and friends during open house days.
They also played the kNOw PLASTICS memory game, in the traditional way as well as in a new, collective way, where the students instead of competing collaborate so they can win together. They played the online version of the game in the computer room as well.

The 6th grade, following our project on kNOw PLASTICS, went to the Eco-Service, where they learned to segregate their plastic waste brought from home. They learned a lot and decided to share some of their learning with the community at large.

The children were very enthusiastic about this project and felt that they could do something with their knowledge. They not only presented their findings to the other students of the school, but also posted their findings in Auroville’s News & Notes. Here they encouraged Aurovilian consumers be mindful of waste and to buy consciously.

“I and the Universe”, Grades 4-5:

Grades 4 and 5 worked on the “I and the Universe” project. The project goes from the physically near to the far—starting with helping the children be aware of the area near them, from the school to the bioregion, and then eventually going further away.

The 4th graders of last year continued this project into 5th grade, eventually making a start of an ongoing project of making their own Atlas, with color-coded maps explaining the unique features of the 7 continents and their political and physical aspects. Through this they also learned many geographical terms.

Both of these groups met a visiting Antarctic scientist who gave an inspiring Power Point presentation about his work and the life of these scientists: their experiments and research, the melting glaciers, global warming. We made a display of the material he brought. We studied Antarctica and learned about the different countries that have research stations there.

The teacher of this subject says: “By my contribution in teaching Geography, environmental awareness of Auroville, the Bioregion and our place in the world I hope to make the students aware of the connections of the web of life; the people, flora and fauna, the quite recent human interference in the systems of our planet. Through teaching, research, fieldtrips, documentaries, mapping, inviting visiting experts who are passionate in what they do and can talk about their experiences in the world, we create a rich tapestry where we hopefully can bring awareness of our world and our responsibility and our role in it.”

Environmental Science, Middle School:

The students started the school year with an introduction to Environmental Science. They learned the importance of studying science and that doing research Environmental Science today covers how living and nonliving things interact. It involves many disciplines and fields of study such as physics, biology, chemistry, geography, oceanography.

The students already had knowledge about commonly spoken-of issues, but they were not really aware of the complexity of the relationships in our Environment. We realized that we needed to learn more about the environment and its natural resources (water, air, soil and forests) where people and animals live: the interconnectedness of living and non-living. The students enthusiastically read, discussed and did their own personal and group research to deepen their understanding of the concepts.

They learned more about the water cycle and scientifically looked at the alarming pattern of water pollution and shortages. They studied about Air—learning about the atmosphere, the layers of the atmosphere and about the changes of the atmosphere and causes of air pollution. We also took a trip to CSR where we were introduced to the term ‘sustainability’. The students were very impressed by all of the work that CSR had done over the years; they appreciated the opportunities to meet people working to try to find alternative ways of living and generating energy. They know it relates to their life and their future.
Next year we will continue our work on environmental science. We plan to work with the Water Service to learn more about how can we help or what can be done to conserve water?

2. Collaborative and Cooperative Learning

Since the beginning of Transition School, 1985, our work as a teaching team has been important. We believe teamwork has led to innovation and courses of action for the good of Auroville, the school and the children. We experience that working closely with so many people, who sometimes view things differently, offers many chances for personal growth, change and discovery and also the chance to learn from each other. The children observe the teachers working together: to prepare all school events, in the weekly meetings and other situations. The children are also encouraged to collaborate and often work in situations where they can share their ideas and understanding and learn to work together with respect. We define collaborative learning as offering opportunities for children to work in small groups or pairs to help each other, solve problems, learn from each other or just support and enjoy working together.

With this approach, the children are individually accountable for their own work, while the work of the group as a whole is also assessed. These children work face-to-face and learn to work as a team. This form of work needs training and guidelines in order for it to be purposeful. Teachers work with their students to help them realize that we can all learn from each other and that everyone’s participation is needed and respected. At the beginning of each new project, this is discussed until the children are able to be more independent.

Here are some reports from a few of the teachers in which they share their experiences:

**Reading Buddies in Transition School:**
Every year students from the 1st and 2nd grade pair up with older students as reading buddies. They meet once a week and get the chance to read to the big buddies, and the older students learn how to help the little ones become better readers. They practice, ask questions and make flashcards and importantly they also become friends.

**Collaborative Learning in the 2nd Grade English Classes**
During this school year we utilized collaborative learning in pairs or larger groups, and this was advantageous for the growth of the children and the classes as a whole.

**Spelling:** Before a spelling test children worked in pairs. They gave each other the spelling test and corrected it (teacher role). Then they wrote the spelling test (student role). They were all engaged and focused while working. They were attentive to any mistake and were motivated to practice before the actual test. Overall, children improved in spelling.

**Book Reports:** Writing about their favorite character and the setting of a book is a new skill in 2nd grade. Though everyone wrote their own report individually, they were partnered with another to support each other in the process. They read the book, used the ‘4 square’ method to gather information, wrote it into sentences and finally wrote out a good copy and drew a picture. The children supported each other in all of these steps. They began to understand that they were able to help and to receive assistance. All children realized their capacity to notice mistakes and help another to improve. This exercise was empowering for all.

**Grammar:** After preparing a grammar test, I decided to organize an experiment with the class. I wanted to see if working collaboratively would help children improve their learning and understanding of grammar. I divided the class into 3 groups and provided the types of questions that would be on the test (e.g. “Use the correct action or state-of-being verb to complete the sentences”). The teams created their own questions, following the same order and format of the actual test. With a few reminders, everyone in each group was involved. After creating the questions, they had to make an answer sheet. Then each group passed their test to another
They moved from collaborative teacher roles to student roles. After completing this process, we took up all the questions and answers as a whole class. They did make mistakes, but they understood where they went wrong. A few days later they wrote the actual test. Everyone did well! Children who normally have difficulties were able to experience success.

Overall, I found creating opportunities for children to work collaboratively had far-reaching benefits. They were more engaged, focused, had a better and deeper understanding of new material, and the harmony within the groups supported children with more difficulties to participate and thereby learn.

**Inventing your Own Civilization (Middle School)**

This project is a great favorite with the children and they showed their ability to work together and produce results. After reading, researching and learning about the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and India, the class was divided into 2 groups. Then secretly they invented and developed a civilization of their own. They made artifacts that would represent their civilization and buried them on the school grounds. After that, the groups changed sites and enjoyed digging out the other group’s artifacts. By studying these artifacts they tried to understand, analyze and decipher the excavated culture. The 2 groups ended by making a museum of their findings with explanations for the all school Open House. At the end we prepared a final presentation exchange of our findings and the secret was revealed!

**Improving writing skills (Grade 8)**

The eighth-grade program focused on how to improve students’ writing skills. Throughout the year the students wrote a variety of essays including personal narratives, historical research essays, and essays where they analyzed literature. In each case, before writing, the students pre-wrote to create an outline for their writing. This could be in the form of notes, key words and diagrams. This helped the students to learn how to structure their writing. Once students had made an outline for their writing, they wrote a first draft. The basic structure for this was a five-paragraph essay. To write the literary analysis essay, students were asked to include quotes and references to the text to support their arguments.

The next stage of writing involved one-on-one collaboration with the class teacher. The teacher sat with each student individually, reviewing their essay with them and giving feedback and suggestions. After this, the students worked on their second draft, incorporating the teacher’s feedback when they felt it improved their writing.

The final stage of essay writing consisted of proofreading their work. Students came to understand the value of rereading their second drafts to improve their accuracy. One method to work on their proofreading skills was to work with a partner and collaborate on checking their work. The students benefited from this process, and recognized the importance of taking the time to include these different stages in their writing. At the end of this process, the students assessed their final essays, and they were generally satisfied with the outcome.

**3. Arts and Crafts**

This year the arts and crafts team developed a foundation of projects, crafts and activities that would introduce the basic elements of Art: shape, space, value, form, texture, and color. Along with these basic building blocks, we wanted to continue to expose the students to Art History and different art media. We have created projects that teach the children about the classic artists such as Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, Leonardo Da Vinci, Mondrian, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Henry Matisse, Gustav Klimt, Andy Warhol, Keith Haring and conceptual art of the 20th century – exposing the kids to the world art and different cultures following Transition School’s value of open-mindedness.
We also spent time developing projects and crafts for younger children that build a pyramid of learning and a foundation for their future art projects. The goal for us is always “to have fun”. We believe that through humor, amusement and perseverance the learning process becomes more effective and creativity and social life are improved.

Each year we try and interact with the main class teachers and explore different project ideas that will link main subjects to Arts and Crafts.

4. Music (reflection by Matt)

This year marks the end of my 20th year of teaching music in Transition School. Though the milestone is not particularly important, it serves as a good opportunity to reflect on how music education has developed during the time that I’ve been in the school.

Probably the most impressive change over time, is the level that children now have in music. Auroville is currently a place that offers students of all ages the opportunity to learn and perform. Instrumental and singing teachers are numerous, and young children wishing to take their first steps in music have many different possibilities. Furthermore, the occasions to perform as individuals, and in groups such as the youth choir, musicals, youth pop and rock groups, allow students to experience first-hand what it means to be on stage and perform to large scale audiences.

With this in mind, from an early age, students are already reaching Transition with musical knowledge. In the past, the number of students that played or performed music outside of school was probably one in twenty. Now it is in most cases 50 percent of the class, sometimes even more. This growth and increase in interest has allowed us over time to work in a quite different way.

In the beginning, classes served as a very general introduction to music education. The songs and activities were basic, and some of the classes involved simply sustaining the interest of the children for the duration of the class. Less exposure to music, and music education within the community, made for some difficult classes. Children were simply not as accustomed to working in this way and having this type of education. Today however, it is very different. Students come knowing the types of activities that we do, and bring with them certain expectations. This allows us to start from a very different place, and to explore a far greater range of ideas.

In the younger grades, students can already be challenged to learn far more complex songs, be introduced to more advanced coordination exercises and rhythms, as well as be exposed to types of music and music appreciation that were not possible twenty years ago. In the older grades the program has become very diverse. Singing is a normal part of every music class, so we have been able to tackle a greater variety of performance techniques, such as using microphones, singing with backing tracks, exploration of two and three part harmonies, and vocal rhythmic work such as raps and rhythmic poetry.

The higher general level also gives us time to explore music appreciation in greater detail. In the last few years we have made a move to explore with children a more detailed way of listening and understanding the music that they enjoy. Rock, pop and film songs are all very much part of their daily lives, so we have tried to direct them towards understanding why the kind of music they listen
to has certain qualities. We aim to open up the ear so that they can distinguish between good or well-made music, and music that could be avoided. We also work on looking at music of the modern age, how it is made and the thought processes and work that goes into making the kind of music that they would listen to.

The increased musical level also allows us to work with students who would like to continue music outside of school, or even ones that are thinking of taking it up as a career. At present most of the older classes have several children who would like to either study music at a high level, or consider taking it as a profession. This is very exciting and satisfying for us as teachers, as it brings the studies that the students do much closer to the work we do as full time musicians.

All in all, music in Transition is very different from twenty years ago. Children of all ages come to classes with an enthusiasm and willingness to learn that does not have to be encouraged, but rather guided in the right way. Music is very much part of the Auroville daily life, and it is a good time for students and teachers wanting to enjoy the subject at all levels. The challenge now will be to go on from here. How to not only to provide a musical base in the school, but to offer extended advice and activities for those who would like to take the subject further.

5. Awareness Through the Body (ATB)

Attention, the basic indispensable factor in anything we want to do, and especially in anything we want to learn, is often taken for granted and seldom taken as a subject of ‘study’ by itself.

Often it is assumed that children will know or learn by themselves: how to pay attention, how to use selective attention, how to know when they are running out of attention and how to refill it. Moreover, children tend to be labeled, consciously or unconsciously, in relation to that pre-assumption.

In Awareness Through the Body (ATB) we take attention as a subject of study through sensorial explorations in the first person experience. That is, we assist children to acquire their own subjective sensations for attention: what attention is, how it moves, the different ways of using it, how to know when they are running out of attention and how to refill it. Our aim is that attention passes from being just a word children hear to ‘something’ tangible, a bodily felt sensation that can be trained as a muscle. Once they are acquainted with their sensorial experience of attention, we use those personal references to help them develop over time, their ability for soft conscious sustained selective attention.

Although the whole ATB program is a practice of conscious attention, we have specific activities that work on attention itself. When this school year started, we felt the need to emphasize those activities, and to help children integrate what they would acquire through the exercises into their school day and most importantly into their life.

This year when leading the attention exercises, an image that seemed particularly useful to children was to compare attention to the zoom of a camera that can be regulated to a field of perception that one chooses: from zooming in, focusing on a detail/close up and letting everything else be out of the field of perception (consciously ignoring distractions), to zooming out, to open to a big field of perception that includes everything that the camera/person is able to take in. Within that wide range, one can select different degrees of field of attention.

Through those specific exercises we worked on searching for the body-felt sensations of:

• A consciousness in them that can choose to use the zoom of attention at will. Within their capacity and age, we wanted the children to start developing a sense for the source of conscious attention.
• Focused selective attention on one input/task.
• Focused selective attention to several inputs/tasks.
• Focused flowing peripheral attention; soft sustained open attention that is responsive to the need of the moment.
• Conscious attention and automatic attention.
• Attention in full receptive mode.
• Balanced receptive and active modes of attention.
• Focused selective attention to the space around the body, like a cocoon/blanket of attention around the skin of the body.
• Present, awake flowing attention in open field mode.
• Attention in oneself, to others, to the space one is in (the environment of the moment).
• Running out of attention and refilling of attention.

After noticing the response of the children, we saw that we needed to help them overcome the habit of straining when wanting to direct and sustain attention and use soft intention instead. One activity that worked especially well to bring all the specific attention work together was “The cocoon of Quiet”.

The cocoon of Quiet

This is an individual activity that we built up gradually by putting together four separate activities: attention exercises, subtle physical body activities, wave breathing and ‘the Quiet’.

From the specific attention exercises, over time we developed a sense for placing the attention all around the skin of the body like a cocoon of attention, like a body of attention that has continuity from the space around the body to all the way inside the body. We used this attention around the skin of the body when working with the subtle body, reinforcing the personal sensorial references for use of attention and subtle sensations at the same time.

In other classes we practiced what we call ‘wave breathing’. This is a way of highlighting and enhancing the natural breath. To work on the breath children needed to use the references for attention that they had acquired, and at the same time, they were developing further their capacity for attention by focusing on the breath.

Over the school year, we regularly did a simple exercise to find ‘the Quiet’ within. We asked the children first to bring the attention to sounds around them. After some time, we asked them to listen for the sense of silence in the room next to their body. From there children were assisted to find a clear sensation of something very quiet, silent, immobile, calm, somewhere inside their skin or around their skin or in both spaces simultaneously. We then helped them to stay with it, inviting ‘the Quiet’ to gradually grow/swell in them as a clear sensation in their body. At the end we often shared how it had felt to them either as a texture, density, color, temperature, or any other sensation or combination of sensations.

When we brought all this together children had a sense of the whole space around their skin alive and breathing. Here follow some written feedback from the 14-year-olds after the ‘cocoon of Quiet’ exercise:

• “I felt light and like I was underwater. It felt I was underwater because of the sound around. In and Out. The color of the cocoon was a light pale blue. I felt protected.”
• “I felt soft, warm, yellow, and tingly. I felt with each breath peace filling up inside me, like liquid from feet to my head. I felt the cocoon around me like warm and when it had an opening I could mend it by putting more peace on the point from outside – like when paint on a wall peels off, you can always repaint it. I felt relaxed and happy. I felt most peace in my feet. I usually feel it in my feet because peace fills up my feet first.”
• “I felt tired, sleepy, but also calm and quiet. I felt like everything around me was gone and there was only me in an empty room. It felt like everything was blank, white, emptiness.”

• “When I create the cocoon of quiet the sounds from outside just fade way. It kind of makes me a little tired but when I come out of it feels refreshing. My breath feels deeper and heavier and I could almost hear my heart beating.”

• “When I did the cocoon it felt kind of a magnetic power. Going into it was easy, coming out was difficult.”

• “Glowy orange blanket is how my cocoon felt today. The rest of the world fades away and I feel drowsy, but also calm and energized. I didn’t have a complete cocoon today; it was practically only the lower half of my body.”

Conclusion

These are just a few examples of the all-school programs and activities that we have been working on. The program is full and varied, but ultimately we strive to work together and provide the best conditions that we can to aid the children’s growth and that helps our children feel safe, grow in confidence and to develop all aspects of their personality.

Every year we have the pleasure of a new first grade class. We generally also welcome other new students. We are committed to the growth and development of our students. Additionally, one of the points of the charter is for Auroville to be “a place of an unending education, of constant progress, and a youth that never ages.”
Auroville, Our Home
A project of Transition School

Last year was Auroville’s 50th anniversary. The Transition School team decided that it was time to try to develop an all-school program to help our students learn more about Auroville. Our children from many different nationalities grow up together in Auroville. Many of them were born in Auroville and now, we are ‘old’ enough that many of our students’ parents grew up in Auroville, and some have grandparents here. For some children, the line goes back even further.

They know that Auroville is different from other cities and towns – they have known from an early age that the purpose of Auroville is to realize Human Unity, but what does this mean to them?

For this project we agreed on the following themes: Vision, History, People, Organization, Work and Activities.

Description of project:

The base for this program is already there: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are our guides and the Charter of Auroville is a frame for our work. Action research, our study and inquiry into how to improve our curriculum at Transition, our methodology and our approach to education in order to help us get closer to the realization of the ideals of Auroville, is central to our work.

When we asked the children what aspects of Auroville they wanted to know more about, they had many questions and thoughts. They want to understand more. We started the year with discussions and ‘wonderings’ in the classrooms. “What is Auroville? Why are we here? What would you like to learn more about?”

To get a direction for the project, classroom discussion was encouraged: What do the children want to know? What do they already know? Some questions were:

- What type of Government does Auroville have?
- How do new communities start?
- Is there a youth community? What does it do?
- Where does the food for Aurovilians come from? Is some of it grown in Auroville? How much and what?
- Why do people say that Auroville is not a religious place, but then there seems to be a religious view of the Mother? It seems that many people look at the Mother in a religious way. I would like to know as it is confusing how spiritual and religious matters work.
- I would like to know about Future plans for Auroville and who makes these plans?
- I would like to know about current problems in Auroville and how they are worked on.

These questions were taken seriously and the students met several Aurovilians to try to get some answers. Some of our outings and activities were:

Visit to exhibition on the Early Days of Auroville (Grades 4-6)

In February, just before the birthday week, we went on a cycle trip to a video art installation about the early days of Auroville, which took place in Kalakendra, Bharat Nivas. The exhibition was entitled “A tribute to the soiled hands and feet”, referring to the pioneers of Auroville. Clips
of video footage from the first couple of decades, from 1968 to the early 90s, were played simultaneously on an assortment of old TV sets. There were also some rare historical images and texts by the Mother displayed. Frederick, who has been in Auroville since the beginning and also happens to be the grandfather of one of our students, talked to the children about the inauguration of Auroville in 1968 and answered their questions about what life was like in the early days. They also saw him as a young man in some of the video footage, as well as some of their parents, and even one of their teachers, Emma, riding a pony through the greenbelt when she was their age. This exhibition was a wonderful way for the children to get better acquainted with Auroville’s history and realize how life was different in the early days and how things have changed since then. They enjoyed it a lot!

Visit to Eternity Beach (Grades 4-6)

We went for an outing to one of the beach communities of Auroville, Eternity. There, Jonah taught the children about the ocean and its eco-system, as well as marine life. We went for a walk on the beach, where the children got to observe different creatures like soft-shelled crabs, sea urchins and clams. They also collected some plastic litter, which they found lying around, to help clean up the beach. They then went for a swim in the sea and had a great time playing in the waves. Later, we had a snack and Jonah talked of his experiences as a diver and different issues such as sea erosion and pollution. It was a great, educational outing. When we were back in school, we watched a beautiful little movie: “The Blue Waters of Pondicherry through the Eyes of Jonah”, which he had filmed during his diving adventures under the sea.

Visits to Forecomers and Ravena (Grade 8)

The eighth grade students went on field trips to Forecomers and Ravena. Many of the students had never been to the Forecomers/Ravena area, which is the largest contiguous stretch of green belt in Auroville and one of the earliest settlements where reforestation work began. The forest stewards, Jaap and Renu, shared their knowledge and enthusiasm with the students. After the trip, students wrote reflections on their experiences and interactions. Here are some of their thoughts:

• “I learned about the water crisis around India, and about dams and bunds to store water.”
• “I didn’t realize how hard it is to distribute water to all the plants.”
• “Jaap has a nursery of about 200 species of plants and 5000 saplings, which he distributes throughout Auroville. He plants TDEF species, which used to thrive before the deforestation.”
• “Renu told us about her struggles with the quality of the soil which results in some of the trees being below average in size. She also told us that she quickly removes dead trees to prevent forest fires.”

Visit to Maroma (Grade 8)

The eighth grade class visited Maroma, where they met Laura and Paul, the executives. Maroma has been operating since 1977, and it has a team of about seventy-five people. The eighth-grade students reflected:

• “I learned that a candle takes three days to make and the mould is refilled five times to get a perfect size.”
• “Maroma has a lab where they test each batch of a product. The researchers have a very important role in Maroma.”
• “Paul told us that sandalwood is the most popular perfume. Incense is Maroma’s most sold product.”
• “We visited a room with a huge machine which is used to make soap. I learnt that Maroma does not use palm oil in its soaps, but 99% of soap producers use palm oil.”

• “It was interesting to learn that Maroma is shifting from using plastic packaging to parchment paper to pack products.”

• “Paul, the founder, started Maroma to make money for Auroville because the ’70s were a difficult time for Aurovilians, and there was a lack of food and money.”

• “I found it interesting that Maroma produces fair-trade products without chemicals.”

By the middle of the year many activities and discussions had made the theme ‘Auroville Our Home’ alive in the classrooms. So the teachers had a workshop to listen to each other and share ideas as to what they had been doing with their students, and ideas on how to develop our project. As our students range in age from 6-14, the teachers made smaller groups according to the age of their students, and brainstormed together.

One of the main outcomes of this discussion was the recognition that the outings, meeting and speaking to Aurovilians in their work places, were not only enjoyable but also made a big impact on the children. They learned not only about the people but in many cases were made more aware of the history of Auroville and the vision behind its origin.

With this in mind, we created reflection slips for the students’ portfolios, and started to keep lists of people and places to visit as well as audiovisual presentations. This is just a beginning and we plan to develop this project further.

Outcomes:

The students expressed their questions and reflections through writing, through artwork and in their personal portfolios. Some of the older students presented poetry by Sri Aurobindo to the whole school. Students from all groups went to the Matrimandir. Some of the teachers made a program that they will try to follow.

Reflections and Conclusion:

What was most meaningful about this project was that the whole school was involved in learning about Auroville, Our Home. The children were enthusiastic and really enjoyed meeting Aurovilians, young and not so young who shared their stories and their enthusiasm with them. The teachers had a lot to share with the students and they also enjoyed and profited from meeting other Aurovilians and hearing about them. This project got the older students thinking about the future of Auroville and their place in it.

This was a year of exploration. Next year, when we continue this project, we will need to meet together more often, share ideas and look for ways to build up the program.
Student Presentations for Learning and Sharing
A project of Transition School

Student presentations are an important part of the work at Transition School. Students of all ages give presentations of some of the work that they have been doing to their parents and to other students in the school. In studying this work, we have a few key questions such as:

- How do student presentations benefit the children who are doing the presentation?
- Do student presentations benefit the audience?
- How can teachers help the students make a good presentation? How can we assess student presentations?

Description of project:

Students from grade 1 through grade 8 were taught and encouraged to present their work to classmates, the students of other classes and to parents. Often, after a group had studied a theme for some time individuals or groups were urged to choose some topic that they would like to explore further and do the research necessary to prepare to give a presentation. Students enjoyed learning more about ‘their topic’ and generally worked hard as they knew that they would be sharing with friends and family. They often made a visual display to make their presentation even more alive.

Through giving presentations children gain in confidence and in their ability to communicate their thoughts. Sometimes the presentations are done in groups and the children learn to act as a team. It is also a chance to challenge and expand on their understanding of the topic by having others ask questions. Presentation skills are likely to be useful in the future.

Presentations in Music (Grades 1-8)

Performances are an integral part of music class from first to eighth grades. Learning to perform in public, both as an individual and as a group is an important skill to be developed. Students should feel challenged and enjoy the experience, yet they should feel safe that they can experience this kind of work without it becoming overwhelming.

The youngest students perform often, and mostly within the presentations of their own classes. Short presentations to parents occur every term, and they frequently follow the theme of projects that they are studying during the year.

At the older levels this is tailored to the needs of the class. Some classes work better in smaller groups, taking on projects in which they choose their own materials, and some prefer to perform as a group and sing songs and repertoire that suit that environment. Within classes, particularly with older children there are often students that play instruments outside the school. We try to encourage such students to come forward, to give them the platform to perform, as well as support the music of their classmates.

Presentations in Grade 1

Poster making after doing research on a project was very popular with this group especially in the last term. We made posters to finalize both the ‘kNOw Plastics’ project as well to the ‘Sun, Moon and Stars’ project. The posters came out beautifully and the children presented the contents to parents and friends at the Open House.
After ‘Sun, Moon and Stars’ we started to explore the Solar System and the children did research about the planets in small groups of 2 or 3. Each child wrote one or two facts on their posters. These were the facts that they were to present. This helped in memorizing and understanding what they had to say.

Some children seem to have a natural knack for remembering their lines and saying them in a natural way. Some children have problems with their nerves: they know what to say but get nervous and ‘blank out’ in front of an audience. Others memorize well but sound like robots when they say their lines. We had a lot of individual practice to take the pressure off. The children also had a practice presentation for their 8th grade buddies.

Powerpoint presentations in Grade 5

This year, the 5th grade students learned how to create a Powerpoint presentation. At the same time that they studied animal and plant collaboration in Science, each child chose one specific kind of collaboration and created their own powerpoint presentation on this topic. Some of the examples of topics were: shark and remora collaboration, fir tree and birch tree collaboration, how social insects like bees collaborate, and the symbiotic relationship of shrimp and goby fish. The students first gave their presentations to the full class and later to their parents. Through this project, the students not only learned about different examples of collaboration in nature and how important collaboration can be for the survival of different species, but also how to convey this information in a way that others can learn.

Presentations in History (Grade 8)

In the eighth grade this year, the students worked on presentations for their history programme. After studying the Renaissance period, the students chose inspiring individuals and then researched their lives. This project developed from their discovery that the term ‘genius’, meaning a person of exceptional intellectual and/or creative power, originated during the Renaissance. Studying the lives of these great luminaries was inspiring for the students. Some of their chosen individuals were: Leonardo da Vinci, Queen Elizabeth I, Michelangelo, Mozart and William Shakespeare. In addition to their research, the students created posters which enhanced their written work with paintings, maps and other visual aids. The students then shared their learning with their classmates by giving oral presentations to the group.

Outcomes:

Teachers observed:

• A growing confidence and self-esteem in children
• Memory skills were worked on
• Respect for self and others was reinforced
• Improved vocabulary and speaking skills
• Students valued the need to cooperate and collaborate
• Different forms of literature and poetry were explored and appreciated by students
• Students tried to write various forms of poetry
• Children and teachers worked together to solve problems. Concentration, cooperation and communication skills were tested and worked on.
• Students were given the opportunity to explore their own strengths
• Additionally, as the children communicate information in simple ways and are helped to keep it interesting, the audience generally concentrates and listens to what is being said and learn from each other.
Deepanam School

Deepanam School strives to apply the principles of Integral Education as described by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This provides the opportunity for a free progress and integral development of both teacher and student. Deepanam was started in 2000 and is presently attended by some 65 students. The school also benefits from a mixed demographic, with students coming from over 15 different countries around the world. This brings a vibrant mix of languages and cultures.

The school program offers standard academic subjects – mathematics, English, sciences and languages (Tamil, French). These subjects are offered as classes throughout the year but also via cross-disciplinary project work, theatre, field trips and applied work experience. Equal importance is given to other areas: visual arts (drawing, painting, craft, clay); performing arts (singing, theatre); physical education (daily Dehashakti sports program, Capoeira, yoga); vital education (Awareness Through the Body, communication skills, mindfulness and meditation); and nature (gardening, food growing, cooking).

Activities of the year:

Light group (7 and 8 years old)

This year our class worked on different subjects including English, maths, clay, crafts, painting, ATB and singing. We worked on a few science experiments with projects on light and food. Through the latter project we also looked at world geography and culture. We did a project on Auroville where we learnt about its history, went on field trips and interviewed elder Aurovilans.

Teachers guided children to work on faculties such as concentration, perseverance, imagination and practising fine motor skills through arts and crafts. Children created origami flowers, animals and insects with waste materials. They put their imagination on paper with crayons, poster paint and water colours.

The children learned to recite Sanskrit shlokas, and learned Tamil through songs and rhymes. Linking the food project with Tamil language has resulted in knowing the Tamil names of fruits, vegetables and plants. We hope to bring more Sanskrit next year.

Along with presentations, open houses and cultural programs, our highlight for this year was a weekly cooking class and involvement of parents for the food project presentation. Parents prepared a dish from their country and spoke to the children about the continent and the nation.
Peace group (9 and 10 years old)

We started the year with narrating mythology stories to the children every week in the morning circle. They also came up with the idea that each one of them could share a story with the class. This made them comfortable taking in the group and many of them opened up and became confident.

In the first term we decided to work on the quality ‘Mindfulness’ as a whole school. We started and ended the classes with a minute of silence.

We did a project on Plants. The children prepared the garden beds near the classroom and planted a few seeds to see the life cycle of the plant. We visited different farms of Auroville including AuroOrchard, Annapurna and Solitude Farm. This inspired the children to learn about local plants and food along with the plant cycle. We included cooking classes: learning local recipes and using millets and different greens. We also visited the local vegetable market in Pondicherry. The topic continued in Science class, learning about the water cycle. The students learned how to take measurements with a rain gauge and make a bar chart measuring and recording rain water.

Another project this year was on Feelings. This project was to help them understand their feelings and others’ and communicate with each other. It started with different activities exploring their senses and working in pairs. Painting was included as a tool on different topics with selected themes and colors. We started by sitting in a circle, sharing poem on the topic of that week which helped them to create their paintings and from that children made their own poems for each topic. Children came up with beautiful poems in this process.

We did a life science project on amphibians, had regular bird watching and then visited Ousteri Lake.

Grace group (11 and 12 years old)

Owing to an increase in numbers of students at the school, Grace group was created this year and included 15 students.

This year an experiment was conducted by dividing the curriculum into units of study focused on learning one particular topic in depth for between two to six weeks. It was greatly beneficial as students did not have to move from one subject to another every 45 minutes, and learning could continue uninterrupted for longer blocks of time, intensively over several weeks. Children retained more and got a deeper understanding of the subject matter. It allowed for more integrated learning with hands-on application. In some ways, the teacher could cover a greater variety of subjects throughout the year without the need to recruit subject teachers, when the schools are struggling to find committed people.

Subjects offered in Grace group were: English, maths, Tamil, French, science, history, geography, nature study and gardening, and life science. Other activities included crafts, origami and painting. Workshops included creating a design for the Garden of the Unexpected (one of the Matrimandir gardens), body percussion, Tango, photography and woodwork.

The main theme of this year was to take literature as a central theme and branch out, connecting other subjects, skills, and values. The first book we read was a novel – Wonder by Patricia Polacco. It is a story about a ten-year-old, homeschooled boy named August, who has a severe facial deformity, who enters a fifth grade and attends mainstream school for the first time. The book touches values like friendship, kindness, courage and teaches that inner beauty is more important than physical beauty.

In the month of August, our special theme was Sri Aurobindo. We read parts of Sri Aurobindo: The Story of His Life. Children were very inspired by young Aurobindo’s sincerity and courage. Continuing with our theme of the life of Sri Aurobindo, we visited Savitri Bhavan for a session of listening to the tale of Savitri with Shraddhavan. We made a timeline of key events of Sri Aurobindo’s life. We also learned some of Sri Aurobindo’s short poems.

At the beginning of the second term we read the fable Dolphin: The Story of the Dreamer by
Sergio Bambaren. It is a very inspiring fable about being brave, overcoming fears, pushing personal limits and following dreams. Following the theme of dolphins, children did a research project and produced a booklet on the topic, using the non-fiction text features they had learned in their English class.

Connecting with literature we studied the five oceans, oceanic zones, coral reefs, features of the ocean floor and ocean life. We also did some collaborative artwork of a coral reef and made a model of the ocean floor. This brought us onto the subject of ecology. We learned about ecosystems, the biotic factors, water cycle, the composition of air, layers of soil and layers of the atmosphere. We studied the Mangrove coastal ecosystem and went on a class field trip to Pichavaram, which is the second largest mangrove forest in the world. We measured the temperature, salinity of water, and noted the biodiversity.

The fourth book we read together was *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien. We studied the fantasy genre and its elements and also the stages of the hero’s journey which is an archetypal story pattern, common in ancient myths as well as modern-day adventures. Apart from novel studies, we learned the elements of a story such as character, conflict, setting, point of view and plot.

**Theatre performances:**

In Deepanam, much importance is given to theatre performances. Teachers consistently observe how powerful theatre is in building self-esteem, creativity, imagination and group dynamics. Theatre productions have helped reveal hidden talents and to shed the inhibitions associated with being on the stage. The year was punctuated with several performances from Grace group: the recitation of poems, the presentation of projects in school assembly; dance during Christmas talent show, performance of class play “The Hobbit” and finishing with our annual cultural programme.

The journey of the play began with reading the book in our literature class. It opened doors to the fantasy world of wizards, trolls, dwarfs, elves, hobbits, dragons, etc. We listened to songs and one particular song “Misty Mountains” called us on to enact the play and join Bilbo’s adventure. During the Christmas holidays, children painted the backdrop and props were prepared with the help of teachers in craft classes. The play was staged for parents and community and it was well received.

**S.T.E.A.M. Studies:**

We took an integrated approach to studying STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics). This approach encourages the child to think creatively, solve problems and be innovative. First, the topic of simple machines was introduced and we did some experiments in the virtual lab. After completing an online Exploratorium course on motions and mechanisms, students made a cardboard automaton using axle, cam and cam follower. Each automaton was
unique and had a character and a story to narrate. Students also explored marble run activities from Exploratorium (making a creative ball-run contraption, from familiar materials, designed to send a rolling marble through tubes and funnels, across tracks and bumpers, and into a catch at the end). Following research into Rube Goldberg, children were very inspired by his machines and designed their own with various functions such as: popping a balloon, watering a plant, and throwing a bottle in a bin. There were lot of trials and errors, but ultimately it was a lot of fun and it opened doors to creative thinking.

**Gingee trip to the mountain:**

Towards the end of the school year, Grace group went on an overnight trip to Gingee seeking adventure and finding an experience in pushing one’s own limits. The start of the trek was a very steep climb, full of boulders and very little vegetation. The bags we carried slowed us down, not because they contained food or clothes or books but the most essential thing for us to survive: 3 liters of water each!

The first hurdle was almost crossed when some children started to give up. Thankfully our team included ATB teachers who talked and supported the children to carry on. After an hour or so of walking, we came to the foot of another hill on top of which we were to spend the night. The distance looked short but we soon realized that it was the most difficult climb. There were very narrow paths among boulders where only one person could go at a time. Here the children showed a lot of care for their fellow mates. We cooked and ate had a session of stories and slept under the stars. There was not a single word of complaint and the trip brought out the best in each child and also they bonded with their classmates.

**A night out at Botanical Gardens:**

Stories play a vital role in the growth and development of children. Listening to stories helps children to develop listening skills, encourages creativity and imagination and improves communication skills by learning the art of asking the right question. We went to the Botanical Gardens for a story session around the bonfire and star gazing activity.

**A night out at AuroOrchard:**

To supplement our study of soil we went to AuroOrchard. We learned the history of the farm, learned about layers of soil, had a story session around the fire in the evening, and slept under a banyan tree. Next morning we helped to harvest lemons and collect mulch in bags.

**Faith group (11 to 14 years old)**

This year Faith group included 14 students. Besides studying regular subjects (maths, physics, chemistry, biology, French, Tamil and English), the focus this year was on creativity and team building. The students were given more hours to pursue their subject interests in the form of electives.

**Anthropology:**

We were very fortunate to have Dr. Thanuja among us this year, to introduce the subject of Anthropology at the middle school level. It helped students understand different cultures and history from a new perspective. Being in Auroville, there is great cultural diversity within the classroom. The students learnt to be curious and appreciate each other’s cultures. The elements studied included varied topics: prehistory, history, archive information, epigraphy and oral history, greetings and gestures in different culture-languages, kinship and family, geography and environment and fieldwork.
The field work was carried out in Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala. It is a protected forest with rich diversity in flora and fauna and notably, is home to two indigenous groups, the Muthuvans, and Hill Pulayas. Additionally, the area is home to important archaeological sites: dolmens and rock art.

Objectives that we fulfilled during our trip were:

- Learning about the forests, water bodies, and fauna of the tribe areas (Muthuvans/Hill Pulayas).
- Preparing question schedules for an interview on understanding cultural aspects and environment.
- Learning about archaeological remains such as the dolmens and rock paintings.
- Reconstructing a settlement map.
- Debriefing post fieldwork, listing and sorting all that we had understood.
- Framing content of a book and writing. Finally publishing.

The ultimate achievement of the trip was inculcating a sense of value and respect for humanity, its cultures and the environment.

Photography:

“The camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.” Inspired by this quote, the students of Faith group began their Genius Hour in school by learning to observe what’s around them before picking up a camera to shoot.

In the first two terms of the year, we focused on cultivating the art of observation and seeing a picture without a camera. We began by observing nature, seeing the same surroundings with a fresh pair of eyes every week and discovering something new. We explored black & white photography, light and shade, learned about different composition techniques, textures and details, geometric lines and then moved on to the technical bits about shooting in Manual Mode and photo editing in the last term.

The group was enthusiastic and some really progressed and refined their art through creative compositions and innovative concepts. Some, who had never held a professional camera before, learned quickly and created beautiful memories for themselves in the form of a personalized Photo Calendar.

The group learned to work with the big constraint of being in and around the same campus week after week, yet managing to find the extraordinary in the ordinary.

“Kaleidoscope”, the monthly magazine published by the Faith group students, was a platform to showcase their talent. With a regular Gallery section in the magazine to feature photographs, the group of students were motivated to click photos through the week and not wait for the weekly sessions. They learned to collaborate by understanding what the editorial team is looking for and contribute photographs for articles and the magazine cover. We enjoyed visiting a few restaurants to do food photography and compose shots to suit the cover story. All of us used to look forward to the magazine so much and see how the photographs turned out.

The magazine was an integral part of the photography sessions and brought in a sense of purpose to our learning and exploration.

The class teacher felt that the group would receive so much more encouragement if the work was presented and shared with the larger community. The students were excited to get an opportunity to exhibit their photos at Pitanga for two weeks in April – that was like the grand finalé!

“Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes” – theatrical direction and performance:

Students of Faith group became intrigued by the story of “Sadako and Thousand Paper
Cranes” while folding paper cranes in their Origami class. This inspired them to perform the play adapted by Kathryn Miller. Most importantly, one of the students took up the task of directing the play. It was ambitious and required great teamwork to make it to the stage. It was entirely owned by the students and teachers kept the role of backup facilitators. It was deep and enthralling performance, well appreciated by the community. It brought tears to the eyes of many. They learned about human conflict, death, perseverance and faith.

Craft:

In craft class, students learned different embroidery stitches, and how to embroider with pearls and sequins. With these works, they decided to stitch cushion covers and small bags.

Students learned the technique of tie-dye and visited Auroville’s unit, The Colors of Nature to learn about natural dyeing with indigo. They brought their tie-dyes and got them dyed in indigo. Back at school, they made scarves with them, applying different embroidery techniques.

Four students participated in the 2019 Auroville Trashion Show, which occurred at the beginning of February 2019. This year, they had to use only trash that had already had a previous life. They collected the pieces at Eco Service, cleaned them and transformed them into outfits. They proudly strutted the catwalk in their trashion creations!

Outcomes:

Overall outcomes of Deepanam School this year:

• Differentiated, in-depth and cohesive learning programs aligned with the integral education principles of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo;

• Help in identifying one’s own strengths and interests;

• A rich and inclusive learning environment responsive to the needs and interests of each individual student;

• Teachers committed to the harmonious development of the personality (their own and students), and improving student outcomes through ongoing personal professional growth, coaching and mentoring;

• Opportunities for community and parents to participate in learning and decision making processes.

Reflections:

This year the Deepanam team came together for visioning and planning for the future by doing a workshop with Leena and Sheeba. Our vision:

To empower students to acquire, demonstrate, articulate and value knowledge and skills that will support them as life-long learners; to participate in and contribute to the global world and to the growth and the development of the community; to practise the core values expressed in the Auroville charter.

Conclusion:

Next year, our plans include:

1. Curriculum designed to better integrate Auroville as a part of the learning process.

2. Team building activities that involve the whole school, to promote harmony among students.

3. Developing critical thinking skills by doing more STEM (Science, Technology, Mathematics, Engineering) related activities.
Auroville through the Teens’ eyes and words
A project of Deepanam School

The intention of this project was to offer activity-based learning experiences, also know as Problem Based Learning, where the students are put in a situation very close to the reality of a project and/or a situation that they have to solve or carry out. The whole process requires them to dig into the skills they already have as well as developing new ones in order to achieve the target.

This project was articulated around three main activities: a regular monthly magazine, a book compiling text by the students, and a play according to their own words. All activities were done by the 14 students of the Faith group (ages 11 to 14 years old) of Deepanam School.

“Kaleidoscope: The various hues of Deepanam”, a monthly magazine

After a rather slow start over July and August, the first issue of Kaleidoscope was printed in the early days of September. As it was a brand new project, lots of things needed attention. The students had first to choose the format with which they wanted to work, from a school ‘newsletter’ to a full feature ‘magazine’, passing through a larger ‘newspaper’ format. This in itself generated lots of discussion, argumentations and team meetings. Finally the decision came and was unanimous: a Magazine it would be. Therefore a name had to be found and this was another lengthy process that nearly antagonised the group and resulted in lots of debates and brainstormings, which were rather new activities to them. But finally, using an anonymous value voting system where they had to not only choose one and only one name but their top three choices, therefore accepting that any of the chosen names would be acceptable to them, an unanimous decision got taken there too “Kaleidoscope” is the name they chose

Once the format and the name were fully validated and accepted, the actual making of the magazine started. The students had to define all the required roles they would have to fill up in order to come up with the final product. From Editors to Illustrators, through to Page Makers, Photographers and obviously Writers. To support them we visited the News & Notes office so that the kids could be exposed to the making of it and understand all the work required. It was a great experience for them and Sabine was generous to open her doors to us like she did, going as far as offering Faith group the opportunity to design the next News & Notes cover, which they did.

Once the affairs started there was no going back, and slowly but surely the students got to understand a little better every time the full process they had to undergo. The first issue of Kaleidoscope came out in early September and number 8 was handed out to them on Graduation Day, 26 April 2019. Overall more than 200 pages were printed, more than 100,000 words written, 100 drawings, many photographs.

One can see it all here: https://issuu.com/faithclass

NaNoWriMo, a November writing challenge that extended to the Third term too

The second part of this project with Faith group was to come up with a book by the end of the school year. Mahavir found out about the writing challenge called “National Novel Writing Month” (NaNoWriMo); we looked at it thoroughly and with great apprehension. We found out that they were running a “Young Writers’ Program”, which seemed highly promising, with a strong pedagogical framework that seduced us, we were growing more and more excited, so we agreed to give it a chance.

After a tepid, if not cold reception by Faith group, things got wild and they did participate in a
very unexpected commitment and motivation. They had to write and write and write, during the month of November. They even wrote about their experience in the Kaleidoscope of December. It was thrilling to observe the word counter slowly but surely increasing. When we say they wrote a lot, we are serious: more than 200,000 words collectively, across fourteen short to medium sized Novels.

While it contained a lot of ‘hits and misses’, ‘highs and lows’, overall we were quite impressed by the deliveries. Some of these students had barely any experience in writing ‘long distance’ in a language which, if not fully foreign to them, remains nevertheless just a second language. The result is here, it exist, it is tangible and for this we are grateful to these fourteen individuals who have enjoyed the NaNoWriMo ride with us, to the point that most of them are looking forward to go at it again this coming November.

“Sadako and the thousand paper cranes”, the first student-only production at Deepanam

The students of Faith group were fascinated by the story of “Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes”, a book they all read in class; while folding paper cranes in their Origami Class with Tomoko they also made an effort to finish making their own thousand paper cranes. This inspired them to perform the play from the adaptation by Kathryn Miller, which they heavily rewrote to adapt to their group.

Most importantly, one of the students took up the challenge of directing the play. It was ambitious and required great teamwork to make it to the stage. Eventually, it was entirely owned by the students and teachers were just facilitators to help them with props and stage settings.

All the hard work came to fruition as it was an enthralling performance and well appreciated by the community. It brought tears to the eyes of many. They learned important life skills of patience, perseverance, and tolerance while preparing for the performance.

Outcomes:

Aside from the tangible outcomes of 8 magazines, 1 book and 1 play, the group dynamic has increased tremendously. It was not easy at first and tensions were often experienced but eventually the ‘greater good’ got the best of them and collaboration did happen.

A problem-solving attitude appeared and most of the students if not all of them began to search for solutions before even finding excuses for not making something. That is, we think, one very important step towards free progress.

A sense of pride developed and students’ self-esteem went up as well.

General progression in terms of writing English can be noticed too. The skills came as they were required during the process.

As summarised by Bhakti, when Faith group was facing some great difficulties for the making up of the Play and some students were quite close to giving up: “In Deepanam, everything is possible!”. This motto got adopted and we hope it will stay with them in their future endeavors and within the school for the future students.

Reflections:

We are proud of what this team has achieved, though this is nothing in comparison to how important we think it is that they feel proud of themselves for what they achieved. We are grateful to so many people, including all Deepanam teachers and staff for their constant support, the students’ parents, SAIIER, and the kids themselves for having responded so well to our crazy call.

It was indeed quite a lot of work to achieve all this, both for the teachers and for the students. But it was the type of work that inspires and motivates; this is the type of work we want more and more of.
Through the continuity of the work during the year, not only can we see and assess the progress, but they can do so too and that is quite a major thing.

The students surprised us with their freshness, their ability to come up with their very own and unique responses. That we value a lot too.

**Conclusion:**

To conclude around Kaleidoscope, NaNoWriMo and Sadako, we have to come back to what we intended to achieve through these three projects: to bring in our students the deeper understanding of responsibility, through respect of deadlines; creative and collaborative work, both within and out of the school; to create in the students an openness and an understanding towards other perspectives and ideas on a similar subject; to develop their ability to raise and articulate their voice with the inclusion of as much consciousness as possible; to give them the perspective on working on tight scheduling with the monthly commitment, as well as the perspective of a medium to long term project with the book and the play; to make them aware that through team work and thorough engagement one can do pretty much anything and that the Universe will conspire to make it happen; to encourage them to create connections and bonds with the different Units in Auroville that could be helpful and/or interested by the project; to keep improving their command of the English language through all activities related to the making of the magazine, the play, and the book. In order to assess our success regarding all the points above, we had the students fill up a survey. Reading through the students’ answers shows us how they made their own assessment, and as we gave them the steering wheel for most of the year, we do want to give them the concluding words too.

- “I have learnt how to co-operate with other people. I have learnt that working with a deadline is hard at times but it is not so bad... Kaleidoscope should stay in the curriculum as well as NaNoWriMo, it definitely prepared us for the future as well as opening our writing capabilities.”
- “I don’t really know what I have learnt though I feel like I have. Maybe the responsibility to finish something and submit it. I also feel that my grammar and vocabulary has grown tremendously.”
- “They all are good ways to learn responsibilities, as well as spelling and grammar, and all in a fun way and that is good for the brain.”
- “They were all real fun experiences, and I have stopped wasting my time.”
- “I improved my grammar a lot...”
- “I definitely learnt how to cooperate with people, to work for a common goal.”
- “Kaleidoscope and NaNoWriMo should definitely stay in the curriculum, it is arguably the best part of it... I learnt how to write as well as to Photograph and be proud of it all.”
- “I learnt a lot about English, about cooperating with others and finishing work before the deadline... Also, if everybody was a little more cooperative and responsible it would make the work of the editors all the easier.”
- “I learnt a lot about leadership and deadlines as well as taking more risks. I got a lot of creative freedom which helped a lot. It helped me take studying a lot more seriously – to study for the sake of studying and not towards some tests.”

When all is said and done, we’ll still have our Kaleidoscopes, Book, and Video of the play. (https://issuu.com/faithclass)
Educational research at TLC

Educational research is at the core of our work in TLC, as we strive to find ways to implement Integral Education. Each year, different areas have been given more focus, and in this way the methodology and curriculum have evolved over the years. A philosophy of education with so much depth, as described by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, will require a long and conscious journey.

Last year we experienced a need to start documenting our research more formally. For the coming year we are putting in place a research team to hold this documentation, and look forward to sharing our findings and observations in a more systematic way.

This year we explored two central areas for research and development:

1. **How to develop a Free Progress Methodology based on the Three Principles of True Teaching**

   Our method of working is fully guided by the three principles. It is becoming clearer each year how to offer this approach to the children. Some essentials in implementing the three principles that have emerged from our research since the creation of TLC are: individualised curriculum for each child, uninterrupted time to develop concentration, individual pace of work, learning by doing, materials and experience to offer Aha! moments, the need for a thread from pregnancy to adolescence. Weekly planning and reflection is also used as a tool to help the children to get to know themselves, for their personal development – their learning styles, time management, their strengths, needs and challenges.

2. **How to offer a Curriculum through which the children can develop their Faculties of Consciousness**

   When creating a system of education that is not based on the teaching of content but on the development of faculties, we need to reflect deeply on what this really means in practice. Our curriculum is constantly evolving from the curiosity of what consciousness is, and how we can support the children to connect to their consciousness by developing their faculties (vital, thinking, seeing, hearing, speaking and the body). Some examples of ways that we offer this to the children are: sensory learning in all areas of study through nature exploration, cooking, baking, gardening, travelling, stories, Montessori maths materials,
much more, as well as using Auroville and all its opportunities. The children are in a constant loop of reflection and planning, setting up their own goals, guided by the facilitators.

As a part of developing the collective consciousness we offer: weekly community gathering which involves the children in decision making, Ubuntu sessions, Awareness Through the Body, daily service (we clean and care for our spaces together with the children, and each one washes his/her own dishes – we have no hired help because we see care for one’s physical environment as a part of the educational journey). From next year we will be working closely with the Restorative Auroville team, who will train children, parents and facilitators in compassionate communication (NVC).

**Small groups and individual one-to-one sessions**

When working with the three principles of True Teaching, we need to meet each child where they are at. We believe in a school for all, where we are willing to work with any child, and see how we can provide for the individual needs of the child. Over the years many children with more complex special needs have joined TLC, needing a very individually designed and flexible program.

Last year we received funding from a foreign donor to support this individualised approach, to be able to accommodate and meet the needs of these children. This has enabled us to provide one-to-one sessions for the students who are in need.

We use an online comprehensive ‘learn to read’ program to which we subscribe on a monthly basis for some children who have reading challenges. The program provides an engaging methodology through self pacing lessons with songs, games and visuals which invites them to keep on learning and tackle those reading challenges bit by bit. Combined with the writing and reading materials this has been shown to be a real help for progress, while still enabling the children to work at their own pace and ability, and is fluently integrated in our way of working. We are also working in one-to-one sessions with math materials which are designed to bring out a better number sense in the student. Through interactive games and activities the student discovers at his/her own pace what numbers are about in real life and from there slowly moves on to the more abstract learning. The one-to-one also allows the flexibility that these children need, with movement and flow, following their rhythm and combining hands on activities like gardening, animal care, cooking, or being in nature.
Development of our independent learning spaces

TLC is constantly evolving, and each passing year points us in the direction of deepening for the coming year. The principle ‘work from the near to the far’, points out the importance of using that which is alive and of interest to the child as an entry point for learning opportunities. When working from the near to the far the child becomes motivated, and with that comes engagement, focus, perseverance, joy, curiosity, and much more.

The children in TLC had requested more opportunities to deepen in the field of science. As we had very limited materials and books in this area, we decided to start to build up our resources to create a learning environment for such exploration. We have been working on this for the past year and a half. Preparing such an environment is a huge work, both because there are many different areas of study (geography, history, biology, chemistry, physics, environmental studies, garbology, mathematics, and much more), and the resources available need to cater to so many different levels, from children with early reading and writing skills, to more advanced levels. The children using the environment are now 8-12 years old, but the aim is to cover the span 7-14.

One of our buildings was underused, so we decided to create the new science learning environment here. The children chose to call the building “The Lab”. The task of building up this environment from scratch was (is) huge, we needed to do it systematically, and in a way that it enables the children to use it before the setup is fully completed (which will take us a few years). The building in which The Lab is taking form, is a roofed open building. The challenges that come with an open building (monsoon rains, dust from the roads, leaves from the trees, dogs, scorpions and snakes) is a daily challenge. Now we have made an attempt to close off the most open sides of The Lab with fishing net to keep the animals out. But as we develop the environment we will need to get cupboards to store the educational resources, as well as some stage to enclose the building to protect from the weather.

Inspired by learning through stories that awaken a curiosity and link areas of study to become an interdisciplinary exploration, we decided to build up the environment around three great stories. The first story is the story of our universe, from the Big Bang to the formation of our Earth and Solar System. The second great story is the story of evolution of life on Earth. The third great story is the story of humankind, which takes us from past history, to present reality and finally to the future (where Auroville really is a living example for the children of change and what is needed to bring it).

This past year we have collected and created educational resources for The Great Story of the Universe and Earth. This includes material on:

- Astronomy: solar system, stars, galaxies, comets, constellations
- Meteorology: wind, currents, weather, fronts, erosion, water cycle, clouds, glaciers
- Chemistry: states of matter, changes, mixtures, reactions, elements, atoms, periodic table, compounds, molecules, chemical formulas, equations, lab work, experimentation
- Physics: magnetism, electricity, gravity, energy, light, sound, heat, friction, motion, experimentation
- Geology: types of rocks, minerals, land forms, volcanoes, earthquakes, plate tectonics, ice ages, eras of the earth
- Geography: maps, globes, latitude/longitude, climates, land/water form names, continent and country research
- Mathematics: most areas ready for children up to age 12/13

The children are using the environment every day, and the atmosphere of activity and concentration that is evolving is beautiful. It shows the need that the children had for this work, and how the environment is starting to meet those needs. When buying or creating materials we try to provide those through which the children can discover something themselves and experience Aha!
moments. All materials are created and presented in a way so that each child can work at her/his own pace. The setup offers a self-directed and child-led learning, with small group or individual facilitated lessons when introducing new areas.

**TLC Kitchen**

Since TLC’s conception 10 years ago, we have been aiming at including the kitchen and cooking in our educational journey. We have witnessed that when children are involved in the harvest and cooking of their own meal, they are more open and curious to taste the less-known vegetables, millets and dishes available in our area. We see the connection to our food and where it comes from as an important part of the Integral Education that we are striving to implement in TLC.

This academic year TLC moved away from receiving lunches from Auroville’s Solar Kitchen and instead approached several of Auroville’s eateries with a request to supply our children and adult team with affordable, simple lunches, with the priority being the use of organic and locally grown produce. We began this pilot by receiving meals from 4 Auroville eateries who were willing and able to comply with these parameters, as well as one day a week where a team of parents cooked lunch in TLC’s base camp. The pilot was a success and saw children eager to eat and try new menus.

After the initial trial, we decided to reduce the number of lunches provided by outside sources and increase the number of cooking days in Base Camp. With a team of 3 permanent and dedicated people, we began to cook 3 days a week. In addition to the adult team, all the children have been involved on a rotational basis in the preparation of snack every day, and lunch on the 3 cooking days. Each day 2 children have had ‘cooking service’ and have worked in the kitchen preparing the food for the rest of the community. This has been a great success and we have witnessed how the children have taken immense pride in their involvement and in their abilities to offer food to the other children and adults. It has been a continuation of the work we have started in our ‘daily service slot’ where adults and children work in base camp to clean and maintain the learning spaces and the garden. Service in the kitchen is a natural extension of this work.

We continue to work toward refining and deepening the project – to introduce even more local and seasonal fruits, vegetables and grains and to expose the children to local preparations and spices. Next year we will be cooking 4 days a week with the children, and have a team in place to help develop our kitchen gardens.

**Our Long Field Trips this year: Rajasthan and Goa**

A reflection from one of the participating facilitators on the way home from Rajasthan...
“We have boarded the train bound for Jaipur. This part of the endless journey is slowly approaching its inevitable end. It has been a pilgrimage into ourselves. An initiation, a deepening, above all it has been an absolute honour to spend time with these amazing children and adults. To observe the kids, support them when needed, and whenever possible to encourage their freedom and their path to discovering themselves. We have had the challenge of quite some illness, a bout of “Rajasthani fever” washed over our little group like a rolling wave, sparing very few along its course and leaving us as TCC (the coughing community). Physical conditions were not always the easiest, but the open hearts and amazingly warm reception received wherever we went, made the physical challenges fade into the background as we were invited for yet another delicious meal into yet another sumptuous Rajasthani home. Camels, jeeps, tractors, colourful bazaars, sleeping under the stars, it’s been a journey through many sandy arenas. For me, this trip has served to further strengthen my resolve to continue on the path of never ending learning, and has once again reinforced my conviction that deep learning occurs when we step out of our comfort zones, when we step back and allow life to steer, and above all, when we are driven by love and care. I thank you from the depths of my heart for the trust you have shown by entrusting your beautiful children into our hands for these 2 weeks. I feel humbled and awed by all of you. With much love and gratitude.”

“Open Spaces” in Base Camp

On Friday afternoons we have opened Base Camp to the wider community, beginning at 12:30 with a potluck lunch, followed by our “Open Spaces” activities until 3:00pm. These are various activities including art, craft, gardening, carpentry, outdoor games, dance, board games, carving, lego, to name but a few. Open Spaces are open to all Aurovillian, Newcomer and Guest children of all ages, with the aim of bridging between children of all schools, nationalities and ages.

A sharing from a facilitator in the workshop space:

When I first heard of TLC, my children were not born and yet I knew right away, that’s the ‘school’ I want them to go to. I never had a doubt about that. My passion (not my profession) is sewing. I learned and taught myself sewing over the years and I love working with the materials, being creative and always learning new methods and tricks. I am also passionate about upcycling and recycling and those are the passions I wanted to share.

So when I joined TLC about 2.5 years ago, it was clear to me that that should be my participation. Sewing is for me a very meditative activity which requires a lot of concentration. So when I started I didn’t really know how to go about it. The first year I joined I was given a task of creating bags for the children so they could keep and transport their books and material from one space to the other. We had plenty of old folders and so I created the ‘folder bag’ Each child brought their own fabrics and they created their own beautiful upcycling bags.

Then we had many small projects, the older children often came with their own ideas and I supported them when they needed help. The younger ones started sewing simple bags, small pillows etc. Then one day a child asked if they could sew a bear. So I needed a pattern. I found an old book I had used years ago with beautiful patterns which I then printed out and created sheets with easy explanation so the children could work as independently as possible. I asked of each child to first master hand sewing before trying out the sewing machine. I thought all of this would be much too difficult for them and they would quickly give up, as I knew how challenging it was for myself! But to my big surprise the children became so passionate about these stuffed animals, cats, dogs, giraffes and co. they created. At first I had to help a lot, with putting the needle in the thread, correcting mistakes all the time, making knots etc... but very soon I noticed they were asking less and less help and now they only come once in a while for help and work very independently, highly concentrated which creates a quiet and beautiful atmosphere.
The most beautiful part is to see the joy on their faces and how proud they are of what they have achieved. The parent of a young boy told me that her son is looking forward every week to his workshop day, and nothing makes me more happy to see and hear that my passion has jumped over.

Looking toward the future: TLC Crèche/Kindergarten

As much as we feel that we are taking many steps forward in the work we are doing with the children, we experience a gap. The gap shown itself in several ways:

• When we start working with children of age 6/7, it is challenging to work with Sri Aurobindo’s principles of education. We realise that his theories of education are fully based on the child getting what they need at each specific stage in their development. If the needs in the stages of development of a child have not been met, it proves itself very difficult to implement the principles at a later stage, as development and ability/skills are then not in sync.

• Many parents are afraid to take the step of a new way of education for their children. Therefore there is not a full trust in the emergence of a new way of education, and parents fall back on comparison and see a traditional method of education as a safety net for their child. This causes a lot of confusion for the child, and some parents choose to put their children in a more traditional system of schooling half way through TLC. To bridge this gap we see that we need to start working with parents already during pregnancy, and children from when they are in their early formative years. This year we have been exploring the possibility to expand TLC to also include pregnancy and the ages 0-7.

• This year we prepared an environment for toddlers on our campus, with the help of parents’ work, input and donations. For next year we will offer this space to be used for an Integral Education program for Toddler parents, as a start in creating this thread from birth to adolescence in TLC. Eventually from this we would like to develop a crèche/kindergarten in TLC in 2020 or in 2021.
Last School

A Secondary & Higher Secondary level school facility, Last School is unique in following the “Free Progress” approach: inviting the students to progressively define their own program of development. This approach has a demonstrable structuring effect on their personality and increases their autonomy, self-confidence and capacity of innovation. The school offers a curriculum designed to develop each child integrally through their mental, vital, physical and, when possible, in their psychic & spiritual beings.

The teachers assist the students in finding what they truly are and want to become, and to build in themselves a rich multifaceted personality, through a great variety of learning activities.

Approach and curriculum:

The program of Last School includes literature, art in all its forms, social sciences, natural sciences, philosophy, mathematics, physics & chemistry, languages, film editing, 3D modelling. Physical education is very much insisted upon as well as extra-curricular activities such as dance, music, theater, trekking, so that all the parts of the being are awakened and developed.

Art is an important component of the program having in it a triple objective: first, to refine the being and give to it a sense of beauty in everything, second, as an exercise of concentration and focus, and third as an opportunity to develop the capacity to work with matter and to make it a conscious expression of beauty.

Mathematics and sciences are approached to sharpen the analytical mind and awaken the intellectual integrity embedded in scientific methods.

Literature and language are used to develop the capacity to think and express oneself, whether in writing or orally, and to touch some of the most essential questions of human life and condition.

No subject is an end in itself but all serve as a means by which to address and develop diverse parts of the being.

Students are encouraged to involve themselves in the management and care of the school as well as in the different activities of the community as a field of hands-on and experiential learning.

The evaluation of the year is undertaken individually with each of the students with a focus on the way they have progressed, not only academically but also as human beings, the priority in the school being openness and sincerity.

Highlights of the year:

We had 39 full time students during the year. In addition, courses have been offered to young Aurovilians and adults on Indian Culture and Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. Moreover, the Art Center is being used by students who are part of other Auroville schools’ programs. Some adults also come to study Sanskrit.

Included or completing the regular and intense work in the routine of the school timetable, here are some the highlights of the year:

• We start every day with an assembly in a concentrated silence.
• Art workshops take place at the start of each semester, in which everyone, students and teachers, work intensively together for 5 to 10 days, concluding with a presentation and display of the work. In addition this year glasswork was offered by Robert L’Heureux at his workshop.
• As in previous years, some students also participated in different intensive cultural programs happening in Auroville such as the Ultimate Frisbee tournament, dance and music performances.

• This year the variety of languages proposed increased to 10: English, French, Tamil, Sanskrit, Hindi, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese.

• A Debate Club was started by some students, who met each Friday afternoon to explore together how to debate while maintaining calm and intellectual integrity.

• Projects for the community at large were taken up by several students in film editing and art: such as documentaries, short films and decorative installation projects.

Reflections on this year:
This year, the students were involved in taking care of their school, intensely at the beginning and the end, e.g. cleaning and waxing the floors, painting the walls, scrubbing furniture, etc.

For some of our students, it was a year of deepening and increased responsibility in and out of school.

Ten students have concluded their time in Last School, moving on within Auroville or away for further studies.

Some of the students increased their involvement in the school, thus becoming a point of reference for the younger ones.
Future School

Future School seeks to provide an environment in which Auroville youth and those dedicated to their education may reach their own unique potential through a balanced development of body, mind, emotion and spirit. Inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the school aspires to create a platform for self-discovery. Students are encouraged to follow a value-oriented approach to life in which they have an opportunity to create a deeper understanding of their responsibility to self, community and the world.

The school reflects the international character of Auroville, bringing together students and teachers from many different nationalities, cultures and ethnic backgrounds in a spirit of openness and harmony. The diversity of the school community creates a very special opportunity to be immersed in a rich and positive sharing of experiences.

While offering the opportunity for a variety of choices, the school seeks to balance independence and freedom on one hand, with respect and responsibility on the other. Students are supported in an interactive and open communication environment. At the same time they are encouraged to be aware of their choices and to forge their own path for their growth and progress.

We hope that this environment and the educational program will help the students to become self-aware, self-motivated and self-controlled.

School program and activities:

Future School offers a high school equivalent education to primarily Aurovillian students. This year there were 57 adolescents/young adults from 21 nationalities enrolled in the school.

We offer a wide range of subjects to our students: Languages – English (with Literature option at A-level), French and German; Mathematics; Pure Sciences – Physics, Chemistry, Biology; Social Sciences – History, Geography, Economics, Psychology, Global Citizenship; BTech in Sports; and extra-curricular subjects such as Information Communication Technology, Photography, Film, Art, and Theatre.

Where suited, we also offer the possibility of Practical Training with Auroville Units, making use of the diverse possibilities offered by Auroville at large.

Through our mentoring program we assist the students in making good individual choices that help them to explore, discover, progress and grow.

Teaching and learning methods:

The school incorporates many different teaching/learning methods and environments: interactive teaching with class discussions, projects, tutorials, independent research, traditional lectures, online classrooms; small and large groups, one-on-one approach, peer teaching, work experience and self-study. In this way we hope to meet the needs of each individual.

We feel that the combination of required areas of study and choice of subjects gives students the chance to both get in touch with new areas of knowledge as well as explore their own interests and needs.

Evaluation:

Reflective assessment is shared during the course of mentor meetings and other conferences. We also use school seminars to engage the students and teachers in reflective assessment.
Skill-based assessment includes the following:

- Internal tests, regular assignments and journals of activities and progress
- Project work with presentations, internal and/or public
- Written progress reports
- External examinations (UK IGCSEs and A-levels) if requested by the students

Highlights of the year – All School Activities:

1. Zero Waste of Food
   
   This school year, with the idea of our Librarian, Subhasri, we reduced the amount of food we waste each day at school. We started reusing the rice, idlis, tofu, curd and vegetables left over in the food containers. We cooked them for the snack or lunch for the next day. Consequently, we have added butter milk, soft-cheese (made from leftover curd), variety rice (lemon rice, tamarind rice, tomato rice), curries (using leftover vegetables) and idly upma to our snack-menu. Students and staff who are free also join the ammas to help prepare these snacks. In all, it gives us a wonderful time where the students, staff and the workers come together in an activity and we are happy that the idea and the effort has been well appreciated by all.

2. Circle Garden
   
   Growing an edible garden has continued from last year due to its popularity among many students. This year too an enthusiastic team of volunteers grew a successful crop of pumpkins, bananas, two varieties of lettuce, watermelons, spinach, beans, amaranth, tapioca, papaya, etc. The garden has continued to contribute nutritious, delicious additions to our snack table.

3. Weekly Seminars
   
   These have been an ongoing feature of our school for many years and are open to all students and teachers. This gives us a chance to invite interesting people to present a variety of topics, as well as offer a platform for student presentations and debates.

   Often the seminar serves as a forum to introduce courses and extracurricular activities in an exploratory, interactive manner. The activities introduced then become a part of the coursework and the extracurricular offerings such as study skills, theatre and cycling last year.

4. School Dinner – Biryani
   
   On Friday, 21st of December 2018, our school gathered in the evening to celebrate the last day of school before the winter term break. With the help of the Student Council members and the staff we decorated our pine tree in the dining area with lots of colorful Christmas lights.

   When everyone arrived, we gathered around the big, hot Biryani container (we had veg and non-veg). The dinner was followed by some active games that students and staff took part in. We had a lively and memorable evening with all school members together before going out for the term-break.

5. Graduation

   This year saw the successful completion of the program by 18 students. As per tradition, on the last day of school fellow students, teachers and staff members, and parents of the graduates gathered to acknowledge the accomplishments of these students. The program consisted of songs and Rolf’s hallmark graduation speech. The now traditional powerpoint presentation with photos of each of the graduating students at different stages of their lives was, as always, most touching. Each
student received the gift of their own ‘Goodbye Book’. The event concluded with another tradition: the planting of a tree by the graduating class.

This event has become a very important one in our school and is always filled with laughter and tears, joy and some sadness; it reminds us that we are a family.

6. Field Trips

An important element in any learning program, field trips connect classroom topics to real world experiences. They create an opportunity for closer bonding within the school ‘family’ and provide a break from routine. The following were our field trips this year, recorded in the voices of the students:

**Pichavaram Mangrove Forest**

*On Friday, 9th of November 2018, we went on an all-school field trip to Pichavaram Mangrove Forest, the world’s 2nd largest, located near Chidambaram on the coast of Tamil Nadu. We took 8 small motorboats and rode through the forest. It was a great experience for both the students and teachers to observe the unique ecosystem that supports many different varieties of vegetation, fish and birds. It was a great chance to gain knowledge, especially for our Geography and Biology students and teachers.*

*Overall, we all enjoyed being together as a family during this educational outing.*

**Trip To Hidesign**

*In December 2018, our school was given the privilege to visit the Hidesign factory and office. We were guided through its maze of workers and systems by Dilip Kapur, the owner of Hidesign who also teaches Current Affairs at Future School. After a long but enjoyable hour of driving through unfamiliar streets of Pondicherry we arrived at the production outlet of Hidesign. We were all surprised by how comfortable and simple it appeared, with appealing brick walls and a spread-out campus where workers – mainly young hard-working women in their customized blue and white saris – were using different types of tools and machinery.*

*We, the students, were shown and explained the entire process of how Hidesign products were produced from the piles of interesting types of leather to the designing and stitching stage and the final gluing of each designated piece. It was very fascinating and we were allowed to engage and try out small activities ourselves to get an idea of making a Hidesign product.*

*After visiting the factory, we travelled to the beachside of Pondicherry to see the interactive part of the Hidesign business: its marketing and planning. A small office composed of many computers, chairs and people busying about their work, revealed a friendly environment where employees shared with the students what they did there, how they did it and most importantly, how it helped Hidesign. The place was brimming with ideas, colors and digital sketching for current projects and magazines. The students felt more connected with this aspect of the company because it involved platforms they recognized such as social media, famous newspapers, and names and numbers from abroad. Altogether, it was a highly inspiring and pleasant day with questions and talks in abundance. It was an experience that taught us students, how pieces of small ordinary things such as teamwork and motivation are what form the puzzle that is business.*

**New courses and extracurricular activities:**

1. Foundation Class

This year, Future School created a Foundation Class (successfully taught by a former student Hye Yoon) which aimed to prepare students for the 9th grade by providing them with lessons in Maths,
English and Science. This course was intended to accommodate particular cases – for example, three of the students moved to Auroville from abroad recently and needed to improve their English to be able to follow the 9th grade classes, and one student didn’t have a sound basis in Math. Despite having different areas of weaknesses and strengths, these students formed one grade and attended the school full-time.

The Foundation Class has been operating for almost a whole school year. Although some students joined later on or were out for some months, everyone still improved substantially during this time. As a result, three students passed the 9th grade entrance exam in March 2019 and will be integrated into the next group of first-years in Future School from July. The fourth student plans to leave Auroville next year but we feel he has also benefited a lot from the Foundation Class.

We consider the experiment of our Foundation Class a success but we are not sure if we have the resources to continue.

2. Community Service

For the past nine years, Future School has been participating in a Community Service program that allows the new students joining school to participate in a unique opportunity and experience. For three weeks before the new school year begins, each student works in three different services, units or ongoing projects. We find this activity an important learning tool as it aids in preparing each child for their future. Students learn to adopt a sense of commitment and responsibility. They get to experience working with and around different people in a team. This activity has been an integral part of the school program and has been well received by the students and the community.

**Reflections on this year:**

Our Monday seminars included more sessions about the organisation of Auroville, which were received well.

During classes of different subjects, the teachers tried to offer more reflections in relation to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

The faculty and the Student Council have been working together better, with good results.

**Goals for next year:**

Our main goal for next school year is to strengthen relations among students, staff, and teachers. We will try to achieve this through empowerment and by deepening the sense of community and of taking responsibility not just for oneself, but also for the living space and environment around us.
Auroville Campus Initiative

Auroville Campus Initiative (ACI) is SAIER’s Department of Further Learning. Its aim is to build higher education in Auroville. ACI sees Auroville as an integral learning campus and builds long-term programmes for youth & adults. At present, ACI has five programmes:

1. Swadharma,
2. Swadharma Plus,
3. Svadhyaya,
4. Disha: Auroville Gap Year Programme
5. Integral Design Quest (beginning 2020).

It also supports other emerging programmes in Auroville.

Activities of the year:

1. Swadharma Programme
   Swadharma is a five week ‘adventure of self discovery in Auroville’ for young seekers of the world. It is an immersion programme run with the support of 35+ resource persons.
   In 2018-19 we had Swadharma batches 5 & 6, with 15 participants per batch. The first program ran in Jan – Feb, and the second Jul – Aug.
   An Integral Psychologist from Indian Psychology Institute in Pondicherry participated in Swadharma 6 as a researcher to document the learning journey from an integral psychology perspective.

2. Swadharma Plus
   Swadharma Plus is a 2-week programme (with 4 month follow-up) to find one's true calling for age 30 – 50. We had the first batch this year, with 5 participants plus 2 volunteer-cum-participants. The programme was held in March 2019.

3. Swadharma Alumni Meet
   In March we held a 2-day long gathering with Swadharma alumni with the objective of fostering community and reflecting on individual growth post Swadharma. There were around 12 participants.

4. Confluence on Re-imagining Univers-city
   This was a two-day confluence to accelerate long-term learning programmes in Auroville. 100 people participated, on 26-27 February 2019.
   The Confluence was built completely bottoms-up. Instead of mentally identifying themes, the themes were identified on the basis of emerging long-term programmes in Auroville. This meant hundreds of emails & meetings in a short-period of time, but it was worth it!

5. Disha: Auroville Gap Year Programme (AGYP)
   The Auroville Gap Year Programme is a much-needed bridge between Auroville schooling and the next steps in one's life path. In 2018-19, it was a seven month long programme offered to
Auroville youth where two months were dedicated to finding one’s true calling and five months to apprenticeship in Auroville units and services. 9 youth participated in this first batch.

6. Integral Education Learning Journeys

In 2018, we held two online learning journeys curating content from Sri Aurobindo & The Mother’s writings on Integral Education (IE). We also held a short learning journey with communication designers. Based on the success of the pilot, we will be launching Svadhyaya: Integral Studies Programme from 27 May - 18 July in 2019. We have 2 dedicated editors & multiple reviewers from Auroville and Pondicherry supporting us.

Outcomes:

1. Auroville Youth benefitted through Auroville Gap Year Programme.
2. Swadharma has brought many youth to Auroville, many of whom serve and contribute to Auroville after the programme. Two Swadharma alumni have joined Auroville.
3. Created 19 compilations on 19 topics from the works of The Mother & Sri Aurobindo. It can be found at https://ie.auroville.org.in. 45+ participants benefitted through the process of creating these compilations; besides these the compilations are of benefit to teachers/coaches in Auroville who want to create educational material based in the works of The Mother & Sri Aurobindo, as well as newcomers who are new to the works of The Mother & Sri Aurobindo.
4. Swadharma Plus was piloted for the first time. Like Swadharma, it involved the participation of several Auroville resource people who collaborated & benefitted from the process.
5. 12+ teams in Auroville working on building long-term educational programmes for youth and adults benefitted from the Confluence talks & work sessions, as well as from the Curriculum Design Workshop.

Reflections:

The Confluence showed the vision of Auroville emerging as a Univers-city; so many Aurovilians inspired by this ideal are actually working towards creating learning programmes. We discovered that there are so many Aurovilians aspiring to build higher education in Auroville – which is the vision of ACI.
Auroville Gap Year Programme
A project of Auroville Campus Initiative

The Auroville Gap Year Programme was created by Auroville Campus Initiative (ACI) team members (Sophie, Manoj, Lalit, Valentine) to respond to the need for a programme for Auroville youth between 18 and 30 on a quest for direction and experiential learning within Auroville. The programme aimed at helping its participants find their domain of interest and explore it, as well as providing a better understanding of Auroville’s values, purpose, and functioning.

Description of project:
Participants in this program were 9 Auroville youth: Arpana, Ahilya, Ganga, Mahana, Jonas, Ganesh D., Kalai, Jeeva, Aswini.

The programme was divided in two main parts: (1) Foundation, two months of sessions common to all participants, and (2) Apprenticeship, 5 months of individual apprenticeship/experiential learning, with weekly meetings.

1. Foundation
The first week of the programme was focused on exploring oneself, with activities such as creating a vision board, finding one’s Ikigai and core Values, and participating in a Deep Listening workshop. We visited Solitude Farm where Krishna shared about the importance of eating locally and consciously, which left a strong impression on the participants.

Four participants and one facilitator were selected to take part in the Auroville Peer Educator Training organised by Juan Andres (clinical psychologist and Y-PEER educator) and Youthlink. This workshop’s aim was to educate and train youth about issues typically found in their age group, such as safe sex, responsible partying, basic first aid, being assertive in risky situations, etc. The training gave participants tools and knowledge to convey these notions to their peers, supporting each other in maintaining healthy behaviours.

We then moved on to the next phase, getting the youth to know more about Auroville. Meetings were organised with members of working groups, who were extremely cooperative and welcoming. The youth met with Housing Service, Financial Service, Town Development Council, the Working
Committee, the Residents’ Assembly Service and SAIIER. They learnt a lot through these encounters, as they were not aware of this aspect of Auroville.

The youth felt particularly inspired by the Master Plan, which they had not seen before. We feel that this part of the programme was particularly beneficial to the youth as after those sessions, they shared that they felt proud and lucky to live here, having a new understanding of Auroville and its greater purpose.

They each chose a working group as case study and gave a presentation to the rest of the group.

We observed that most of the participants had an inclination towards Design or Art, so a Design Module was created and organised by Lalit and Jitesh, consisting in 6 sessions covering different aspects of the subject. This included Architecture with a visit to Nandanam Kindergarten and a conversation with its architect, Shailaja, a session on designing a book with Jitesh, a session on Kolam with Grace, a session in UpCycling, a session in Handmade Papers, and a session in Last School.

They also had Creative Writing sessions with Francesca, which they all enjoyed.

2. Apprenticeship

Then came the time for the participants to choose an apprenticeship to commit to. For some this was a clear and easy decision: Arpana was studying education and for her it was obvious that the next step would be volunteering in a school. She chose to volunteer at NESS. Ganesh, who was interested in Mechanical Engineering, joined Aureka. Awsini, interested in Interior Design, took drawing classes with architect Ganesh Bala. Kalai, interested in agriculture and inspired by Solitude, is experimenting in his own garden, planting various vegetables, growing mushrooms, and attempting to create a beehive, with the project of having his own farm. Jonas, interested in studying design, is working with Ram on creating a chair using recycled materials and learning baking with Daniel from Bread & Chocolate. Ahilya is currently working at the Visitors’ Center selling Gelato and she is planning on joining Youthlink.

For others, things were more difficult. One participant quit the programme in December to take care of herself, sharing that she was not ready to commit to anything due to personal issues. She joined the Youth Center and helped them out in their activities. Another felt confused and tried a few things, like an online course to master the Office pack, before trying to learn tattooing and giving up. She ended up investing her time creating artwork for the Youth Center Love-a-Fair t-shirts and helping them out with their activities. A third showed interest in learning from Jorge, then Thalam and Solitude Farm, but financial issues changed his priorities and he is now looking for a job while finishing his studies in engineering.

Outcomes:

This programme gave these 9 young people insights into the functioning of Auroville while providing them with a structure in a slightly challenging moment of their lives. They have expressed their gratitude for this programme as for one it helped them take time to think and explore, for others it gave them something to look forward to, and for some it was just the push they needed to embrace their path.

Reflections:

The most meaningful aspects of this programme were:

1. Giving confused youth something to do: they all told us that they were grateful for this programme, since they would have spent their year drifting around if it did not exist. Even those who dropped out thanked us for the experience, and they now know that we are there to help them if they need support.
2. Educating the youth of Auroville about their home and its resources, innovations, and vision.
3. Making the youth of Auroville more visible to the rest of Auroville, as well as getting a clearer idea of the needs of our youth.
4. Helping youth find their direction: through their exposure to certain activities or learning labs, some of the participants gained clarity as to what they want to do with their future.

The challenges were:
1. Lack of a proper setup: we suffered from the lack of a ‘classroom setup’ with tables, computers, and a reliable internet connection.
2. Lack of apprenticeship maintenances: the deal we had with HRT/BCC did not materialise, and we made the mistake of telling our participants they would be eligible for financial support. When in the end they could only receive a regular child maintenance (which some of them were receiving anyway since it is given to AV children by principle) it was a huge disappointment for some and caused them to change their plans to make ends meet. This is a point of major concern as it is obvious that for the participants to dedicate their attention to learning they should not have to worry about money, so we hope that this can evolve in the future.
3. Difficulty in keeping the youth engaged: the biggest challenge came in the second part of the programme, where the participants were all doing different things and we were supposed to meet them once a week to hear their latest achievements. The momentum disappeared and only two participants stayed consistently in touch. This needs to be worked on and improved before the next programme starts.

Conclusion:
We have learned a lot from this first edition of the programme, and we are currently redesigning it to make it more efficient: a longer structured period, more content, and motivating projects such as travelling in India. We believe that it is crucial for such a programme to exist in Auroville and we hope for more support this year. We are also planning to open our programme to youth from the bioregion.
Scholarship and Educational Fund

The Scholarship and Educational Fund (SEF) was established in 2008 to provide financial assistance to Aurovilians who seek educational opportunities outside Auroville. Financial support is provided in the form of interest-free loans, repayable as soon as and to the extent the recipient has the financial capacity.

Activities of the year:
During the financial year of 2018-19, the SEF team met eight times.
44 Aurovilian students received loans, including a few student-specific grants.
The application form for financial support was changed in regard to expecting repayment of loans: now, repayment is expected as soon as within the financial capacity of the recipient, even if in very small installments.
In order to pursue repayment by beneficiaries, a young Aurovilian, herself a beneficiary of SEF support, was engaged as part-time secretary in the last quarter of the financial year.
Our fund-raising efforts for the SEF were successful: we secured generous support from CSR funds of an industrial corporate for the subsequent financial year.

Outcomes:
44 Aurovilians received financial assistance to pursue educational opportunities.
Six of the supported students at the tertiary level received assistance also thanks to specified contributions from individuals and Auroville business units. Five students at primary and secondary school level received support thanks to student-specific contributions.
Of the 39 students pursuing college or university level studies, 34 did so in India, and five studied abroad i.e. in Belgium, France, Germany and UK.
The study subjects included agriculture, anthropology & archaeology / world history, architecture, biomedical engineering, business administration, civil engineering, commerce, computer applications, dentistry, economics / political science & sociology, electronics & communication engineering, electronics for sound engineering, English language, environmental biology, fashion, forestry (Indian Forestry Service), geology, German language, biology – human ecology, mechanical engineering, nursing, physiotherapy, structural engineering in aeronautics, tourism & hospitality management.

Reflections:
Based on last year’s survey of early grant recipients, a drive for repayment has been initiated, as reported above. For the coming financial year this will need to be intensified so as to build up a significant corpus of a revolving fund.
We also plan to organize a meeting for the exchange of students of secondary grades in Auroville schools who yet have to decide about their tertiary studies and professional future, with some earlier SEF beneficiaries who have completed their studies and now work in Auroville. This is meant to share the experiences of the graduates working in services or business units, or those in search for employment, with those who have not yet made up their minds.
Conclusion:

In view of our expectation for the SEF to develop a large corpus of revolving funds that becomes independent of financial support from outside, efforts towards repayment will need to be further intensified. Further, our efforts towards exchange of information on study choices, college quality, job market, vocational training and skills and Auroville’s needs will need to enter a public forum of debate.
Aikiyam School provides a progressive kindergarten, primary and intermediate education for children from Kuilapalayam and other Tamil villages geographically connected to Auroville. The school’s mission is to maintain a creative and joyful atmosphere, where the uniqueness of each child is respected and nurtured. We aim to prepare children for life in a rapidly changing world, while maintaining strong contact with their Tamil cultural heritage. Our approach is based on the principles of integral education as defined by the founders of Auroville, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Aikiyam School started as New Creation Bilingual School in the early 1980s. The school provides a quality bilingual education in Tamil and English, covering all of the standard academic subjects (CBSE curriculum), physical education, and a wide variety of vocational options, giving children a range of choices in the type of education they will pursue when leaving the school.

Activities of the year:

All Aikiyam School teachers understand that a strong academic base is necessary for the future generation. The method we follow to make children familiar to the content is innovative and participatory. The annual syllabus of every class is completed in time even though teachers follow various activities that keep Aikiyam as one of the research projects of SAIIER. Learning, assessing formatively and summatively, understanding strengths and weaknesses of each child and relearning activities were followed without fail in all classes. Some children who have different interests are given personalized educational programmes where they can pursue these lines in a more focused way.

Art Therapy: Mathilde and Melina gave Art Therapy classes for children from Crèche to 4th grade. It is a great space for children to bring out all their emotions through materials provided to them. Children are given chances to work alone and in small groups. This classroom is very meditative for viewers’ eyes. It is also a great space for self expression for children. The art teacher Mathilde describes: “With kindergarten, we mainly had experiences with paint, paper/collage, and colors as well as body movements and music in order to develop their gross and fine motor skills. With 1st to 3rd standards, we used all type of artistic means to explore basic emotions and how to identify, express and regulate them in healthy ways. With 4th and 5th grades, we used all type of artistic means to explore their personality and deepen their self-knowledge. With all groups, we also worked on their self-awareness, their social skills, and help with their project presentation.”
**Write Dance:** Children from Crèche to 2nd grade are following a programme called Write Dance. Respective class teachers with the help of our volunteer teacher Ms. Melina conducted these classes. All children following these classes met the Write Dance teachers once a week. Children read stories and songs with body movements, the songs practiced with recorded CDs. They sing story songs and their body movements are developed as calligraphy patterns. Through this activity the children experience their own movements according to the music and the stories, which are transformed into drawings with the help of writing/drawing materials like crayons, pencils and painting brushes.

**Fantastic Phonics:** This alternative English learning programme was continued up to 5th grade during this academic year. In this programme children complete 60 Phonics stories before they reach 5th grade. The activities involved in the process of learning bring immense impact on reading speed and writing without spelling mistakes. These programmes are full of language activities with pre-prepared materials so that children are very busy. The teachers act as guides and facilitators during these classes.

**Get Set Go!** This is another English learning programme that can enhance and motivate children to have English conversations in the classroom. It is 100% activity based, immersing children in the language activities. Classes include short poems/songs and conversations that are practiced. Through this programme the children's spoken style has improved a lot.

**Body Awareness:** Aikiyam School has been giving Body Awareness classes for Kindergarten and Primary classes. Two trained teachers along with class teachers run the programme. This programme helps children to understand the connection between the space, objects in the space and themselves. They become more aware of their physical motoral capacity and how to coordinate the body parts with regards to space and objects around them. Our new body awareness teacher Isora is adding a good strength to this team.

**Reading activity:** One of the experienced teachers, Lisbeth gave reading classes for 5th and 6th grade children this year. Her students go to the library with their borrowed books. They have half an hour reading with Lisbeth or one of the teachers assigned by Lisbeth. Their book reports and book making activities in their normal classes helped the children appreciate books they read.

**Memory Game (a pilot study):** Paula, one of the Transition School teachers has created a cooperative memory game for children which can increase their focus and memory power. The children's own pictures are used as memory cards. Children enjoyed this game a lot because the material was directly related to the children themselves.

**Aikiyam Physical Education:** Aikiyam children follow a compulsory physical education programme every evening from 4pm - 5pm. The physical education team organizes activities like gymnastics, running, jogging, swimming, volleyball and basketball. This systematic instruction helps children to develop flexibility of their body, refreshing their mind and creating good awareness about personal hygiene.

**Supportive Learning Programme and IEP:** Children who have learning difficulties follow a supportive learning programme in Aikiyam. Children who have problems that are beyond our capacity to help like speech therapy or psycho therapy are sent to Deepam.

Some children who cannot follow some classes due to their different capacity, are able to
choose more classes that they like and an Individualized Educational Programme (IEP) is arranged for their learning. Those children spend more hours with teachers who teach a simplified / personalized programme for them. This happens for a couple of hours every day and they spend the rest of the day with their classmates.

**Dance workshop and performances:** Bill and Livia Vanavar came again this year to Aikiyam to give a dance workshop for children, teaching songs and dances from different parts of the world. It was a very successful workshop for the 1st to 4th graders. They also gave a performances for the children and for the community.

**Field Trips:** This year our children were taken to Mudumalai wildlife sanctuary, the Planetarium in Chennai and number of trips in and around Auroville. All upper middle grade children visited Solitude Farm in Auroville and took part actively in the food festival.

Children also participated in a 2-day cycle trip organized by Payanam team, and did one day trek in Devathanapettai hills.

**Conclusion:**

Every Aikiyam child is taken care of. Aikiyam’s activities can be taken as an example for any rural school in India. Students visiting from various teacher training colleges appreciated the programme of Aikiyam, and teachers from Chennai and other Auroville schools have come to observe Aikiyam classes. We are constantly engaging and learning from each other.
Get Set Go! and Classroom micro projects
A project of Aikiyam School

Get Set Go!

The Get Set Go project is well established in the lower grades of Aikiyam School. The project this year was to extend the programme into the higher grades and support its continuation.

Get Set Go! was introduced to the school by Marion who had worked with the programme before and seen its success. The teachers of grades 1, 2, and 3 had trained with Marion in delivering English as a Second Language (ESL) in a dynamic and interactive way using the programme and had great success.

The teacher of grade 4 and the upper school English teacher worked with Marion this year to deliver and extend the project into the upper grades. When the upper school English teacher went on maternity leave, the grade 3 teacher stepped up to deliver English to the higher grades and worked with Marion in adapting some of the activities to make them more age appropriate.

The books for this curriculum are far too expensive to provide for each child and, thus, the greatest expense is photocopying.

Outcomes: Get Set Go! has now been extended through to grade 7, and continues to be enjoyed by and bring great benefit to the students. Students through to grade 5 have been found to have a better grasp of spoken English than the higher grades which did not begin their time in the lower school with this programme. Visiting teachers from other Auroville schools and from outside schools have commented on and been impressed by the students’ ability to communicate in English.

Reflections: Get Set Go! has 8 levels but at the moment we are using only the first three levels throughout the school as the students benefit from returning to lower grade work to thoroughly review and, in some cases, re-learn the basics of English as a Second Language.

There was some feeling that the narrative content of the books would not be age-appropriate for the older students. However, the upper school English teacher reports that this is not the case as the interactive nature of the programme and the games and activities used in delivering it are enjoyed by all students irrespective of age.

The middle grades will soon be ready to move onto level 4 of the project.

Classroom micro projects

Classroom micro projects are one of interesting classroom events of Aikiyam School. Micro projects play an important role in letting children and teachers create a ‘Real Learning Environment’ in the classroom and on campus. Children’s questions are about the ‘reality or applicability’ of the theories they learn from their books. Children create a relationship with the topics they choose and teachers help or guide their self discovery. Micro projects integrate content areas of reading, writing, and oral communication and can change the climate of the classroom in an enjoyable way. Micro project hours are when the children can use their inbuilt capacity to create and showcase their creativity and celebrate their outcomes.
This year the classes did the following projects:

- Kindergarten – My Family
- 1st standard – Plants
- 2nd standard – Animals
- 3rd standard – Wild Animals
- 4th standard – India and States
- 5th standard – Food Festival

Micro project hours are interwoven with language, maths, science and social science hours. There are not any separate hours are given exclusively for the micro project activities. The quest is part of the classroom activities and children keep looking for the ‘Aha’ moment. Those findings are shared with others within the class and the campus.

Outcomes: Children can experience what they learn. Their experiences were expressed in many ways. Children have done many experiments to understand their core questions. They have created books, posters and working models. They also collected materials from other sources like internet, old magazines and encyclopedias. They organized an exhibition and offered performances.

Reflections:
1. Through these projects most of the children can better understand or even surprise themselves about what they have learnt during their classes.
2. Children can distinguish between the facts and the core knowledge of what they learnt.
3. They can also identify the areas and aspects of the class that motivate them and go more deep in that area.
4. Teachers can understand that all children do not have the same creativity in all aspects of the project. Some are interested in one or two activities while others may do other activities well. A teacher can identify the areas of strength and weakness of each child in the classroom.
5. A teacher can understand even the emotional and psychological reactions of students towards the topic and specific questions.
6. Children express their learning with different materials and forms.

Aikiyam children and teachers have been doing micro projects for many years. They continue this practice every year so that the experience and chance continue for future students too.
Isai Ambalam School

Isai Ambalam School is located on the periphery of Auroville, adjoining both Alankuppam and Kottakkarai villages. The school includes a crèche, primary and middle school. In the last academic year there were 130 students in total.

The aim of the school is to support both children and teachers to reach their highest potential and to follow the principles of integral education.

The school broadly follows the CBSE syllabus and is up to the 8th grade. All the children are registered from 1st grade under CBSE at New Era Secondary School (NESS), where they may choose to continue their 9th grade to 12th grade.

Isai Ambalam has qualified and well trained teachers and many youth and volunteers. This includes 11 Engineers who work with the children in science, technology, programming, electronics and mathematics. The medium of instruction is English, but most teachers and classes are bilingual.

This year the focus was supporting the ability to plan well and reflect to move towards perfection. This year we also worked on bringing joy and happiness through team building. “Alone we can do so little; but together we can do so much” as the quote goes did see itself in action at Isai Ambalam School.

Activities of the year:

The highlights of this year were as follows:
1. Education by Design
2. Teacher training and team building
3. Annual performance
4. A movie created by RV and Claire about the school activities (15 minutes)
5. The ‘support-a-child’ program has been able to support all the children at the school
6. Students’ participation in state level Judo competition

1. Education by Design

Here we highlight some EBDs and their context in the last year. This year we looked at celebrations as fun and an opportunity to learn, especially Republic Day celebrations and Pongal. We also took up academic topics of which the projects on solar system, birds, Indian governance and elections, and 5 types of lands are described here.

Republic Day celebrations

We took the opportunity of Republic Day celebrations this year to learn more about India. The question of why we celebrate Republic Day is usually abstract for children. So we came up with three topics for the children: (1) to learn about the social diversity of India, (2) to come up with theories on why there is diversity, and (3) to come up with what makes us all one.

As children made teams and started learning about different states, they had the idea of creating India as a collage and adding each state as they presented their learning about a state. They used thermocol and created an embossed prototype of the states of India with foam-sheets of different colors indicating the states and explaining its cultures, food & crops, rivers, etc. From this the ‘Republic Day’ project evolved into a much larger learning process. In the end we made two large India maps, each measuring over 6 ft. height. One was made with thermo-
col and chart-paper pasted on the surface. Here, the information collected by children was pasted on top of the chart. The second India map was made with foam pasted on the thermo-col. These were made for the younger children to understand the political structures of India. They made each state into separate parts and joined them to make a full map. As they were putting the map together like a jigsaw puzzle, they needed to be accurate for state boundaries to line up perfectly. This was a delicate and careful affair. In addition, they made another pattern with foam sheets for future reference for doing some projects like rivers.

We had less than a week for this project. So the students decided to stay at school overnight for a couple of days before Republic Day. Some of the teachers and volunteer-teachers from STEM Land supported them during their work at night as well.

On Republic Day, team by team the children shared their learning about each state and added it to bring up the large India map. The teams formed across all grades from 1st to 8th, divided into 29 groups. The children collected information on food, clothes, state-animals, state-birds, freedom fighters, saints and local languages. Initially, we didn’t think about the contribution of the crèche and kindergarten children. But they learned and prepared the everyday greetings of all the states, and started the presentation of each state by greeting everyone in local languages.

When Sanjeev R. (our Principal) addressed everyone, he reminded children of the three questions of which the first had been answered in detail by the children. For the second question, the children had some theories based on geography and history to explain some of the clothing and food differences. The third question, of what makes us all the same, had stumped the children. Many had researched rivers that went through many states, mountain ranges, but nothing seemed acceptable. Sanjeev then asked if it appeared India was a country only by choice and this is the choice we celebrate as Republic Day. He then went on to add that it was a choiceless choice and our underlying spirituality binds us together. He simplified spirituality as: being good, wanting (aspiring) to be better and doing good to others – explaining each with an example from school life. He also linked this to the 5 dreams of Sri Aurobindo which encompass a vision for a just world.

While collecting information, one student in 8th grade wondered why West Bengal is in the Eastern part of India. Such questions, and looking for their answers, brought up the history and deeper understanding for the children as well as some teachers :).

Pongal celebration

This year, we celebrated Pongal in Isai Ambalam School with much gaiety and enthusiasm. We went along with the Pongal atmosphere and planned to have a kolam competition and some traditional games. We decided to use Mother’s symbol to create a space for everyone to make Kolams. The outer circle had a radius of 18 m, the middle 6 m and the inner one 3 m. The outer circle was divided into 12 parts and the children were split into teams of 5 each. The middle circle was divided into 4 parts and given to teams of teachers. The inner circle was left to prepare Pongal in a mud pot traditionally.

After a week of examinations, everyone was chirpy on Friday morning. We had set to celebrate in the afternoon before the school was closed for 9 days’ vacation. We figured out as to where materials in bulk and cheaper price can be purchased. This time we got colour kolam powder from Tindivanam and a 50 kg sack of white powder was bought from the Pondicherry market. There was a lot of happiness and joy while making the kolams. There wasn’t any hierarchy to make the kolam, everyone selected their area and color randomly.

This is the first time we had a kolampotti and everyone was supportive about it. The joy of creating a kolam was something that everyone shared. Some young kids also very naturally stepped in and made an outline for the entire kolam.
A few boys said they can make better kolams and dared the girls. At the end, the boys walked away with the first prize. STEM Land teachers judged the best kolam and as the practice is, gave away pumpkins as a prize for the winners.

For the celebration we also had a few traditional games for the teachers and students like tug-of-war and ‘Uri Adithal’. After that, Ammas made Pongal in front of everyone. All the children and teachers stood in a circle. After doing the pooja, Pongal was distributed to all.

Solar System EBD

1st and 2nd grade students participated in this EBD and their task was: to understand and find a way to present the solar system and imagine what would happen if everything stopped moving.

The outcome of the challenge was that they learned about the 8 planets and created their own song after learning more from the teachers about the planets. They were able to read and write about every planet in nearly 50 words. They could respond to the teachers’ questions. At the end of the project they drew the pictures and made a model of the solar system as a group.

While doing this project, we could see skills like communication, creative thinking, collaborating with each other and the quality of works much improved among the students.

Indian Governance and Election EBD (6th, 7th and 8th graders)

Given the elections coming up children wanted to learn about the election in India. They started with the word Democracy (‘of the people, for the people and by the people’) and went on to learn about governance in India.

During the class, children would come with questions. These questions would result in research to find the answers by themselves, and then what they learned would be discussed in the next class resulting in further questions about details. This encouraged them to be independent to find the answers. Through this process they found about the different forms of government: Central government, State government and Local government – their roles and those who are in office.

Whatever children learnt, they presented it in the assembly for the whole school to know. They watched a video on the election commission process of election. After learning about this, children wanted to conduct an election at their school. The students came up with many interesting suggestions to improve the school and support the younger children. These included working with younger children on mind-storms, educational music during their bus ride, education on plastics and cleanliness with younger children and much more. They built a voting machine using Raspberry Pi. They split the children into three groups like two parties and one election commission. Their work was captured by multiple newspapers including The Hindu.
Five types of Land EBD

5th and 6th grade students did an EBD project in Tamil about the five types of land in South India. We took up the question “How was the state of Tamil Nadu divided into 5 parts in the 5th century A.D.?” Before going deeper into the subject, we tried to find out the occupation and the people connected to each type of land. They found it difficult to find more about the Palai land (desert).

The students were divided into five groups, and each group took up one type of land and started finding the information through the internet, books and interviews. After sharing the information, they wrote it in a chart and drew pictures based on their lands. They learnt about the culture of Kurunji (hill station), Marutham (field), Neithal (sea-shore), Mullai (forest) and Palai (desert). They also learnt about each one’s occupation, food, daily routine, entertainment, trees, grains, flowers, clothes and weather.

The children went to the Pudhukuppam sea-shore village with their questions and interviewed the fisherman and wrote it on the chart paper. After collecting all the information, each group wrote songs about their land. They drew the picture of five types of land on a cloth of about 2x2m. All the students participated in the drawing. Finally, they gave a presentation by way of song, dance, verbal sharing of information and what they created through the EBD.

We were able to notice the collaboration, creative thinking, communication, aesthetic and quality consciousness among the students.

Bird EBD

The children had been studying birds for some days. The 4th grade children were learning about local birds and their habitats. They were also interested in learning about beaks and legs of different birds and why they are different. We gave them access to computers, books and bird cards to learn and research. We also showed them a documentary on Hummingbirds.

They were fascinated to see hummingbirds being so swift in flight. Since they had learnt about flowers in the past, children also picked up the fact that hummingbirds and flowers are interdependent on each other. Children cut out shapes of birds and hung them in strings to make them fly. Some of them were very happy to draw birds and colour them.

We also decided to take the children to Vedanthangal to visit some of the migratory birds.

STEM Land activities:

STEM Land has brought in many scientific and mathematical teaching materials by which the students are capable of manipulating all kinds of scientific, technical, electronic and mathematical concepts. Some of these were captured in the EBDs above.

2. Teacher training and team building

This year we focused on creating competence and team building in multiple ways:

a. Research on improving planning and reflecting on execution
b. Stewardship for New Emergence and Amma Appa program
c. Drama workshop
d. The three principles of True Teaching of Sri Aurobindo

The research is described in our research project report. We will be describing the three principles of true teaching of Sri Aurobindo here.

During a week-long holiday in April 2019, all the teachers (full time and part time volunteers) participated on a workshop on the ‘Three Principles of True Teaching’ set by Sri Aurobindo. We
started with an invocation followed by silence. We read the text, discussed and understood the concept, wrote down what everybody has understood, and had good insights. The insights of some of the teachers are as follows:

- **Sundar**: To be more of a learner and guide is what is expected of me in Auroville.
- **Naveen**: I am able to still myself, I am able to reflect on my teaching and find alignment with the three principles. I acknowledge everyone who shared as it helped me learn.
- **Pratap**: As a teacher, I need to have a beginners mind. The week helped me get into the depth of the three principles.
- **Poovizhi**: I was able to reflect on how I interact with the children. I was able to notice that all of us are on a path of growth and the only difference is when we were born.
- **Kavitha**: I don’t want to be a taskmaster and know it all. I want to be a child and learn with the children.
- **Nirmala**: I have been doing many activities at the school and now I notice what such activities develop and support.
- **Jagadambal**: I have learned to not think of myself as 'teacher', but a learner of many children’s minds.
- **Vasantharani**: I want make a good environment for children and learn with them.
- **Siva**: The sessions were deep and made me wonder am I fit to be a teacher. I feel now that teaching is such a responsibility and I wonder how to implement these in my classroom. I feel I have been focusing on the product rather than the process and I want to explore how to find out what each psychic being needs.

3. **Annual performance**

   This year we conducted the school’s Annual Day performance a little differently. We had two sessions, one for the crèche through 2nd grade, and another for the 3rd – 8th grade. There were a variety of worthwhile programs including ‘children’s grip’ and ‘prowess of the academic’, awareness programs on social problems (alcoholism & the plastic menace, both presented as dramas), display of extra curricular activities including Judo, Silambam, drumming, tabla and a few dance programs. A short play was performed in Sanskrit by the elder kids. The program started at 4.00 pm. and finished at 7.30 pm., where over 80 parents had stayed till the end of the performances.

4. **A movie created by RV and Claire about the school activities**

   RV and Claire have created a 15-minute video about Isai Ambalam School. It was also shown to the parents during the Annual Day performance.

5. **The ‘support-a-child’ program has been able to support all the children at the school**

   The support-a-child program started in August 2018 when we partnered with Asha for Education, Bangalore. Phase-I included 68 children (from 3rd grade onward) and the remaining 62 were supported in the phase-II. Now all the total 130 children are supported by this program.

6. **Students’ participation in state-level Judo competition.**

   This year 27 students from our school participated in the state-level Judo competition in Pondicherry. Out of this, 7 got gold medals, 4 silver and 3 bronze medals.

   The students also gave Judo demonstrations at Achariya school, Venkateswara school and Udavi school.
Outcomes:

This year the crèche focused on understanding simple instructions, knowing information about mosquitoes, Kangaroo, Ostrich, Butterfly, frog, Christmas, fish, Ganesha, trees, flowers etc. The children have been given 8 developmental activities to know about the different types of tastes, colours, soft & hard and more activities based on fine muscle developments.

In Kindergarten, 8 children learnt more than 400 words in Tamil and 300 words in English. The teachers have trained the children to do the everyday work with perfection. For example, to keep the footwear orderly, the mats properly, the drawing notebooks one by one, etc. They did a project on Christmas and celebrated.

In 1st and 2nd grades, all the children are able to recognize words and sentences in Tamil. They are able to read words and sentences through phonics in English. They are able to handle the teaching-learning material for the maths to understand the concepts.

In 3rd and 4th grades, children are able to read the English text with understanding. In the puppet show, they are able to communicate fluently in English. They are able to do additions, subtractions and multiplications mentally. They have done many EBDs to understand the concepts of the lessons.

From 5th to 8th grades, they have done many EBDs related to real-life endeavors like Elections, use of Bamboo (finally creating a Bamboo tower-cum-ladder), organic soap, garden-fencing, etc.

We have started a blog to share some of the activities of the school: https://isaiambalamschool.wordpress.com/blog/

Future direction:

We will get closer to our optimal strength of 160 children (16 children in Crèche, Kindergarten, 1st up to 8th grade).

The Foundation for World Education has approved a grant for our new project on “Empowered children, Healthy homes” with a focus on better health at the school and homes. It will also support the development of the land we would like to lease next door.

We also plan to further our research on “Personality development to build a constant Aspiration”. We will focus on these two projects and improve our skills, quality of education at the school and reinforce our aspiration to a higher and deeper life.
Critical skills of *Goal Setting* and *Perfection* leading to inculcating deeper values and improved school environment

A project of Isai Ambalam School

This was an action research project for teachers at Isai Ambalam School, the primary purpose being to effect positive changes in the school.

The research questions were:

1. How does an application of the critical skills of *goal setting* and *perfection* make teachers more effective at what they do?
2. What role does reflection and sharing over time have in the ability to sustain effort in applying these skills?
3. Can repeatedly applying these two critical skills result in imbibing deeper qualities of the Mother of Perfection, not only in the work but also in oneself?
4. Is there a sustained improvement in children, especially in recurring learning difficulties due to applying these methods?
5. What is a meaningful and effective way to equip children with these critical skills?

**Description of project:**

Out of the 11 full time teachers who participated in the research, 5 teachers had some experience with goal setting and perfection before. The rest of the teachers were new to this approach.

All the teachers first watched the DVD from Thalir-Thiran-Thittam on ‘Win with goal setting and Win with perfection’. Role-play was demonstrated during every pause of the video. For example, we showed the comparison of two pictures by enacting the play from the video. They understood how perfection should be and also its process. Through the DVD they also learnt how a goal should be converted into ‘SMART’ (Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic and Time-bound) goal. There were 2 lessons in perfection and 5 lessons in goal setting. The DVD explained educational goals, professional goals and self-improvement goals. We have taken education and professional goals for our research project.

The teachers took notes on the videos and afterwards discussed and practiced making the goals they had into SMART goals. Then a volunteer came up with activities where we worked to understand the process of perfection. After that, the teachers, including STEM Land teachers, who were available at that time wrote their experiences on goal setting and perfection.

This research focuses on the full time teachers who were exposed to goal setting and perfection and continued to write their reflections and participated in future surveys, materials, etc.

**Outcomes:**

The teachers and the students have benefited. At the beginning the new teachers found it difficult to understand to make the task into specific goals. But after writing 2 to 3 experiences, they got clarity on what they were doing. Then they took weekly goals based on the needs of the children and completed them.

The teachers are able to write their teaching, learning experiences on planning and perfection. They are able to review their work. They are able to finish the work on time. They are able to come on time to school every day. They are also able to share their daily reflections in the morning circle.
and conversed in English. Their communication skills have improved. They are also able to write their experiences in English with simple sentences.

A very important change in the teachers was their ability to distinguish between outputs and outcomes. This helped them target improving outcomes in children rather than only creating the outputs that they had focused on before. The result of this was that children improved in their abilities beyond only being able to answer specific questions in the text book, e.g. their ability to read a newspaper and other books.

Even the small goal of ‘meeting on time in the morning to share before school starts’ has seen an increase in the number of teachers who make it on time.

We observed that the learning difficulties of the students reduced. Self motivation of the students was increased. They have increased curiosity for learning new things. They started taking responsibility of their individual work. They became more aware of completing their homework.

The teachers also noticed the changes from the students like, making less mistakes in languages, increased habit in reading, involving in classroom activities enthusiastically and taking responsibility.

We also saw a few improvements of the event which the children put up for parents at the end of each term. By the end of the school year we were able to see a distinct difference in the event compared to the earlier ones due to planning, time management, organizing the programs, and variety of activities. We saw that many of the activities reflected things the students had learned differently and their outcomes. We also saw an increased number of parents who came and stayed till the end of the program.

**Reflections:**

With the help of this project we have created the environment of planning and execution rather than reactive fire-fighting. The teachers acquired the skills of preparing the right plan based on the needs of the children. They learnt to complete the goal perfectly. In time teachers were more organized and prepared for the classes, and they also prepared Teaching and Learning Materials for the students. They are able to feel the sense of perfection set by the Mother in their work, and they carry on the vibration in their own life too.

Most challenging about this project was that teachers found reflection in writing really hard especially in English. Although each teacher gave in many reflections by the end of the project, they found it really difficult to do in the beginning. The teachers are able to reflect on goal setting and perfection after an activity is done, now, but recording it in writing is still something they do only when asked.

**Conclusion:**

The activities and experiences of the teachers have had three-fold impacts on them:

1. All the teachers who took up these two skills vigorously practiced learning their academic subjects, and they will use it in their personal life too.
2. These encouraging outcomes have now resulted in a positive manner in the entire academic year of 2018-19 for creating a Collaborative Learning Community.
3. It supported the teachers to convert problems to SMART goals that can be achieved within a certain time.

Towards the closing of the year we teachers had a week together where we read a chapter on the three principles of true education and their application to a school (in the book *Psychic Education*). We felt inspired and our insights were deep, and we felt that perhaps while we could see the functional improvement through the DVD we used (which was created with a corporate culture), we could undertake something that would inspire us and connect with our spiritual nature. We will be taking this up in the next academic year.
The Auroville Tinkering School was established three years ago on the Udavi School campus to provide an atmosphere of joy of doing and learning. The Tinkering School aims to bring new elements into the teaching of basic science and its principles and concepts, through different project kits. The Tinkering School provides a space where children use their own minds to create and problem-solve. We aim for an atmosphere of learning together without getting bored.

**Description of project:**

This year, the Tinkering School progressed in all parameters of teaching, learning and resources. Science project kits were used to introduce basic principles of hydraulic pressure and air pressure with experiments. The 6th graders made different working toys of their interest. Workshops enabled the children to improve their fine motor skills and thinking skills.

A few of the participants made gadgets like a rain alarm and energy efficient boat. Through hands-on experiment the children learned about air pressure, hydraulic pressure, friction, circuits, attraction and repulsion. They learned to hack things; they learned soldering.

**Reflections:**

It was a great joy to engage children in tinkering activities. We noticed that the children who come for tinkering activities have learned to decide for themselves and have become more quick at getting things done. They wish to stay for a longer period of time to explore more.

**Conclusion:**

Overall this whole project has been very successful in terms of planning and execution. To make tinkering activities available for more children a full-time person should be available; this is something that has not yet been managed. Hopefully in near future myself or someone from the community at large will be available to offer this.
Music classes at Udavi School

*Katerina worked in our school as a Piano Teacher from August/September 2018 and continues. She has added a new element of western music and enriched the music offering to the children. Here is her report:*

I arrived at Udavi School in August 20th of 2018. It took me about 3-4 weeks to schedule music classes with the students, with a lot of help from the principal Davaselvi. I could use an old keyboard from the library to teach children piano. So I started my classes in September, for two days a week (Tuesday, Friday) with students Siva Shakti, Lara, Anisha, Janani, Agalia, Avantika, Vishal, and Barani.

In October the school got a new piano, and we decided to keep it in separate locked room. From that time I scheduled children’s piano classes and piano practice separately. On Saturday my day was filled with students of the new building: Bama, Bumika, Meethul, Yuvasree, Keethi, Gautam, Logeshwari. With time interest in piano classes grew and more students came to learn piano: Monisha, Ashvini, Pavita, Abi, Sasidharan, Shaktikanan, Hindupriya, Permasanjay.

During October and November I also worked with kids grades 2 & 3 of kindergarten. I made group and individual classes with children I chose. For the 2 & 3 grade group classes, the school bought 14 flutes. At the end of the year 2018 we used them for a Christmas performance in kindergarten.

With all the music students we prepared a program for the Udavi Christmas celebration. Hedia and I conducted the program: 7 various Christmas songs. During the performance four students accompanied the choir on piano and drum, and two students sang solo. Dakshini, a previous year student, accompanied me on piano and Miriam played the flute. Before the Christmas performance we made with the kids shakers from recycled plastic bottles and seeds.

Also during Christmas time we visited New Creation boarding school with 5 of my students from 8th grade, to sing and play with them. Some students of 7th grade participated in a small flashmob at the Visitors' Center where we sang Christmas carols.

From the beginning of 2019 I started renovation in the room given to me for piano classes. Money was donated by one of my piano student from Auroville. About 6-7 volunteers helped me to do all the process of preparing and painting the walls, and a friend of mine printed music posters for the walls.

In 2019 I continued singing classes once a week with the older students. Also we collaborated with Katrin, an artist from Italy. Together with students of 7th and 9th grade we listened, sang and visualized songs by drawing them. We noticed a lot of music learning influences; even kids who didn’t come for piano classes used a lot of music signs in their pictures.

At the end of the school year a musician donated to Udavi School a good guitar. In April I prepared the kids for a performance. Also there are kids who applied for summer time classes. Overall, interest in music has been established at Udavi and we continue to grow and play together.
Udavi School vegetable garden

This was a collaborative project between Buddha Garden (Priya) and Udavi School (Ravikrishna) where the vegetable garden set up last year was developed further.

1. Last year we set up the garden with the 7th grade students. They had never participated in such a practical class before and in the course of the year set up four raised beds and grew vegetables. This year we spent time establishing the garden and offering practical food growing experience to students from 8th, 9th and 10th grades. This was possible because Ravikrishna is now a teacher at the school. Priya from Buddha Garden continued to visit at least once a week for the 7th grade (for whom the work was new) and the other three classes in rotation, one each week. Except during busy times when she came in as often as needed.

2. During this year we created more infrastructure as follows:

a) Each set of students was divided into three groups, each of which had a bed to look after. Eight new beds were made, some with granite pillars and some with a mixture of granite pillars and parts of a demolished building.

b) We created a separate storage for the garden as a safe place to keep all the tools.

c) A proper irrigation system was installed to replace the old system which consisted mainly of second hand equipment from Buddha Garden. This has made irrigation much more efficient and easier to manage.

d) A new water tap was installed with a cement surround and a better drainage system that is used to irrigate a nearby lemon tree.

e) We purchased some much needed tools which enabled all the students to use whatever were the most appropriate tools to do the jobs.
3. This year the plants we grew were as follows:

a) After cutting down a lot of work trees and other unwanted bushes we planted papaya trees around the perimeter of the garden. Each group was responsible for planting and looking after two trees.

b) We planted banana bushes just outside the compound near the water tank. These were watered both by the students and the overflow from the tank.

c) We grew a range of flower plants in pots to be used by the rest of the school as needed.

d) The primary work for each grade was to grow vegetables and each group grew a range of seasonal vegetables. These were used in the school kitchen with surplus being taken home by students.

4. New developments:

a) Something we have found difficult in previous years was to build compost heaps. The problem has been that each group didn’t create sufficient material to make their own heaps. Even if we collected all the groups’ material together unless it was used immediately to make a compost heap the material tended to get lost. A new process was created whereby at the end of each class all the weeds and other green material were put together. The students then collected twice as much brown material (mostly
leaves) and mixed the green and brown material together. It was then put on the top of the compost heap together with compost powder (bokashi) and water. As a result there are now two compost heaps that will provide compost for next year’s beds.

This had the added advantage that in regularly undertaking this task students began to understand that in nature nothing is wasted. That weeds and leaves are not things to be thrown away but an important resource to sustain the fertility of the garden.

b) As in previous years we saved some seeds. Without a safe place and infrastructure to grow seedlings most of the seeds saved from previous years have not been used. For this reason our request for next year will be to build a small nursery for growing seedlings. Once students are able to collect and grow their own seeds and have mastered the art of making compost Udavi School vegetable garden will be completely sustainable and able to continue indefinitely.

This is how the garden looked at the end of March when the classes finished:
Oli School

Oli School is for children ages 2-6 from the local villages. This year we have completed 9 years of continuous work. We are giving continuity to Free Progress and the Montessori method, used as a tool to practice Integral Education. At the same time we try to integrate it into the Auroville context and local culture.

During the year 2018-19 we have been working in a renewed structure and educational view, as our children’s parents are trusting us more and more and leaving the children for one more year with us.

The team composed of 13 teachers is able to follow up the school program and practice it with the kids on a daily basis. The kids who leave the school at the age of 6 years old are ready to start any type of education on an elementary level.

Our classrooms are set up to answer the needs of the kids and teachers. Sangeetha has taken the team lead since Ana left and Marie-Claire is there for psychological and pedagogical support in case of need. This year we had new volunteer, Marie (through Savi). She worked on arts and crafts with the children.

We have a new outdoor platform, which is used as a quiet separate space to work on psychomotor skills, Awareness Through the Body (ATB), English and Tamil language. From next year onwards we will also use it to welcome the crèche children in a quiet separate space in the morning.

During this year our teachers participated in:
- Online Montessori training for three teachers (Sangeetha, Sakthiya and Viji)
- Stewardship for New Emergence program (Charulatha and SuriyaPrakash)
- All the workshops conducted by the Outreach Educational Board
- A French class given by Marie (our new volunteer)

Goals for next year:
- To attend school trainings happening in Auroville.
- Proper follow up of the school curriculum.
- Have one or two voluntary teachers for arts and craft and music and dance, to enrich our programme and give the children more of an opportunity to speak English naturally.
- Fund-raising plan: The school is mainly financially supported from a French NGO named Espoirs Et Vie, but with the help of Marie-Claire, we are slowly building an autonomy with small donors from France. It’s a long process. Fund raising from India is another option.
- We would like to start again with the bigger children the Nirmiti project in the Botanical Gardens. It is based on the principles of land-art, which seeks to create with objects that are found in nature. It takes place in a calm and peaceful environment that helps to quiet the mind. The kids have an opportunity to make different creations, from simple drawings with a few leaves to an installation built over several days.
- We are very happy to see that the Outreach Board is bringing us all together and we want to continue participating in the Outreach Board activities.
Arulvazhi Education Centre

In Tamil language, Arulvazhi means ‘Path of Grace’. This Education Centre, situated near the Promesse community of Auroville, caters to the educational and cultural needs of the children between age 2.5 to 18 yrs. of the neighboring village, Morattandichavadi, in the Light of the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Over the years Arulvazhi has expanded its scope to include women’s education and also to serve as a platform for interaction with delegates from different parts of Tamilnadu and Auroville.

Its aim is to provide value based education in an atmosphere of simplicity, beauty, joy and harmony, wherein children develop naturally.

Activities of the year:

1. Crèche and Kindergarten

In this group importance is given to the development and use of the sense organs, the cultivation of the aesthetic sense, the capacity to choose what is beautiful, simple, healthy and pure.

There are eleven children in the group between the 2.5 yrs. to 4 yrs. They are provided with clay materials, picture identification cards, puzzles, charts, and other materials to develop the sense faculties. They are taught rhymes, to draw pictures and play games and also simple basic words in Tamil and English.

They are given supplementary nutrition also. The classes are from 9am to 12:30pm, 5 days in a week. The mothers are encouraged to come along with their children (this is not mandatory), so that they learn how to better take care of children and provide a good ambience at their homes.

The children are growing in a caring atmosphere without coercion. Some children who do not speak in their houses (due to domestic circumstances) get to express freely in words and rhymes; they are very happy to come to school. The parents even would like us to start offering primary class sections. The children also participate in celebration of festivals and functions in the school, we take them on outings to places like Matrimandir, Ashram, etc.
2. Primary school group in the evenings

We offer extracurricular activities for about 40 children from 1st to 5th standard of the village govt. primary school from 4:00pm to 6:00pm, 5 days a week.

Apart from games and yoga they are taught dance, songs and basic computer knowledge.

Twice a month we take them to places connected with education, including farm visits in Auroville and visits to the Planetarium and science exhibition in Pondicherry. They are provided healthy supplementary nutrition and stationary items and uniforms every year.

Sports day and Arulvazhi’s annual day are celebrated each year with great enthusiasm, where students showcase their proficiency in each activity.

The final year (oldest) students are given mementos and certificates of participation. The government school teachers appreciate that these students participate in interschool competitions and win prizes. The parents of the children also feel very proud. Through involvement in our centre these children get a more all-round education, not just academic education.

3. Computer class

Basic computer knowledge is taught to students of age group 9 yrs to 15 yrs. Resource persons Ganesh and Muthukumari conduct these classes according to the children’s requirement. Children learn with great enthusiasm.

4. Yoga and related subjects classes

Benefits of Yoga asanas and meditation are so well-known that they do not need any reiteration. The daily activities are conducted from 6am to 7:15am for about 35 students from 5th to 12th standard, 6 days a week. This takes care of the overall wellbeing of these students. They practice meditation, Pranayama, Asanas, Kriyas and Mudras.

As part of the exposure to other yoga centres an educational tour was arranged this year to Vethagiri Maharishi Yoga center in Pollachi, Kundalini Yoga center in Udumalapet, and Kodaikanal nature camp with visits to Palani Hills and Trichy en-route. 15 students, 3 captains and 1 yoga teacher participated in this trip over 4 days, from May 26 to May 30, 2018. Children experienced series of practices like Kayakalpa, concentration exercises, Pranayama, and trekking.

Children gave several yoga demonstrations for different events including: Auroville’s 50th year Tamilnadu Seminar in Auroville, International Day of Yoga in Bharat Nivas, Auroville’s birthday celebration in Promesse, and Women’s Club Sports Day in the Morattandi community hall.

5. Summer camp

A summer camp was held for about 40 students for 10 days in May 2018.
The resource persons Syamala, Varadharajan, Bhuvanasundari, Sudarshan, Thillai Ganapathy, Velmurugan, Nimila, Muthukumari, Anandou, and Saravanan from Aranya shared their experiences and knowledge through various activities.

This summer camp created space for children to learn and express their inner talents, and also experience different educational activities including: education about physical awareness, life history of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, flowers’ spiritual significances given by Mother, twelve psychological qualities in the Mother’s symbol, traditional healing with local herbs, history of Aranya forest, aims of Matrimandir and of the Ashram.

6. Wellbeing programme

Wellbeing classes integrate concepts of the functioning of the body systems, principles of primary health care, nutrition, the body’s energy system and healing. This programme is conducted for village women every Tuesday. It includes education about natural healing therapy, yoga therapy, massage, acupuncture, nutrition, health education and awareness program sessions for children, caring and nutrition support for old age women in the village, and Stewardship/Leadership training in Auroville for women participants.

This year 15 women were regular participants. The beneficiaries feel the loving care and healing energy. Most of the women who attend are exposed to this knowledge for the first time.

After one year of classes, participants felt the difference in their health conditions: diabetes, blood pressure are maintained within the accepted parameters, normal mensural cycle without pains, body felt less heavy, and obesity reduced (data documented).

Reflections:

Every year in all areas of activities we are progressing step by step and there is overall general improvement. But still we have to move forward, as our beneficiaries are going to outside schools and coming to us on a part time basis. We are always fine tuning our efforts to suit the day-to-day contingencies.

Conclusion:

When there is the holistic approach comprising young and old, there is a lot of goodwill generated between village and Auroville.

The outstation delegates coming from Sri Aurobindo centres from the length and breath of Tamilnadu for Tamilnadu seminars held in Auroville are highly impressed with our centre, and often invite our team members to visit their centres for sharing knowledge for mutual benefit.
Kuilai Creative Centre

The vision of Kuilai Creative Centre (KCC) is to connect the beneficial influence of Aurovilian philosophy and activities with the Tamil culture, and for our centre to be a place where the two cultures will integrate. We would like to build a bridge between Auroville and our villages, connecting people with many different activities. We believe that this would fulfill the Mother’s wish to attend to the development and welfare of local village people.

Activities of the year:

Continuing activities:

• Silambam – Every Sunday (10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.) taught by Ajitkumar and Ravikumar.
• Bharatha Naattiyam – Every Saturday (4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.) taught by Sathya, Ramya and Vanitha.
• Tuition classes – Monday through Friday (6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.) taken care by Subithra, Sandhiya, Divya and Sathya.

New activities:

• English class – Weekly twice (Tuesdays and Thursdays (6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.), taught by Amudhavalli and Sandhiya.
• Music class – Weekly once (Wednesdays 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.) taught by Rajkumar.
• Library – Open Monday through Saturday (9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. And 1:30 p.m to 4:30 p.m.), looked after by Subashini and assisted by Selvaraj.

All these activities took place accordingly and the participants showed their interest by joining in most of these activities. Everything was coordinated in advance by Selvaraj to make sure that the activities were regular and prepared.

Outcomes:

Parents encouraged their children to participate in the extracurricular activities, as entertaining activities in their surroundings where they could get mentally and physically relaxed from their daily stressed motives and work pressures.

Silambam, Music and Bharatha Naattiyam had more than 15 regular participants. Because these classes were conducted on the weekends, people could more easily find time to attend. They loved to learn these ancient and very traditional activities of Tamilnadu. Playing piano was completely new for them and they showed their enthusiasm in the Wednesday classes.

The English classes had more interest at the beginning, but later the students attended less and less regularly. So it is a question of how to make them standardized.

The Library was one of the most welcomed and appreciated activities from our participants and visitors this year. We dedicated a lot of time in setting up things for the library, like installing a list of books, putting stickers on the books, arranging books according to the fit criteria, creating book entries, and reaching out people. We had just inaugurated our new building last year, on August 15th, 2018. So we had to spend much of our energies in getting things organized. We have at least 50
users of the library on a regular and irregular basis, and by next year intend to reach more than 200 users.

We continued offering tuition classes, one of the most favored activities, from 6 to 8pm. However we aren’t sure about keeping this alive since it encourages the exam oriented approach to school and life.

Reflections:

Most meaningful this year was seeing people’s enthusiasm for the library which opens them to falling in love with reading books. Especially now that most people are on digital devices we are glad that we can offer this.

Conclusion:

At KCC we wish to be life oriented, rather than exam oriented which is what Sri Aurobindo wished to have and bring forward through the integral education system. We believe in this for everyone’s greater development.
Aurohamsadhwani Art Centre

Aurohamsadhwani Art Centre started initially with two people learning veena, and slowly developed other music activities with Aurovilian students and village students. For ten years now this centre has been running with a team of five members from Auroville. Professional teachers teach our students in five different music classes.

We believe that music and dance can envelop and go beyond the barriers of any religion or cultural differences and embrace all differences within. As Auroville is created for “Human Unity”, this project, we feel, is very relevant to the ideals of Auroville and its education.

Classical music can bring about an impact on the growing generation and the adults who learn it. Music and dance have been used since ages in India as a medium of worship and to enhance the beauty within one’s self to reach the Divine.

This needs a lot of concentration, commitment and self-discipline to achieve this goal.

Activities of the year:

Our students are from Auroville and the surrounding villages, ages 4 to 56 years, boys, girls and women. This year we had a total of 47 students:

• Veena class: 14 children, 7 adults
• Bharatanatyam class: 20 children
• Keyboard class: 5 children, 1 adult

Our veena students participated in veena programmes conducted by the Department of Art and Culture of Puducherry Government. They also participated in many temple festivals in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, mainly Saraswathi Temple.

The Bharathanatyam students gave a performance in Bahrat Nivas auditorium organized by Aurosangamam.

Five Bharathnatyam dance students are ready to do Salangai Pooja and five students are preparing Arangetram. Three keyboard students are ready to teach keyboard class.

Conclusion:

This type of programme offers the opportunity to Auroville and village students who are not able to join such classes in the city.

Doing a single music class is always very expensive, but when we do it in groups the cost is less and is shared by many students.

Already a few students are able to teach new students. The keyboard class is conducted by our senior student.

Learning music together and understanding each other, helping each other brings unity among ourselves.
Mira Cultural Group

The children are our future, gifted with a lot of skills and talents and full of future possibilities. Mira Cultural Group encourages women & children to learn extracurricular activities out of school studies. These activities are connected to the rich heritage of Bharatiya Samskritam.

This type of program offers unique opportunities to Auroville and village students who are not able to join such classes in the city. In the future elder students may teach new ones.

As a team, we also benefit, learn and grow as we love to create a place that encourages and promotes collective art and unity.

Description of project:

Children, youth and girls (different age groups) from Auroville and its surrounding villages participate with us.

Four teachers and two organizers are involved to provide:

- Classical Carnatic music class,
- Folk dance class,
- Classical Bharata Natiyam dance class.

The teachers are professional and qualified music & art teachers. The classes take place during the weekends at the SAWCHU building in Bharat Nivas.

Outcomes:

We have more students attending and benefiting. The coming year we are planning to start the classes in one more place in Kottakarai.

The students gave a performance of Folk dance at Pondicherry Heritage cultural center.

Bharata Natiyam and Classical vocal music performances took place during the Diwali festival function in October 2018 in the Bharat Nivas auditorium, and on Tamil New Year, 14 April 2019 at SAWCHU.

Conclusion:

We are working in the name of togetherness and interconnectedness. The participants' interest in collaborating in this way inspires us to keep working together.

The program has helped to foster the development of the women and children at the personal and the community level. On top of that we seek to provide occasions for contact between Auroville and the bioregion and aspire to open up that space, to build bridges of friendship and collaboration between the two.
Life Education Centre

Life Education Centre (LEC) aims to:
- Offer a space for young women from the villages where they can be provided opportunities for personal growth and livelihood;
- Provide activities that enhance physical, mental, and sensorial capacities;
- Be a connecting space between Auroville and the villages;
- Be a learning space for everyone.

Activities of the year:

- **Fabric Painting:** Introduction to fabric painting was offered by Jyothi Khare and the women continued to practice on their own.

- **Meditative art:** ‘Zen tangling’ sessions to relax, explore and create were introduced by Dev and then continued by the women regularly.

- **Exploring Auroville and the world – Geography sessions:** Continuing with the ‘exploration of soil’ sessions from last year, this year we expanded our knowledge of geography through sessions offered by Lisbeth. She taught the women starting from the basics using a globe, atlas, and wall maps. They learned about continents, countries, states, cities, districts and population. They learned to use maps and identified Auroville and the surrounding areas. The sessions ended with field trips (explained below).
  All the sessions were organized, facilitated and translated by Devi.

- **Expanded women’s circles and drumming:** Once a month, an expanded women’s circle was organized for half-a-day. Besides the women from LEC, women working at Svaram also joined. During the first session, the activities were group discussion and group drumming. A professional drummer from Svaram led and taught the group. It was very appreciated and enjoyed by the women. The second session included group discussion and Awareness Through the Body (ATB) activities. ATB was led by Lison. Both sessions were anchored by Devi and a volunteer, Sangeetha.

- **Making and using bio-enzymes:** The women learned how to make bio-enzyme for cleaning from citrus peels. The demonstrative session was offered by Nina when other Aurovilians participated as well. It was organized and translated by Devi.

- **Group discussions:** These are a time to share issues – personal and societal; listen to the opinions of others and receive support.
  Besides the regular discussions, this year we also had guests who participated and enriched the conversations. In July and August, we had a guest, Dev, who had lived at the Ashram and Auroville long ago and had worked with street children, shared his knowledge and perceptions. The women appreciated the sessions and also were receptive to his sharing.
  Later we had another guest, Lee, a Japanese teacher who participated in the discussions and made it lively by engaging the women in talking about their culture, comparing, contrasting and drawing similarities with Japanese culture, and singing songs. It was enriching to have the guests’ participation. The sessions were facilitated and translated by Devi.

- **Yoga:** The women after training with Muthukumari in the previous year are able to continue
the yoga sessions by themselves this year. Bondeepa, a volunteer, was able to assist them during a few sessions. She also individually evaluated each body type and offered advice for specific yoga asana and nutrition for each woman.

- **Aviva**: Weekly classes to exercise the pelvic region were offered by Indirani.
- **Chanting and singing**: The women continued to learn chants and traditional devotional songs from Harini.
- **Team Building**: A few sessions of games and activities to enhance individual awareness and working in teams were led by Dev.
- **Computer classes and English**: The women are continuing to learn Microsoft Office tools, particularly Word and Excel. A few English classes were offered by Dev but did not continue. The women very much want to learn English but it has not been easy to find a committed teacher.
- **Field trips**: As a culmination of the geography classes, we visited Savitri Bhavan where the women saw the paintings by Huta and explored the place. The second trip was to the Matrimandir and the Town Hall. The last trip was to the Ashram in Pondicherry. The big tour that was planned to Kanchipuram and Tiruvannamalai at the end of February has been postponed to July after the heat subsides.
- **Tailoring and embroidery**: Learning continues on the job.
- **YEN KALVI (college and career guidance)**: The placement cell coordinator at Pondicherry University was invited to give a session about courses and careers. 25 students from Edayanchavadi, Sanjeevi Nagar and Alankuppam participated. Transport was arranged for them to attend the session and it was appreciated by the students. Devi counseled a group of students at Annai Nagar as part of the program.

**Outcomes:**

The activities help the women gain confidence, become aware of themselves and of society.

**Reflections:**

LEC is still going through a period of transition. The year 2018-19 was another step forward in a new direction. There is more stability and clarity in terms of activities. LEC is a place that is attempting to integrate learning, working and progressing individually and as a community. This effort is an experiment that has started off well.
Ilaignarkal Education Centre

Started in 1976 as the first experimental prototype Outreach school for the workers of Auroville and their families, Ilaignarkal Education Centre has grown into a centre for overall education. We promote research on preservation of the language, local heritage, history, and lifestyle of the Tamil culture, always striving to be a bridge between Tamil speaking and non-Tamil speaking residents and developing sustainable communities.

Ilaignarkal harmonises internal and external development through an integrated working with children, young people, adults and communities. Its activities can be categorized into three Faculties:

1. **Faculty of Humanology**:
   Ilaignarkal is a place of unending education, of constant progress, providing overall development to youth that never ages. It offers:
   a) Primary English classes, vocational skills, hard and soft skills, adaptive and leadership skills, life skills, and personality development courses for the people of the Auroville region and collaborating and leading other youth centres.
   b) Education on ethical practice in early childhood; courses for bilingual early learners in primary schools, alternative schooling, learning from children what to teach them.
   c) Promotion of holistic education – Yoga for all ages, healthy cooking classes, development of herbal garden, health and healing courses.
   d) A nodal centre for the promotion of traditional medicinal practice (Siddha), integral healing.
   e) A place for counselling of children, adolescents and family.
   f) Community and human resource development.
   g) Scholarships for students from economically backward families.

2. **Faculty of Tamilology**:
   Ilaignarkal is a site of cultural researches for a living embodiment of an actual human unity.
   a) Research centre – research on Tamil Language, culture, healing techniques, demography, anthropological studies and organising workshops, seminars and international symposia.
   b) Preservation and promotion of heritage with an educational approach through celebrations of festivals as well as arts and culture.
   c) Publications – Newsletters and research article exposing young children to creating writing and encouraging young authors to write.

3. **Faculty of Futurology**:
   Ilaignarkal acts as a bridge between past and future, taking advantage of all knowledge from without and from within, reaching and teaching diverse populations.
   a) Pedagogy for teaching staff – innovative educational methods such as involving parents in their children’s learning, outside classroom methods, and method of Joyful learning.
   b) Home, school & community collaboration; creation of sustainable communities.
   c) Young creators and thinkers of tomorrow.
   d) Managers and leaders of tomorrow, educational leadership, eco-system-based leadership.
Our vision is to strive to be a pioneer in providing overall development for students who will become beacons of progress, human unity and harmony, following the Mother’s Charter and guidance. Our core values are human unity, worker’s welfare and co-evolution of the neighbourhood.

Activities of the year:

April 2018:
- Annual summer camp for girl students began. 20 students participated.
- Annual Day of Ilaignarkal Education Centre was celebrated. Best Youth Award was conferred upon Ms. Muthukumari from Arulvazhi Education Centre. Best Staff Award was conferred on J. Ayyanar. A cultural programme was presented by the students of the classical dance workshop and summer camp.

May 2018:
- Summer camp for girl children continued. The participants were taken to New Creation to participate in their annual day. An arts & crafts workshop was conducted by Mr. Selvam from Jwala Home, Pondicherry.
- Mrs. R. Meenakshi conducted a session for Newcomers (soon-to-be Aurovilians) as a part of the Aspiration Programme, creating awareness about the history of Tamil culture and its integral part in Auroville.

June 2018:
- World Yoga Day was celebrated. Around 100 participants attended the programme including students from in and around Auroville. A non-stop Akanda Yoga was performed and introductory sessions were conducted. The health benefits of yoga were explained and yoga sessions were conducted for children.

August 2018:
- International Youth Day was celebrated in collaboration with Mohanam Cultural Centre.
- We hosted 20 students of the Swadharma programme.
- Four sessions of Management and Leadership Training were conducted by volunteering consultant, Sean Antonie. Staff from Oli School, Svaram, Kinisi, Yatra Arts, Mohanam Cultural Centre, SEWA, and Paavender school participated and benefitted from the programme.

September 2018:
- Teacher’s Day was celebrated by the students. The event coincided with the celebration of Rabindranath Tagore anniversary celebrations. Teachers were felicitated.
- Sri Aurobindo Birth Anniversary & Krishna Jayanthi celebration was held together.
- Oli School teachers attended a workshop to learn folk and cultural songs, how to teach kids and to learn more about our culture.

October 2018:
- Gandhi Jayanthi celebration.
• Festival of Evolution – The concept of the theory of human evolution, transformation and divinity is well depicted through this doll show which is traditional and part of the Hindu culture. In the modern times there are interesting dolls that are so real and lively and give each Kolu a new dimension. The themes are chosen within the frame work of evolution. Students of Oli School, Vigneshwara School Sedurapet, Yatra Arts, Deependam, Nandanam, Paavendar School, Aikyam School, Udavi School, Arulvazhi Education Centre, Isai Ambalam School, Rayaputhupakkam evening school, Kottakarai evening school, and World Peace Centre, Salem visited the exhibition and enjoyed the display learning the history and science behind the festival. Auroville Radio and Auroville OutreachMedia documented the event.

• We celebrated Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's birth anniversary initiating science and technology.

November 2018:

• Children's Day was celebrated with the students remembering the First Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

December 2018:

• Christmas was celebrated at Ilaignarkal. The students put together the nativity and recreated the birth of Jesus by hanging star and lights.

January 2019:

• Celebration of Pongal festival, together with Mohanam Cultural Centre and the French Pavilion. It included traditional dances, games, stalls exhibiting overlapping cultural elements between France & Tamil Nadu, awareness talks, rituals, competitions and traditional health practice consultation (Siddha medicine). More than 500 visitors enjoyed the sweet rice Pongal and vegetable curry made from 28 native seasonal vegetables.

• Republic Day celebration – Flag hoisting, rendering of patriotic songs and an experience-sharing session where the elders told stories of the liberation movement and constitution of India, marked the day. Siddha vaithiyar Thiru. Selvam hoisted the flag.

• We hosted a delegation of 16 students from the Swadharma programme for training in our Joyful Learning Programme, and shared research materials of our studies on tradition, history and heritage.

• “Mahatma 150” – Ilaignarkal organised an exhibition during the last week of January, commemorating the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi displaying rare manuscripts, commemorative stamps, and documented moments of his final days which were beneficial to both students and teachers. The exhibition reached Ilaignarkal after travelling to 10 schools in Pondicherry.
February 2019:

- As a part of the yearlong Golden Jubilee celebrations of Auroville, Ilaignarkal Education Centre organised an exhibition on Indo-Tamil-French cultural relations from 18th February to 28th February at their exhibition venue. The rich culture and heritage of both India and France are the highlights of the exhibition. Snippets of history in the form of vintage maps were displayed in both English and French. Images of handwritten correspondence of Napoleon Bonaparte, ancient French architectural landmarks and temples of Tamil Nadu were showcased in this exhibition. A detailed introduction to Tamil literary scriptures, the art and science behind Kolam, and the history of Pondicherry was displayed in French attracting a lot of tourists and visitors. More than fifty people visited the exhibition and were appreciative of the display. We express our gratitude to Shri. A. Arivan of Pondicherry National Museum for his efforts in organising the exhibition.

- Mother’s birthday and Auroville’s birthday were celebrated with the staff and students, by revisiting the history of Auroville, its Charter and significance.

- Project Vivekanandham was initiated by Ilaignarkal staff and visiting team of dHIVE, which included dHIVE co-founder, Krishna Thiruvengadam who received our Best Youth award in 2017. The sessions included facilitator training and introductory sessions with the students. The project is for 12 months duration.

- Sharing Day was celebrated with our friends from far and near. Patrons of Ilaignarkal Education Centre from the bio region, literary circle, Voice of Peace group, participants of Project Vivekanandam and Aurovilians enjoyed a pleasant evening sharing their love and kindness.

March 2019:

- The Executive, R. Meenakshi was felicitated as the editor of “Auroville SeythiMadal” (which has been in circulation for the past 22 years) as a part of Women’s Day celebrations organised by the magazine “MagalirOsai” (Voice of Women) on the 22nd March, 2019 at the Puducherry Tamil Sangam.

- Ilaignarkal Education Centre brought out their official brochure. Copies have been circulated to SAIIER, Outreach Board and other partners.

Miscellaneous activities:

- Periodic interaction with nearly 20 female beneficiaries of BharathiEducare and their families, who receive support for education, health and social awareness.

- Literary circles on Thursdays lectured by learned Professors, writers and poets, which completed 12 years.

- Spoken Tamil classes to non-Tamil speakers.

- Regular monthly visit of Siddha Doctor under health and healing project.

- Monthly Voice of Peace gatherings at various centres within and around Auroville, where participants share their experiences.

- “Auroville SeythiMadal” – the Tamil Newsletter successfully entered its 23rd year of publication. The newsletter has a wide reader base and patrons across India and even abroad.

- “Vaasal” – the English Newsletter completed 11 issues successfully and looks forward to the new year to continue its fun-filled journey.
Outcomes:

We were able to spread the message of fraternity and harmony through our work. We believe in the ‘One world concept’ of Tamil leading us to the Universality.

Many residents of Auroville, workers, neighbours and friends of Auroville from far and near visited us and shared the experience.

Reflections:

Most meaningful this year was Project Vivekanandham. The project was initiated based on a request from the youth group of Vivekanandham community. The community consists of 25 families from socially and economically backward sections. The children of the community had no access to creative learning or extra-curricular activities and had approached Mrs. R.Meenaeshi for guidance. Ilaignarkal Education Centre with the help of dHIVE designed a project aimed at instilling values, creativity, problem solving skills improving their confidence and team participation. The aim of the project is to come up with a productive result which will improve their lifestyle and make them independent socially, economically and politically.

It was a challenge to gain the trust and confidence of the children – to get them engaged. But the trained facilitators had many interesting tools that kept the children attentive and soon they were enjoying the programme. Many showed proactiveness and expressed keen interest to learn new skills.

This project highlighted how the the socio-economic situation of a community has is first impact on the children. It puts immense pressure on them and brings down the confidence level of the growing children. Therefore, the project was customised to bring the community together with participation from the parents and schools. We also included children from the other village communities, to create a more multicultural and inclusive environment.

Conclusion:

The past year 2018-19 was challenging in terms of financial support but was also rewarding in imparting knowledge. People of all walks of life, from far and near approached Ilaignarkal for guidance and support. This showed the trust and reputation of Ilaignarkal in the bioregion. The year also saw a growth in non-Tamil speakers showing interest to learn the language.
Vaasal – English newsletter  
A project of Ilaignarkal Education Centre

Vaasal is an English newsletter published by Ilaignarkal Education Centre. The aim of Vaasal is to promote and create awareness about Tamil language, literature, culture and heritage. The scope of the project is also to enlighten the community about the links between Sri Aurobindo and Tamil.

Description of project:

The Auroville Charter was written out in many languages and the Mother spoke of having four languages in Auroville. As Auroville grows, we felt that the need to create awareness about Tamil language and culture is greater than ever. Through our educational interactions with volunteers, newcomers and Aurovilians, we found that a gap needs to be filled in terms of understanding Tamil language, heritage and culture. Vaasal is small step towards bridging the gap. While we have received an overwhelmingly positive response to our Vaasal, we want to keep going by engaging everyone who is interested to learn more about Tamil.

Vaasal (வசல் in Tamil) is a monthly newsletter in English on Tamil ideas, art and culture for anyone in Auroville who is from another native uur (ஊர், village, home, country, habitat, that place which belongs to you and you to it).

Our Vaasal has the following regular contents:

• Speak: Simple language classes in the Tamil language for those who are frustrated by their language inability and wish to learn to enjoy themselves in a easy, fun way.

• Unravelling culture: Introducing important traditions and rituals along with an open offer to participate.

• Enjoy: Original translations (and translations by Sri Aurobindo) of Tamil literature.

• Meet: Introducing senior Tamil Aurovilians, friends of Auroville and village elders, trendsetters in the community at large.

• Art: Highlighting native folk art and classical art of Tamil Nadu with meaningful illustrations.

• Think: Simple questions about cultural matters to smooth over daily life, such as – How can I show respect to someone older than me? What should I serve if I wish to invite someone for tea? How can I discuss a difficult subject with a neighbour?

• Health: Showcasing practical seasonal health tips using local plants and flowers.

• Architecture: Highlighting the history of some of the ancient temples in Tamil Nadu and their architectural magnificence.

Outcomes:

11 issues have been created so far. The reception of the newsletter has been overwhelming in that we are receiving more and more students who have expressed interest to learn the language. Currently, we have students from Italy, France and Switzerland. Our readership base has expanded considerably. We receive positive likes and visits to our newsletter website on a regular basis. Our patrons include Auroville International centers apart from the pavilions and units in Auroville.
Additionally, we have been able to introduce many forgotten treasures of Tamil in the field of literature, temples and cultural practices. We introduced “Riddles – Vidukathai” which was an oral tradition practiced in early times but has been diminishing lately. The riddles have invoked the interest to learn Tamil both in children and adults simultaneously.

The Aspiration group, which conducts “Yucca” and “Aspiration” programmes for newcomers and Aurovilians-to-be, has recommended Vaasal as inspiring and informational.

Reflections:

There have been many attempts in the past in terms of publications which aimed at creating awareness about Tamil language and culture. But these were not very successful as they were done at a very theoretical and advanced level. Vaasal was conceived to break this mould and try to be the voice of non-Tamil speakers addressing the common misconceptions about culture, heritage and language. An effort to introduce them to the beautiful world of Tamil, but in a gradual and planned pace that a non-Tamil reader would be able to cope with.

During the content research, the editors came across a lot of valuable information that highlighted the similarity between Tamil and other cultures, one being French. An outcome of that work was the celebration of Pongal festival at the French Pavilion in January, 2019.

Financial support has always been a challenge. While the vision of Ilaignarkal Education Centre is to serve the community free of cost, we hit the wall when it comes to compensating the project team for their commendable work.

Conclusion:

We acknowledge the encouraging reception of Vaasal and intend to keep it going. We plan to be more interactive with our reader base by encouraging them to contribute their experiences and knowledge.
Dehashakti School of Physical Education

The aim of Dehashakti School of Physical Education (Dehashakti means “the full power and perfection of the body”) is to provide an environment where children can develop, grow and enjoy themselves through various sporting activities individual and collective. To sculpt a strong base in the physical to be able to manifest the dream that is Auroville. Movement, mobility, control, health, fitness, strength, stamina, flexibility, balance and body skills are some of the materials we consider important to construct this base.

Team-games, individual games, athletics, gymnastics, fitness and swimming are the means used to develop the above mentioned qualities.

Importance is directed towards developing team spirit, fair-play, respect for teammates and opponents, the joyful attitude during competitions and games, and to encouraging all the children to actively participate irrespective of their skills and capacities.

Participation for all remains our priority rather than winning or losing.

Activities of the year:

At Dehashakti the aim is to introduce the students to a variety of disciplines since each brings an important element in the child's overall growth. The emphasis is to create an all-around sportsman/woman. The activities we offer our students include:

Athletics events for older students:
1) 100m race, 2) 400m race, 3) 800m race, 4) Long Jump, 5) Triple jump, 6) Shot put, 7) Tennis ball throw, 8) Relay race, 9) 30m race, 10) Standing triple jump

Games for older students:
1) Football, 2) Volleyball, 3) Basketball, 4) Softball, 5) Ultimate Frisbee, 6) Kho-kho, 7) Handball, 8) Cricket

Athletics events for younger students:
1) Shuttle run, 2) Five-bounding strides, 3) 30m race, 4) Tennis ball throw, 5) Standing triple jump, 6) Relay race

Games for younger students:
1) King & Fortress, 2) Lungadi, 3) Circulation ball, 4) Flag-game, 5) Futsal, 6) Dodge-ball, 7) Kho-kho, 8) Handball, 9) Burn Softball, 10) Table-tennis, 11) Badminton, 12) Obstacle course

Other activities:
1) Swimming, 2) Fitness, 3) Gymnastics

Outcomes:
This year we conducted the competitions (Aurolympics) in two phases: the Team-Aurolympics and then the Games. Three teams were made for each age group.

These competitions let the students to put into practice what they have learnt and compete with themselves and not others, push their own limits and demonstrate fair play, respect and the right attitude no matter what turn the situation may take.
For us teachers these moments offer a glimpse of each child’s character, reactions, strengths and weaknesses. These little details and observations go a long way in helping us deal with and accompany the children in their progress.

Once again our team organized the 5km run for the Auroville Marathon in which kids and adults took part and ran for the joy of running.

This year many of our children participated in friendly matches of Futsal that took place in Lycee Français de Pondichery. It was a great experience as many were playing a friendly match with another team for the first time. We hope to have these matches more often in the future.

We conducted feedback sessions for some groups which were very informative and help us to better design the program to fit the needs of our students.

Research highlights:

This year in the oldest age group, there was a mix of different ages ranging from 11 to 15. We thought it would be interesting to keep these kids together for the duration of the entire academic year, giving more responsibility to the oldest kids in the group when possible, so that they would progress together helping each other. The results were surprisingly positive, given the dynamics of the group which assembled kids from three different schools of Auroville and from very different backgrounds. Despite some moments of difficulty the kids had with each other, we managed to come to an understanding together with sessions of discussions during or after the classes.

Conclusion:

As always we strive to improve our program, to find new ways and methods to help all progress and benefit as much as possible. We would really like to communicate more with the schools our students come from in order to acquire more elements that would help us teachers as well as the students progress.
Playing sports can be essential for individual physical well-being and also has several social benefits like channelling aggressive energy through positive and beneficial activities. Sports can be a platform for excellence, allowing individuals to develop essential skills like concentration, discipline, cooperation, team work, endurance and to develop their full potential – thereby helping prepare the body for the eventual transformation as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Auroville Sports Resource Centre (AVSRC) coordinates regular trainings, coaching camps, friendly matches and tournaments as part of on-going efforts towards human unity through sports. Strengthening the relation between Auroville and its surrounding villages is another aim, which we try to reach through a growing communication based on the bilateral interest in sports and culture.

Activities of the year:

I. Kalari

A traditional Kalari has been constructed in the Aspiration sports ground. The Auroville Kalari team was very pleased to receive support from the Bajaj Auto CSR grant (2017-18) towards manifesting this. Although Kalari Payat has been practiced from the early 80’s in Auroville, with Kalari masters passing through over the years, a traditional Kalari was never established. Now the Aspiration Kshetram Kalari has been established and regular training for children and adults takes place there. This year, AVSRC supported the purchase of 2 sets of swords and shields for their weapons’ training program.

II. Kabaddi

The Auroville Kabaddi club organized the 45th Pudhucherry State Kabaddi Championship for men and women in Auroville at the New Creation sports ground from the 3rd to the 6th May 2018. This was a grand event celebrating the 50th anniversary of Auroville with all our neighbours through this Kabaddi Championship. Hundreds of people came to watch the matches from all around. Some 1,200 players (men and women) participated in the 124 league matches that were played. It is noteworthy to mention that an Auroville women’s Kabaddi team was also fielded in this
Championship. During the championship, a medical camp was also organized for the benefit of the players and the general public with the help from Padmavathy Hospital.

III. Badminton

AVSRC partially supported the annual Certitude Badminton league in August 2018. There were 8 categories of matches played: sub-junior girls doubles, sub-junior boys doubles, junior girls doubles, junior boys doubles, women's doubles, men's doubles, mixed doubles and outreach men.

IV. Basketball

The Certitude basketball league was organized only for the juniors this year, during the Auroville birthday week. Six mixed (boys and girls) teams consisting of 10 players each were formed from the Auroville and outreach school children to play in this league. Two matches every evening were played for a week from the 21st to the 28th of February.

For the seniors, an All India invitation basketball tournament was organized in a grand manner inviting teams from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Pudhucherry. This tournament celebrated Auroville 50th anniversary in the new indoor stadium constructed with funds from the 50th Anniversary Celebration GOI funds at New Creation sports ground.

V. Women’s music and culture

AVSRC supported the purchase of a much needed musical instrument: a veena for Aurohamsadhwni Art Center. This center helps organize music classes and coordinates performances for Auroville and Outreach children.

VI. Transport

AVSRC supports regular training in basketball and organizes transportation for Auroville and outreach school children participating in the basketball activities in Pudhucherry state.

VII. Rural volleyball

Regular trainings in volleyball and fitness for the youths and children are carried out by one of our staff at AVSRC for the 10 immediate villages surrounding Auroville. During these daily training sessions in the evenings and mornings, awareness in keeping their villages and play area clean is also done by arranging cleanup programs using the youth and children to pick up the non-bio degradable trash and disposing them accordingly.
Outcomes:

Sports, games and cultural activities are some of the best means to reach out to our neighbors that have positive and beneficial effects. Through these activities, AVSRC is able to reach out and support the youth and children of our bioregion for their physical well-being. Through regular trainings, matches and tournaments, several hundreds of children and youths are reached by our efforts towards a growing human unity.

Reflections:

These sports, games and cultural activities are very meaningful approaches towards our efforts in approaching human unity. The challenges are how to avoid and not muddle into the local village politics knowingly or unknowingly when a large number of local populations are involved. It is a delicate approach that is learned through time and mistakes.

The joy of sharing through these activities and programs while also teaching and learning from these activities and programs of the ways of life in both the villages and Auroville is very enriching especially in the context of the multicultural, multilingual multi-ethnicity of the people involved.

Conclusion:

The sports and games activities coordinated by AVSRC involve a lot of people from the villages surrounding Auroville, especially the children and youth of both genders. Even the elderly and the village headmen / Panchayat leaders participate with joy as they feel happy and honored to meet and present the medals and trophies to the winning youths and children. The youths, for their part, participate in the sports and games activities with joy and competitiveness and shine in these activities to be recognized as good sportspersons. Such interactions bring about a better understanding of one another and help to create friendship, goodwill, harmony and pave the way for Unity.

AVSRC would like to improve / upgrade the sports facilities and sports infrastructures for the Auroville bioregion. In this respect, AVSRC has been approached by the Auroville Working Committee to help develop the Adventure sports ground. A concept development proposal has been submitted, and we will be taking the project forward.
Eluciole Circus School

by Kalou

This last year we had circus classes every morning and afternoon. More and more children are interested to come and participate. With the new high roof, the students could really increase their level! We still have a big leaking problem with the roof, which means that every monsoon I have to close the school which makes me sad. It is important that the children can have continuity in their practice.

A few circus people came and helped me with some classes during the year. This was really helpful, and also it is interesting for the children to have different people with different energies conduct them.

At the end of the school year, the different groups from Kindergarten, Nandanam and TLC who had been working throughout the year gave their performances for their families and friends. Everything went very well.

Trip to see Cirque du Soleil

Something amazing happened to us: a friend accepted to finance our trip to go to see “Cirque du Soleil” which was in India for the first time! We went with my advanced students to Mumbai to see Cirque du Soleil perform in December 2018. It was an amazing experience for all of us, and very special for my students. It was really inspiring and motivated all my students. They realized that if they like to continue and develop this art, they can work professionally with some circus art companies and go around the world.

After that experience, the homework I give them was to create their own show by themselves, and they did very well (you can see them on YouTube).

Vertical dance

We made a special new creation for the first Auroville Art Camp & Festival, which had the theme “a new world is possible”. It was a very strong and interesting work to bring us deep inside ourselves. We did a vertical dance – a completely new physical discipline in Auroville that I would
like to develop – on the wall of CRIPA on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of March for the closing of the artists week. It was a big success, people really enjoyed and we are planning to do it again in September.

We finally have the authorization to bring and install the metal sphere created for the 2018 SEAS ("Soul Encounters for the Auroville Soul") performance to CRIPA. In August we will start the work, repetition and creation of a new performance with the students for February 2020.

**Reflections:**

This year we learned patience – the students were waiting to start to work again with the sphere for one year and a half! They are really eager to start again after waiting so long!

The leaking problem at the circus was also a challenge for my students because they cannot practice during that time, and it slows down their progress. We learn acceptance, surrender.

**Conclusion:**

It is magical to see how the children, month after month, progress and are able to do what they could not do a few months ago. I love that. I always tell them that everything is possible if we really believe it. Another quality that I share with them is to believe in themselves.
Centre for Research in the Performing Arts (CRIPA)

CRIPA is a rehearsal hall, the first phase of a Performing Arts Centre in Kalabhumi, devoted to music, theatre and dance rehearsals, performances and classes. CRIPA provides space for these activities, and fosters, supports and encourages research into the Performing Arts in Auroville.

Activities of the year:

This year has been very prolific as we have hosted more than 30 different performers for a little more than 45 performances in all the arts of the stage: piano, choir, theatre, dance, lyrical concerts and traditional music, mixing local and foreign artists.

Despite the construction work on Phase 2 of CRIPA, we have continued to host regular classes and dance workshops, theater, piano, chants and performing arts in general.

This year CRIPA was also partner to three major events in Auroville: the Capoeira Festival, the Tango Festival and the Auroville Art Camp & Festival for which we made available the space and whatever technical means it was possible for us to provide.

This year we had the pleasure to host three shows especially dedicated to children and teenagers: songs of the Youth Choir directed by Nuria, the theater performance “Odd Eye See” with Unicorn Collective, and “Awakening Bird” for the little ones with Carlos Antunes, a volunteer with the Auroville Theatre Group.

Outcomes:

We provided for rehearsals leading to performances attended by hundreds of Aurovilians, adults and children, volunteers, guests and guest artists. Classes attracted hundreds of students in theatre, dance and music. Workshops provided a platform for interaction between students and guest artists from Auroville, India and abroad.

Reflections:

The diversity and the quality of the performances represented to us a real work at a professional level for beautiful performances in Auroville, India and Internationally.

It is a great satisfaction for us to involve young people in the performing arts and so closely mix culture and education.

Thanks to the support of SAIER we were able to acquire quality sound equipment giving us autonomy of use that we did not have before. In addition, we regularly share this material, as well as lights to external places like Kalabhumi or the Visitor’s Centre.

For next year we would like to acquire video equipment (projector) of good quality because it is now used in more than 70% of productions.
Kalabhumi Open Art Studio

by Nele

The open studio project in Kalabhumi has been created to give a chance to students of all ages to work and learn art in a well-equipped studio. It has been set up as a collaborative space to facilitate interaction between artists and interested students, to allow a ‘real live’ learning experience.

Many people at some point in their life feel the need to express themselves through art. Often this need is not developed because either one thinks one is not good enough, or because one does not have the necessary facilities. The Kalabhumi Art Studio offers an atmosphere that is free of judgment where a diverse range of skills can be developed. The guided classes are free and grouped according to level in order to overcome these difficulties.

Students from Transition School and Last School appreciate the small groups with individual help and professional equipment and the art studio atmosphere.

Some artists like to come to the studio’s free sessions to be able to exchange ideas and gain inspiration. The studio is there to provide all those who wish to pursue art, for whichever reason, and opportunity to do so.

There are currently three artists teaching groups of students ranging from ages 9 to 75. The classes are planned and guided and there is also one afternoon set aside for more experienced students to come and work on their own projects, while exchanging ideas and critiques and so inspiring one another. The studio is fully equipped with professional art materials to enable students to try out different techniques with quality materials.

Activities of the year:

In the last year we had 9 groups with three to five students in each group:

• 3 groups with school students aged up to 14 years.
• 4 groups comprised of teenagers and young adults.
• 2 groups with adult students.
The space is comprised of two studios, as well as a new storeroom/studio, and a covered outdoor space. A ceramic studio will be built this summer to increase the range of skills on offer to include ceramics.

We are three teachers:

- Stephanie teaches the younger students.
- Sabrina leads the ceramic and painting and art appreciation.
- Nele offers painting, sculpture and art appreciation.

Sabrina and Nele also work as artists in the studios.

There are different courses for children and adults, some are more technique oriented, others are more free expression. Art can be a way to concentrate, understand, to see the world from different angles, to let go of ones old patterns and dare the new, unknown.

The studio aims to create a space in which this is made possible in a free environment with guidance from the teachers.

Outcomes:

The studio serves at a space to meet, explore art, exchange ideas, learn and teach. The group dynamic is very helpful to inspire and find new ideas.

Students were able to work and complete their portfolios and apply to art school. Others came to interact and work on their art as a way to relax and find their creativity.

In our class discussions it emerged how important it is for the art to observe with attention, to get inspired, find ways and techniques to materialise an idea, with methods like aquarelle, sketch, acrylic paint, spray paint with stencils, sculpture in clay or paper mache, collage and many more.

We worked on composition and proportions by doing specific exercises in life drawing and still life study. We discussed the different ‘styles’ of art, from realism to expressionism, abstract, pop art and conceptual art, to be able to better understand the infinite possibilities of expressing oneself.

We provided skills to enable the students to accomplish their intention whether it was sketching, working on interaction of colours for the painting class or creating a sculpture.

Research highlights:

This year we taught clay work and sculpture to students from Last School. This ceramics course focused on the technique of pinching and coiling to build all possibilities of shapes and forms. During these sessions, discussions and debates arose around functionality versus form and art versus craft. With the adult group we explored the technical aspect of making sculptures, from the type of clay used to ensuring the sculpture does not crack while drying or firing.

These courses will be further expanded when our new ceramic section is completed after the summer.

In the painting class for adults the main focus was on composition and techniques of how to use the different paint materials. The younger children worked on drawing skills and perspective, and graphic collage. We also included art history and discussions on art theory in all the classes where possible. Students learned how to apply layers of colours and how to use the theory of colours to enhance the vibrancy and create a feeling of space. I also encouraged students to let go of the feeling to have to succeed to make a ‘nice’ artwork, continuing to work in known patterns, and instead to try new and daring painting techniques. Often it is difficult for the student to work independently, as they feel there is a risk that they might ruin the artwork. The studio atmosphere wants to help tackle that fear of not succeeding.
In this context we worked intensively on expressive brushstrokes, calligraphy and energy lines. This supports the more intuitive, expressive way of painting. This helped the artwork to come alive. It is the balance between the free intuitive and the organising mind that creates the best work.

**Reflections:**

This year we increased the space available with the addition of a new storeroom/studio. This is a wonderful expansion of the project and will create more space for work and better order and storage for the equipment. This comes just in the right time, as with the new activity of ceramics we will require a lot of space.

The ceramic activity has attracted a new set of students, and it has been great to be able to work with clay as a new medium. It opens up a whole new horizon of sculptural projects.

Next year all classes will be scheduled outside of school hours. Previously the students would attend courses at the studio as part of the school schedule, but this became increasingly more difficult to coordinate with the projects going on in the regular classes. To have separate classes in the studio will ensure that the projects can be completed without interruptions, which can be frustrating for both student and teachers. As we have three teachers and the space to have more classes at the same time, classes for those students who are interested will be scheduled after school or on Fridays, so there will be no issues of timings for the students.

**Conclusion:**

It has been a good year, with a lot of innovation. The ceramic work has been a wonderful addition to the activities, as has the addition of the new storeroom/studio.

I also hope to be able to buy a projector so we can use the new storeroom/studio for projections, as it is an easy space to darken with curtains. This will make art history classes possible, with screening of slideshows and art documentaries. It will also make the work with light projection art possible. I am very much looking forward to sharing this with the students.
Aurofilm

Since the last three decades and a half, the aim of Aurofilm has been and is to use Cinema as a tool for education, artistic and creative research. Along with the production of short films during the year and setting up regular screenings of quality films, an annual film festival and other related events, we wish to offer to the Auroville community and the attending visitors, a way to develop taste and discernment as well as to strengthen the sense of Unity, which goal Auroville is aiming at. All this is done non commercially thanks to the SAIIER umbrella.

Activities of the year:

After a rather chaotic last year – in terms of film shows – our team (still composed of Gérard Carabin, Susana Cabra and Surya CR) restarted in April its regular Friday film screenings at Multi Media Centre (MMC), Town Hall, and almost without interruption (except for 2 weeks in May with MMC being closed for repairs, and the month of June for our team’s summer break).

At the end of September (24th to 30th), the first ever Pondicherry International Film Festival (PIFF) was organized, and thanks to our long time contact with film critic and now director of the PIFF, Saibal Chatterjee from Delhi, we were asked to relay this one week Pondicherry event in Auroville. The Bharat Nivas Auditorium was not available, so at MMC 9 long and 7 short film were presented by the Cinema Paradiso team, while Aurofilm chose 4 long and 2 shorts to be shown towards the end of the event.

On another hand, we successfully organized our annual PCIC (Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema), in its 11th issue with a selection of 10 films within 3 days. The festival was held like all previous years at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas, which was finally reopened for cultural programs. (Please see separate report.)

Once more our selection of films for the above event originated from our participation in the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa last November. (Please also see our separate report for this activity.)

In August, in collaboration with the Auroville Theatre Group, we had a special screening of Orson Welles’ famous film “Citizen Kane” (1940) since their performance was around Orson Welles, a creative genius!

Regarding our film production work, our young film director from Kerala, Jinu Thomas, finally completed his documentary film on Auroville. Its final title is “Auroville – From Seed To Sapling”; it is a 51 min. film retracing the Auroville journey from its inception until now, 50 years after. On the Auroville’s 51st Birthday (28 February 2019) Aurofilm premiered it at the Multi Media Center. The 150 seat auditorium was full, and Jinu was present with us. Surya introduced the work and after the screening, the film director gladly and simply answered quite many questions the audience had. The interaction was warm and pleasant; the audience appreciative, in spite of a few technical flaws that we are in the process of correcting. The sound engineer happened to be here as well and could clarify a comment. Jinu then placed the film on YouTube and we kept it there for a month. Now we are in the process of finalizing the subtitles and produce a proper DVD with several subtitle tracks on it. This new documentary should soon be available at the Visitor’s Centre and with us for distribution for whoever wishes to screen it.
Outcomes:

Between April 2018 and March 2019, a total of 56 films were selected and screened. So, we can say we are somehow back to our usual average. Our selection still goes for 8 films categories that are evenly distributed every month all along the year. It benefits mostly the adults as we are not specialised in children’s movies – even though we do have some films for the general audience and/or very much for the young ones, spread out in the year. We always keep in mind some of the words the Mother said about Cinema: “Children below fifteen years will see only educational films. Care should be taken in selecting films to be shown in Auroville.” “All that encourages the lower movements and actions must be avoided.” And “Films are permitted in the Ashram not as an amusement but as part of education. So we are faced with the problem of education.” These statements have been our guidance through all these years, even though we do not want to be rigid about the subject. Education is a vast domain and the Mother allows space for discerning and deciding the most appropriate – according to where we are, and what is available.

Reflections:

Perhaps because we tend to repeat our usual activities year after year without much change but for a new film festival coming our way (the PIFF), or a new film production from time to time (like with Jitu Thomas last year), we have taken the challenge to prepare ourselves – and materially in our film studio in the Cultural Zone – for new programs for the coming year. We are hopeful and enthusiastic about that project and have seen that immediately after the thoughts came, resource persons started to appear around us! We should not fear anything and just prepare some good programs with qualified invitees and useful & thoughtful topics. With efficient communication we will call the interested youth and people who would like to go further in the research with us. This is the part we want to guide in a more specific way through our next year project of film related happenings in Kalabhoomi.
Attending the 49th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa
A project of Aurofilm

Aurofilm aims at fostering education, research and personal progress through the medium of Cinema. Cinema at its best is complete and fulfilling as an art form and may act as a valuable tool in improving our human nature. For this, Aurofilm offers regular (weekly) film screenings at Multi Media Centre (Town Hall) and at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium for our special events. We also plan to restart using our Kalabhoomi studio for “Open Classes” – all this for the benefit of all the Auroville residents and our visitors.

In order for this work to be propagated, research based on meaningful and artistic cinema requires the Aurofilm team to be constantly in touch with the world of film production and distribution. India’s well organized international film festivals provide the perfect milieu for this activity. Hence, it is our primary objective to attend one of these events once a year.

Description of project:
Every year, the Directorate of Film Festivals of India (DFF), a Government of India organization (from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting) along with the state of Goa through the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG, Panaji), organize “IFFI” – the International Film Festival of India. It is a high quality event that showcases and promotes the best films from a global platform, which includes India as well. It facilitates the meeting of all professionals from the film family (production and distribution). It is an eight-day event that has existed since 2004 in its permanent set up in the capital of Goa, Panaji. The first IFFI was set up back in 1952 by the Government of India, as they surely recognised the various and numerous beneficial aspects of Cinema for the society.

The 49th edition of the IFFI was held from 20 to 28 November 2018. Susana and Surya from the Aurofilm team went to attend as it is a well-organised and now renowned event that helps with our work of the year ahead and further.

The two of us attended six days of the event (20th to 26th). Even though we would have preferred to be there until the closing, it was very helpful and, as planned, attending the many film screenings in the different festival sections was fruitful. Some of the sections were:

- **International Competition, with 15 film from the World** competing for the prestigious Golden Peacock award. We saw 4 of them.
- **“Gandhi Medal Films”/ICTF UNESCO** with 12 films. This category is a competitive section for films that explore the themes of peace, harmony and unity – this year we watched 5 of them and selected the only Indian production for our Panorama in Auroville, the beautiful “Walking With the Wind” from Ladakh.
- **World Panorama** had 66 titles and we saw 8 of them, among which stood out the Tibet-USA-India film “The Sweet Requiem” by Ritu Sarin and Tenzing Sonam.
- **Indian Panorama with 26 films** – long feature films from the different states of the country from which we watched 12 and selected 6 for our own Panorama in Auroville. The practice to screen documentaries & short films before every long feature film in the Indian Panorama section still goes on and it is a very good initiative that gives the festival delegates the opportunity to discover these otherwise forgotten items – for everyone is busy with more glamorous or famous films in different places. There were 21 short films, we could watch 8 and selected 3 of them for Auroville.
• **Centenary Award for the Best Debut Feature Film** had 7 films and we could watch the Tamil film “To Let”.

• **Special presentation of Tunisia** with 3 recent film from that country. We could see one as it is rare to see such countries productions.

• **Lifetime Achievement Award** and retrospective of Israeli director Dan Wolman with 3 of his films (we saw one of them “Hide and Seek”, 1980, and appreciated very much for its sensitivity and its subtle message).

So, as always, our week was full from the first minute we arrive in Panaji: registering to get our accreditation as Delegates is the first thing we must do upon arriving. Without our badge, brochures and film schedule, we are nobody in the festival and would not even think of entering the premises! With our kit we can then start to navigate as efficiently as possible through all the programs and activities. Every day we had to be at 8 am to join a line already formed at the ticket counters in the festival premises. A maximum of three films per person can be booked per day, with the possibility to attend one or two more – schedule and seat availability permitting – as well as energy... Our program was always very tight, filled with many hours of film screenings – with walking from one movie hall to the other, joining their waiting lines, taking a snack or drink break, attending part of a forum or tracking a press conference from a screen somewhere. Our meeting with deputy director at DFF and in charge of the Indian Panorama, Ms. Tanu Rai, is a must if we want an access to the Indian films for our Panorama in Auroville. We also meet NFAI in charge to maintain a contact there – and because we have a 3 decade long association with them – and some producers, technicians, screen-writers, journalists, film students and so on. Some film directors, journalists, producers and other people recognized us and we could exchange our perspectives on the festival organisation and film selection, give their and take our recommendations based on film seen or known by our interlocutor or ourselves. Our days were more than full and the week was (as foreseen) was quite tiring – yet, highly enriching.

**Outcomes:**

Attending IFFI enabled us to select 10 good films for our 3 day “Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema” festival. We have also renewed our contact with the Directorate Film Festivals from Delhi. This is the most important as this institution is the one giving us permission to screen these new films in Auroville; most of them are not yet released in the country. Finding authorization from the various producers to screen them publicly in Auroville would be an impossible task – hiring fees would be exponentially expensive as Aurofilm is not in the regular distribution circuits and our presence is not established well enough. At the festival, we also met directors, technicians and film producers and could directly speak with them, presenting ourselves and possibly invite them. Many of them have heard about Auroville and would be (or are) delighted to have their film presented in Auroville for the promotion of their work and because they trust Auroville is a wonderful platform for art, if not for progress and being a model in many ways for the world.

To actively attend this film festival is the best opportunity for the Aurofilm team to follow what happens in the realm of film production from India and the world. The Auroville community ultimately benefits in being exposed to quality Indian and world cinema through the screenings we organize throughout the year. The various films we choose to watch during the festival are also for reference, for our film making and research.

Our presence and outreaching effort in such events/festivals in India also somehow shows that Auroville is a place where culture and art is a major component of research and where we believe that quality cinema is an important aspect of our quest for human unity and progressive change in our human nature. All in all, with this exhaustive program, we really make good use of the place and time to gather contacts and material for our work for the year.
Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema
A project of Aurofilm

The aim of Aurofilm is to use Cinema as a tool for education and artistic and creative research. By organizing regular non commercial screenings of high quality films and related events we wish to offer to the Auroville community a way to develop taste, discernment and openness towards a change in consciousness. This year again we organized in Auroville a 3 day “Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema” (PCIC) aiming at sharing the best of today’s films produced in the different states of the country with the Auroville audience.

Description of project:
This year was the 11th issue of our festival, dedicated to the 2018 productions of Indian Cinema. We started to prepare for it in November 2017 when Susana and Surya from the Aurofilm team went to attend the 49th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa. This well organised and now renowned event is our main tool for this work (see separate report).

We contacted the Directorate of Film Festivals (DFF) in Delhi to request authorization to receive and screen 9 films for which DFF has rights, and we were lucky – and happy – to get confirmation for all the requested titles. We contacted another office in the Ministry for three films which had not yet received their Censor Board number and for which we had to request an exemption. We also wrote to one Marathi film director to request to screen his film. With the program set, we started working on a more definitive schedule, gather synopsis and pictures for the festival brochure and the announcements. Muthiah Kasi was our graphic designer for the festival brochure, and Susana designed individual posters for each film as well as our two main posters for the event.

As festival time came closer, the last preparations such as ordering snacks and flowers, printing and placing placards and posters in various key places in Auroville, checking the electrical arrangements and projection equipment at Bharat Nivas, and finally decorating the Auditorium were done timely.

The main theme and aim of this panorama is the discovery of the Cinema landscapes, people, voices and sounds from the different states of India through short and long most recent films. We had 5 short films: 2 from Maharashtra, “Aushad/The Medicine” (in Marathi) and “Monitor” (in Hindi), one from Odisha “Malai/Ice Cream”, 1 from Tamil Nadu (in English) with “The World’s Most Famous Tiger” and 1 from West Bengal, “Sampurak”. Then 5 long features with “Sa/Simple Notes” and “Uronchondi” from West Bengal, “Baaram/Burden” from Tamil Nadu, “Sudani From Nigeria” from Kerala, and “Walking With the Wind” from Ladakh.

The large variety of issues these ten films brought with them and the original ways they were made and told, could without any doubt trigger interest and connection from everyone in the audience. On another note, with the exception of the Malayalam film “Sudani From Nigeria” which did well commercially in Kerala and the tiger documentary produced by National Geographic, all the others are not really seen in India and abroad. They are considered ‘non-commercial’, ‘regional’ or ‘art films’ and as such will unfortunately have a limited public exposure. In Auroville, with this annual Panorama, our international audience can discover some of these little gems.

Outcomes:
Over the three days 22, 23 and 24 February, many people came to enjoy the Indian films. Aurovilians, Newcomers, students and interns, volunteers, young and older people, Westerners and
others, Indians from different regions and states of India. Tea and snack between two films provided moments to exchange on Indian Cinema and to get informed about the next film and what would happen. We produced and printed 250 brochures. All screenings were introduced by Pavneet Kaur, an Auroville architect by profession, but mostly for us here a film lover and speaker for this art form. She had written short introduction speeches to prepare the audience to better appreciate each film and their context.

Reflections:
We felt that this year’s 3-day Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema was well received and had its own success thanks to the titles selected. Our public is also now more aware of our aims and reacts very positively – even though there are still a plethora of other cultural events overlapping at the time of the year in Auroville!

Future plans:
Next year we may not repeat our Panorama as it has been for the past decade. Some may remember that much before this PCIC in its current formula existed, we used to present annual film festivals and/or retrospectives, with invited personalities from the film world to talk about Cinema. We plan to restart such events, mostly in the form of “Open Classes” that will take place in our film studio, in Kalabhoomi, in the Cultural Zone of Auroville.
Savitri Bhavan

Savitri Bhavan has grown up since its inception in 1995 as an educational centre dedicated to fostering awareness and understanding of the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which are the underlying foundation of the aims and ideals of Auroville. Its purpose is to gather and create and make available to Aurovililians and members of the interested general public all kinds of materials and activities which will support this awareness and understanding.

The regular Research Activities of Savitri Bhavan continued throughout the year, grouped under the headings of Outreach, Research Projects, and Preparation of Learning Materials. During this year a significant increase in Outreach activities occurred with the addition of several new regular classes and courses, now totalling 14 in all.

Some highlights of the year:

• **Visit of 70 Senior Ashramites, inmates of Ashram Care Homes on 15.4.2018.** After a brief introduction to the work of the Savitri Bhavan, the visitors saw the exhibition of Meditations on Savitri paintings made by Huta and the Mother in the 1960s. Many of them remembered the original exhibition held in the Ashram in February 1967 and enthusiastically shared their memories and experiences. They then visited the Matrimandir. For some of them it was their first visit there. Afterwards refreshments were shared by all in the SAWCHU building. This visit was organised by members of the Golden Chain group of ex-students of the Ashram School (SAICE) and proved a very happy family experience.

• **The Golden Chain group** have been offering voluntary service at Matrimandir and Bharat Nivas monthly for several years. After this visit with the senior Ashramites they offered to include Savitri Bhavan in their programme, and subsequently joined Savitri Bhavan staff and well-wishers in cleaning and clearing of our complex on 19.8.18, 21.10.18 and 3.2.19. It is expected that these visits for collaborative service will continue regularly in future, strengthening the bonds between members of the Mother’s family based in the Ashram and Auroville.

• **Delegates of the West Bengal Chapter of Sri Aurobindo’s Action** visited the Ashram and Auroville at the end of December 2018 and were accommodated in Udavi School. Well in advance, their leader Shri Subroto Sen contacted the Savitri Bhavan team and requested us to organise a full day programme on Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri for the Group on 29.12.2018. They arrived by 9am and explored the building and grounds and especially the Picture Gallery where the Meditations on Savitri paintings created by the Mother with Huta are now on permanent display. Then Shraddhavan presented an outline of Sri Aurobindo’s epic to the group. In the afternoon Dr. Vandana Graft spoke to them about Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Author’s Note’ to his poem and how this can give guidance on practicing his yoga.

• **Visit of the Honourable Defence Minister of India, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman.** The Honourable Minister visited Auroville on 2.2.19. After visiting Matrimandir she proceeded to Savitri Bhavan where she was welcomed by Working Committee and Governing Board members along with Mr. M.V. Chunkath, Secretary of the Auroville Foundation. After offering her homage to Sri Aurobindo’s statue she proceeded to Savitri Bhavan’s Sangam Hall where a short film about Auroville made by Auroville Outreach Media was screened. Then the Hon’ble Minister addressed the community members present. Afterwards an informal get-together was held in the garden of Savitri Bhavan where about 70 Aurovililians and guests had the opportunity to interact with the Minister.
Construction:

• Thanks to GoI grant funds received through SAIIER the Meditations on Savitri Picture Gallery was extended during the year, enabling the entire series of 472 paintings made by the Mother with Huta during the 1960s to now be kept on permanent display according to the Mother’s wish instead of only in rotating exhibitions as in the past. The new extended gallery was inaugurated by Mr. M.V. Chunkath, Secretary of the Auroville Foundation, on International Yoga Day, 21.6.18. Further work on the Gallery is foreseen for 2018-19, to provide protective shading for the artworks and visitors.

• Multimedia Studio: completion of the Picture Gallery construction also enabled completion of the space on the Ground Floor earmarked for the development of a long-planned Multimedia Studio. An equipment grant received through SAIIER and some donations of equipment from well-wishers enabled the new studio to be activated from October 2018 onwards. Later, in January 2019, the working conditions there were enhanced by laying a heavy-duty carpet and hanging curtains to improve the acoustics of the area. The following projects were taken up immediately:
  ◦ Preparation of a second (revised) edition of the Savitri around the World complete reading of Sri Aurobindo’s epic by 473 individuals representing 101 countries around the world, intended to be completed and released on the Centenary of the Mother’s final arrival in Pondicherry on 24 April 2020.
  ◦ Video editing of English of Savitri classes for posting on the Savitri Bhavan website (see details below under “Study Aids and Learning Materials”).
  ◦ Editing of video films as required.

All the activities being pursued in the Multimedia Studio involve the preparation of new Study Aids and Learning Materials.
Outreach Activities:

1) Exhibitions:
Apart from Huta’s paintings, and the two exhibitions kept on regular display (“Sri Aurobindo: a life-sketch in photographs” and “Glimpses of the Mother”) four other special exhibitions were held during the year:

• The ‘White Peacock’ group of students of Auroville schools arranged a display of their Ceramic Art from 21 April to 5 May 2018.

• The Gruppo Germoglio of Modena in Italy visited the Ashram and Auroville in the winter. They showed 61 oil paintings inspired by Savitri created by their leader Aghni (Giovanni Tonioni) in the Savitri Bhavan’s Square Hall from 2 to 26 January 2019.

• From 1st to 15th Feb. 2019 an exhibition of paintings by respected Ashram artist Priti Ghosh was displayed in the Square Hall. During this time, a film of her paintings inspired by Sri Aurobindo’s poem Love and Death was shown in the presence of the artist on February 4th, 2019.

• During Auroville’s ‘Birthday Week’ from February 21-28, 2019 the ‘Divine Flowers’ Group of Aurovilians displayed an impressive exhibition of plants, cut flowers and flower paintings and photographs with their spiritual significances given by the Mother. On two days special activities relating to flowers were arranged for visiting children.

2) Talks, Study Camps and special programmes:
Several talks were held in the course of the year, attended by Aurovilians and members of the interested general public:

• “Dealing with Adverse Forces on the Path of Yoga” by Dr. Alok Pandey on April 21st 2018 (organised by Santé).

• “The Book of Eternal Night”: talk given by Dr. Alok Pandey in the Sangam Hall on August 22nd 2018 as a concluding summary to his regular post-darshan study camp on Savitri at the Sri Aurobindo Society’s Beach Office in Pondicherry.

• “Love – The Truth that Saves”: the 9th annual Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture was given in Savitri Bhavan’s Sangam Hall by Dr. Larry Seidlitz on February 19th 2019 in the presence of Dr. Nadkarni’s widow, Mrs. Meera Nadkarni.

• An exploration of the symbolic language and imagery of Sri Aurobindo’s poem Ilion was led by Aurovillian Claude de Warren on February 7th 2019.
Study Camps:

- Two study camps in Tamil on Savitri were organised on 7-9 September 2018 and 1-3 March 2019. These were led by Bhuvana Sudarshan and attended by about 20 people from various Sri Aurobindo Centres in Tamil Nadu, who gave enthusiastic feedback and requested that the series should be continued at least twice a year in future.

Programmes for Newcomers:

- Regular weekly classes in Tamil based on the compilation “References on Auroville in Mother’s Agenda” were led by Dhanalakshmi on Wednesdays 3.30-4.30pm. This programme has been appreciated by the Entry Board and mentioned in their official report.

Programmes for children:

- Savitri Bhavan provided some special programmes for children in response to requests from teachers of Transition and Deepanam schools. In consultation with the teachers, Deepanam students and teachers visited Savitri Bhavan on 14 August 2018, and a class from Transition came on 25 October 2018.
- Auroville Outreach organised programmes by the Mohanam Cultural Centre for children of the Bio-region at Savitri Bhavan on 23 October, 13 November, 4 December 2018 and 22 January 19, as well as on 5 and 12 February 2019.

Publications:

In addition to two issues each of our regular journals “Invocation” (English, appears in April and November annually) and “Prarthana” (Tamil, appearing in February and August) three more publications were brought out during 2018-19:

- *Savitri Bhavan: The Buildings*. This publication is offered in response to the widespread interest in the architecture of Savitri Bhavan expressed by both students and professionals.
Study Aids and Learning Materials:

- A number of useful and interesting books relating to Savitri and the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were again added to the Savitri Bhavan Reference collection during the year. A list of some of them has been published on page 60 of the April 2019 issue of Invocation. http://savitribhavan.org/Invocation/. Two of the gifted items stand out especially: first a handsomely bound bilingual version of Savitri created by Aurovilian Gerard Marechal, in which the original English and Satprem's French translation are presented in columns side by side on the page so that each line in English is matched by the corresponding French version. This work will remain as a precious reminder of our brother Gerard, who passed away very shortly after the book was issued. The second, gifted by Aurovilian Emanuele, has been created over many years by his grandmother Yudi, who painstakingly wrote out her Italian translation of Sri Aurobindo's epic in beautiful calligraphy. Emanuele and his brother have created a facsimile of this remarkable work in three volumes, and have kindly presented a set to Savitri Bhavan.

- Inspired by earlier work by Shri M.P. Pandit of the Ashram, which was continued by a group of Italian Savitri-lovers, the task of preparing brief summaries of each of the 49 Cantos of Sri Aurobindo’s epic was undertaken. The resulting text has been published in the 50th issue of our journal Invocation (April 2019) and is also available on the website http://savitribhavan.org/Invocation/

- The regular weekly class on The English of Savitri reached the end of Sri Aurobindo’s epic on 29.12.2016. Videos of these classes have been made only from the beginning of Book Three onwards (since before that suitable equipment was not available). When the class again took up the poem from the beginning on 02.02.2017 it was decided to produce a full cycle of films of the classes covering the whole poem from beginning to end of the poem. To accelerate this process, training in video-editing is being given to four Aurovilian volunteers. It is hoped that the full cycle can be made available by the Centenary of the Mother’s final arrival in Pondicherry on 24 April 2020.

- From 17.12.2008 to 20.09.2017 regular weekly classes on Sri Aurobindo’s book The Life Divine were held. Audio recordings were made of each study session. Now a young aspiring Aurovilian has volunteered to transcribe and edit these recordings, to increase his own understanding of Sri Aurobindo’s major philosophical work, as well as possibly producing a publishable guide to the text. This huge task has already been launched.

Reflections:

With only 24 hours notice, arrangements for the visit of the Hon’ble Defence Minister were made by the staff of Savitri Bhavan and Hostel. Afterwards appreciative thanks were received from the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation and members of the Working Committee for the work done.

Savitri Bhavan is almost completely dependent on donations for maintaining its buildings, grounds, equipment and activities, and during this year a deficit of funds was experienced for a time. Members of the Management Team explored ways to reduce expenses and access additional funds. Staff cooperated in reducing expenditures, and an appeal for additional financial support was circulated to donors, friends and well-wishers. There was a good response and the Bhavan’s financial position improved. At the same time a request was made to the BCC to approve one or two full Aurovilian maintenances to be granted to people working full time at Savitri Bhavan and currently receiving equivalent maintenances from Savitri Bhavan available resources.
Conclusion:

In addition to adults, again this year also groups of children were introduced to the aims and ideals of Auroville through exposure to the life and teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo through visits to Savitri Bhavan.

For the coming year, several projects are already in the pipeline:

• The most demanding is the revised and upgraded 2nd edition of the “Savitri around the World” complete reading of Sri Aurobindo’s epic, which is in preparation for release on the Centenary of the Mother’s final arrival in Pondicherry on April 24th, 2020. Corrections are being made to the first edition, and new readers are becoming involved. While the first version was live-streamed on YouTube for its 35-hour duration, it is envisioned that the second edition now in preparation, once completed, can be posted permanently on the Internet for people around the world to access at any time of day or night throughout the year.

• As described, a full cycle of videos covering English of Savitri classes from the very beginning to the end of the epic is also in preparation.

• It is planned to continue the English of Savitri series of books with a sixth volume devoted to Books Eleven and Twelve which should be ready for release in 2019.

• Further work on the Picture Gallery is foreseen for 2019-20, to provide sun-shading to protect the artworks and visitors from excessive sunlight and heat. It is hoped that this work will be taken up in April 2019 and completed within four weeks.

• Several new volunteers are expected to join the Savitri Bhavan team in the near future, and it is hoped that one or two of them may prove competent to act as guest editors for future issues of Invocation. Perhaps one of them may even be willing to take up editorship of the journal for a longer time.

Apart from these ventures it is hoped to continue expanding the work and influence of Savitri Bhavan as in previous years.

Visit of members of the West Bengal Chapter of Sri Aurobindo’s Action, December 29th, 2018
The Auroville Library is a hub for information retrieval and recreation and corresponds to the so-called public libraries which provide access to books for a general public. Our aim is to provide free access to all kinds of information, printed and digital, and to do so in a personal, friendly, trustful way.

The collection of books, apart from approx. 100 volumes per year purchased with the SAIIVER budget, has been built up almost entirely through book donations, big and small, within the last three decades. It continues to grow by 3,000 volumes a year – so it mirrors the actual tastes and interests of Aurovilians and guests. In this sense one can say it is the Aurovilians' library.

Today the collection contains 50,000 volumes in ten languages: English, German, French, Tamil, Italian, Dutch, Russian, Spanish, Korean, and Hebrew. It covers a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction, and there is an almost complete collection of Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother’s works. We have a separate room for children’s literature.

We are open throughout the year, lending books, as well as providing HD movies and e-books on request.

Running and developing such an activity in the Auroville context is always a challenge as you have to do the maximum with the minimum resources. Nevertheless it seems to work as the public satisfaction and needs seem to be met.
Sanskrit Research Institute

by Martin G.

Sanskrit Research Institute (SRI) works with the Sanskrit language producing educational tools and materials for further enjoyment, research and study of this language.

Activities of the year:

This year has been an exciting and productive year with some new tools being made public and offered to the Sanskrit community worldwide.

New Sanskrit tools:

1. Mirror of Digital Library of India

We produced a mirror of the entire Digital Library of India (DLI). The DLI consists of scans of half a million out-of-copyright books scanned by universities, archives and institutions around India. We focused on a deep multilingual search within the books as there are many rare treasures of Sanskrit literature and catalogues in this database. We made the project public and informed all universities teaching Sanskrit around the world via the Indology forum. This was met with deep appreciation, also it was published at a time that the government’s site of the DLI was not available for some time. What is unique in our contribution is the depth of the search within the scanned documents that can be done, and as this uses Google’s AI it is continuously improving and continuously adding support for more scripts.

See https://dli.sanskritdictionary.com/?q=aurobindo

Feedback from the Sanskrit community for this work:

• “I wanted to first congratulate you on two tools that are enormously useful tools. I have only just played around with the OCR and the DLI interface, but they’re both massive improvements on what was available previously.” (Andrew Ollett, Harvard University)

• “Congratulations to the DLI website, by the way. Super useful.” (Oliver Hellwig, University of Heidelberg)

• “Martin was kind enough to give me an advanced peek at his new mirror of the Digital Library of India, as a beta tester. The quietness and brevity of his announcement belie the magnitude of this achievement. It’s a simply wonderful resource to have available, and it is a larger set of DLI materials than exists at Archive.org. Having the DLI in two forms, with different interfaces, is a tremendous gift to scholarship in our field.” (Dominik Wujastyk, University of Alberta)

2. Public web-based OCR tool for Indic languages

The second new public tool produced this year was our online OCR platform (http://ocr.sanskritdictionary.com/) designed for the rapid digitization of Sanskrit and allied literature. The tool works in the browser and has been used to digitize around ~85,000 images and 17 million words at the time of writing this report. It is current in very active usage by the scholarly communities working with Indic texts, particularly Sanskrit. This is the first such tool produced for Sanskrit that is available in a browser to digitize Sanskrit literature.
It was very well received by the scholarly community:

- “The OCR is amazingly good! I thought we were still many years from having such a facility.”
  (Dominik Wujastyk, University of Alberta)
- “An amazing work you've done there... I'd have thought it the result of a lifetime of research, but you did it in just a few short years. Congratulations.”
  (Kaivalyanathaswami, Himalayan Academy)

3. Publication of our Indus Script Poster

We have produced for the first time a double-panel poster for classrooms that contains all the known glyphs of the Indus Script. The Indus Script is one of the greatest heritages of India and the world and yet it remains an unsolved mystery with no confirmed translations of any of the characters. We wanted all children in the world to become aware of this script by producing a large poster with an ideographical grouping of the symbols (based on what they resemble). Some are clearly ideographical for example looking like a person or an animal and others are completely abstract. Our final step was to put character frequency data on the poster so people could see the most common characters in an easy way. We are currently in touch with all school overseeing bodies in India to make our poster works freely available in schools of India.

All posters completed have been shared with Auroville schools and the language lab.

4. Publication of our 64 arts poster

Building on our prior work with the 64 arts (a list of arts mentioned in Sanskrit literature that were part of education in ancient India) we have completed a poster of hand drawn illustrations for each art.

5. Digital reference to Āyurvedic literature (Caraka Saṃhitā)

During the course of the year we published a beta of our digital reference to the entire Caraka Saṃhitā (https://www.caraka.net/). This is the primary text of Āyurveda and gives deep insight not just into medicine but into India of the past (circa 500 BC). Having digital access to this text is of great value to those working in the field of Indian knowledge systems, our portal offers two translations and the original text sūtra by sūtra.

Ongoing works:

During the course of this year we commenced our work with the Sanskrit Archive project (a larger project to make a portal to see an overview of extant Sanskrit literature and a collaborative tool for representing and annotating this literature). Much progress has been made.

We are currently in the process of doing the initial research for a series of Āyurveda posters that cover an insight into the concepts and practical informations offered in the Āyurvedic Sanskrit literatures such as Caraka Saṃhitā.

We currently are in the middle of a word frequency and verbal root analysis of the entire Rgveda with a volunteer working remotely from Delhi (graduate Sanskrit student).

We have two Lithuanian volunteers working on a Sanskrit-Lithuanian poster which should be published in the near future. The poster will continue our series of posters of parallel languages with Sanskrit (we have done Tamil and Greek so far).

Video works:

We published a video entitled “7 years in the woods of Sanskrit” of Martin’s lecture given at Savitri Bhavan on Auroville's 50th anniversary.
Outcomes:
Various new online tools, digital resources, posters and videos have been created; existing projects have been improved and updated during the course of this year. Each year we continue to add new tools that are received by all, from the person curious about Sanskrit and its literature to the high level scholar needing a specific tool for their research. This year we are happy to have added a number of tools that were well received and more importantly are actively used on a daily basis. There is no greater reward for ones labour than to see the product of one’s labour bring benefit to others.

Reflections:
The calibre and quality of volunteers we received during the course of the year was wonderful. The spirit of Auroville and its work attracts people from all corners of the world. Many people have a deeper interest with Sanskrit as it was and is the language of yoga and has the world’s greatest spiritual literature tradition hands down. This year we were deeply touched by a stream of very dedicated volunteers and interns who added their spirit and will to our work and also deeply shared our common purpose to make Sanskrit and its literature more available to all. With many thanks to: Jack (USA), Jayashree (India), Yelena (Armenia), Nida (Lithuania), Gabriele (Lithuania), Deepa (India), Rina (Russia), Harshada (India), Shriya (India), Sneha (India), Hanit (India).

Conclusion:
We are in the conceptual phase of imagining a small campus dedicated to Sanskrit in Auroville and will be having initial brainstorming what such a campus would consist of. We leave with a feedback received by a user of our tools last month:

“Namaskar. Thank you for the immense and so helpful work that you are offering to scholars and general public. Your work is amazing and it is so helpful for our research. We are using all your tools, dictionary, roots sandhi, vocabular, IAST software ... Your sevā work for knowledge is helping us to also do sevā work to spread the holy awareness. Dhanyavād” – Noemie Manish Vora

Knowing that people gain benefit and utility from our work brings great joy and impetus for us to do more and stride further. I would like to thank our full team, all volunteers and interns, SAVI and SAIIER and the greater Auroville community for making all volunteers and interns feel at home.
Aurogames
Research, Development and Implementation

by Paula C.

The aims of this project were:
- To utilize games created by Auroculture; conduct active research in the form of game sessions and develop the games further.
- To get a better understanding to see if these games could become tools for the implementation of integral education.

Description of project:
My research is centered on game sessions with people aged 3 to 80+. The games made by Auroculture do not have any instructions. Therefore, one looks inside a box and creatively imagines how to use the game. A graphic artist (to date, 3 different volunteers) reproduced the games digitally. Then they were printed in Pondicherry, and finally produced into a game at home. Once copies of the game were made, I would guide people in the play. I also encouraged free exploration with the material to see how people chose to play with it. Some of the expansions to the “Kaleidoscope” game have been from the feedback of people working with the material (i.e. “Pattern Building Challenge”, and “Paint and Create Your Own Pattern Building Game”).

The wheel below illustrates the circular fashion of the research. This research in play guides the researcher to be flexible. The observations of play lead to the development of the game itself and how it can be played. It is not molding people to adapt to rigid rules. Playing the game should lead towards what it was intended to develop (e.g. focus, cooperation, memory, creativity, etc.). When it doesn’t, this becomes an opportunity to take a step back, be open to ideas and make adaptations to the rules or the game itself. Then have more sessions and observe the play.

![Diagram of research process]

For example, two friends were working cooperatively on pattern building. Though they were focused in the play, I observed moments of disharmony and subtle competition while grabbing
cards. I did not interfere. After they completed the pattern I asked if they wanted to build another one, only differently. The test was to build a different pattern in silence. They agreed to the challenge. I witnessed a shift in behavior. They supported each other in complete harmony.

Auroculture’s games are all visually appealing. They work at developing the faculty of sight. What makes them more appealing are the countless possibilities to test the development of other areas of thinking and awareness that may improve through exploration in play. For example, I adapted the rules of a memory game to shift the play from competition to cooperation while working on memory, focus and teamwork. Thereby the aim of any game/activity is to target and develop faculties like concentration, problem solving, perseverance, imagination, intuition, creativity, cooperation, harmony, etc. through play.

This year I had regular sessions with children at the Kindergarten summer program (4 weeks), a kindergarten class at Isai Ambalam school (weekly), and people at Thamarai Learning Centre aged 6 to young adults (weekly until end of January 2019). I also had children and adults come to my house to play by invitation and request.

Over time I saw a pattern of success when I was able to meet the individual needs of a student. Most of the time this meant that I worked one-on-one with a child. They were learning through play. This engaged their curiosity, individuality (how they chose to play with the materials), creativity, while developing perseverance and focus. As I video recorded portions of the sessions I was able to confirm that young children at Isai Ambalam school had moments of selective focused attention (i.e. attending to the activity to the exclusion of all other sensory inputs). Game sessions took place in a small room with no door, off a large hall. There were times when a group of children would have a class in the hall. Though there was a lot of talking and noise, sometimes other children looking into the space we were using, the child remained poised, engrossed in the activity. It was extraordinary to witness.

Outcomes:

Auroculture’s “Kaleidoscope” game was developed into 7 different activities (pattern match and mirror mirage, pattern building, pattern building challenge, cooperative memory game, paint and create your own pattern building game {utilized by children at Thamarai}, colour and create your own pattern match game {utilized by children at the Kindergarten summer program and all children in the upper kindergarten at Isai Ambalam}, and Colour Me Mandala).

All people that had an opportunity to engage in the games benefited from a session. Everyone enjoyed playing.
The following was published in the December Newsletter for Isai Ambalam school:

Aurogame sessions by Paula Caesar

“Paula Caesar has been coming to Isai Ambalam once a week to work with the KG children on patterns and games. As teachers of KG we have noticed after attending Paula’s class, Sairam has developed an interest to create many designs on his own in his class. He created some designs with wooden blocks and has a good perception and his structures have increased in complexity. He is willing to help others when they are doing the activities in the class-room. He speaks more about Paula’s mirror activity (how a pattern looks when you have two mirrors) at home. From the last month after attending Paula’s class Varathan shows increased creativity. He involves himself into many activities including reading. With any material he comes across on the ground like sticks, leaves, pebbles he likes to create some designs. Before attending Paula’s class Loshika didn’t involve in any activities enthusiastically. Now she is able to create some designs and shapes by using the pieces of paper in indoor activities. After attending Paula's class, we have seen Rithika is gradually improving in her memory. She is now able to concentrate from the beginning of the activities. Earlier she only observed the activities, but now she is involving herself and enjoys all the new activities in Paula's class.”

Reflections:

In the original project I had planned to have someone working with me full time. This did not work out and in December I took over all game sessions for this and the “FACES – A Cooperative Memory Game” project (see separate report). This meant a lot of time and work. However, I learned a lot in the process. For instance, I wanted to support more children in play. I started to take more than one child per session. Very quickly it became clear that this strategy did not work. Usually I was unable to meet the needs of these children. In March, Arpana joined me. What we noticed: children would call out our names to get our attention when our focus was on another child. When we worked one on one, we were mostly silent observers. Our quiet focus on the child supported them in their exploration. A few children still wanted acknowledgment at each step, yet if this was met with a smile and quiet presence, they quickly reengaged in the game.

Another great learning opportunity was at Thamarai Learning Centre. Though I enjoyed working with the kids and team it was very challenging. I did not have a separate space to have the sessions and children all came at different times. What normally happened, children would be engaged in an activity and another child would come and talk to them. It was all in goodwill, yet this made it impossible to use the games to develop attention. This difficulty gave me further clarity in the need for a separate space to have sessions.

Conclusion:

Based on my explorations with Aurogames this year, I want to continue in this research. My experience with the games indicate that they are helpful in the development of attention. With the support of SAIIER, I plan to investigate this possibility with more rigorous research tools and methods.
“FACES” – A Cooperative Memory Game

by Paula C.

This project began as “The FACES” of Auroville” – a cooperative memory game. However, due to some obstacles it evolved into something different. Rather than “FACES” and names of adult Aurovilians and Newcomers (I have many cards and continue to offer irregular game sessions), the game became the “FACES” and names of school students from Transition School and Aikiyam School.

The original project had the wider aim to bring Aurovilians together, to work in harmony, cooperation and unity. This changed into:

• To support children to learn the benefits of working together as a team;
• To improve memory and focus;
• To become familiar with the names and “FACES” of children from a different school that are about the same age. After weekly team playing sessions with the “FACES” cards over several months, to bring these children together to meet each other for the first time. Would playing with the “FACES” cards of each other support them to come together with a deeper sense of knowing? Would they interact with more ease and support each other in their new teams?

Description of project:

The 2nd and 3rd grades at Transition School (34 students and 19 students respectively) and 3rd and 4th grades at Aikiyam School (25 and 25 students) participated in this project.

I took a competitive game (memory / concentration game) and restructured it in a way that promotes harmony, creates a sense of team, requires memory and focused attention right from the beginning. People begin to learn that it is ok to ask for help and they understand that the collective abilities of the team far surpass those of an individual.

How to play the cooperative memory game:

Mix up the pairs (first session – maximum 15 pairs) then arrange them with the picture side up in equal rows and columns. For a short time, everyone should focus and take a mental picture of the location of as many pairs they can hold with their attention. Then turn the cards over. A person starts and tries to find a pair. If the cards match, the count is one. Each subsequent pairing, add 1 to the count. When cards do not match, the count restarts. At any time players can ask for help when they do not know where the matching card is located. The object is to match all pairs with the highest count. Regardless of a match, the turn moves to the next person.

As players begin to get a higher count, use more cards to increase the difficulty.

Each of the 5 classes was divided into 3 teams, for 15 teams altogether. I held a weekly game session with each class. Within each school I had a room allocated for the games. In the beginning, children played with mixed “FACES” (their class cards and those from the other school). As children improved in their team abilities as indicated with higher counts (number of consecutive pairings), I added more cards to the array and fewer cards from their own class.

In February I took all the children’s pictures again. This time it was just the “FACES”, no
associated names. In March each team had 4 sessions playing exclusively with “FACES” of the other school. Each time they matched a pair, I helped them name the child. After matching all of the cards, they had a new team challenge: to name each child. They were encouraged to discuss as a group and come up with one name to guess. Each correct naming, they got a point. I kept track of the teams’ highest count and the number of children named correctly. Before playing I asked if they remembered the previous week’s count and name points. Amazingly most children remembered. Therefore, they would begin a new game with the goal to collectively focus and support each other in order to improve their counts.

With the help of class teachers, we were able to find a time to bring the children together to meet each other and play in the 2nd week of April. Unity Pavilion graciously offered the space to support this coming together of all children. On April 8th the 3rd grade from Transition School and 4th grade from Aikiyam School played together (5 teams, N = 44 kids). On April 9th the 2nd grades from Transition School and 3rd grade from Aikiyam School played together (7 teams, N=58 kids). The new teams were formed by random selection ensuring a balance of children from each school.

In the weeks leading up to the meeting at Unity Pavilion, I reminded children that they would be playing in new teams with children from the other school. They would be playing with all the “FACES” from both schools. They would have to ask for and give help to everyone on their new team in order that they do their best as a team.

Outcomes:

After the final play in mixed teams at Unity Pavilion, I have given the “FACES” cards (2 sets – with and without names) to the different classes at each school. In this way, children can continue to play with their cards.

All children involved in playing benefited from this project. I interviewed some of the children in small groups (after April 9th) to ask them questions. Here are some of the responses:

• **What did you learn?** It helped us work (focus) better as a team, work as a team to get more points, think together, to be a team, to help others, memory power got better, learned other student’s names, I understand to be quiet and only talk in English, only give help when someone asks.

• **What did you like most?** Fun playing and quiet, I enjoyed, I felt excited and happy, always happy to play, liked playing with the rules, I liked the photos and names, memory got better and got higher marks.

• **What would you change?** (All of the changes children suggested were for themselves or their group. They did not want the game to change.) When people did not ask for help and they needed it (i.e. everyone should ask for help when they don’t know where the pair is), sometimes was shouting – play more quietly, I want to help more, some people were talking rudely – only talk nicely, talk softly, no rudeness, everyone focus and everyone ask for help, I need to control myself more – focus more (this child’s response was very insightful and accurate), not talk or blurt out, only help others if they ask for help, do not distract others while they are playing.

• **How did you feel playing with children at Unity Pavilion… new teams and working with children from Transition/Aikiyam school?** I was excited, happy, I really enjoyed, worked well in new teams, people would ask for help when they needed it, focused, I want to do this again in 5th grade (Aikiyam 4th grade students), I have a new friend, made some friends (many responses), (named children that they felt they had made friends with), Transition school people talked to me, “X” is a joker (student from Transition), we laughed, everyone was very kind, fun when we met them and when we had snack we talked with them, I came to know about where they live, what’s their name, how old they were…, made new friends.
on our teams, had new teachers and this was fun (teachers from both schools supported the new teams playing).

Reflections:

The team-play at Unity Pavilion was beyond anything I could have envisioned. I was concerned that having so many teams in one space the chance for competition between teams could develop. This did not happen. They played 3 consecutive games with their team rotating to a new table with different cards and a different teacher facilitator. They brought their team card (listing all members) with them to each table showing their highest count from each game. I encouraged them to focus more each game and improve their count.

Out of 12 teams, 5 increased their count each game. Though I explained and played with all teachers prior to the event at Unity Pavilion, the rules and way of playing were not clear for some. However, what I realized during the play and continue to see looking at the pictures, none of this mattered. The children did focus, they helped each other and really enjoyed coming together. They all want to do it again next year. They connected to children from another school that previously they did not know. They made friends. Hopefully, this memory will stay with them as they discovered different schools and living situations are not barriers to developing new friendships.

Conclusion:

This experience was very significant for me and all involved. There was a great deal of goodwill, help and teamwork behind the scenes. Unity Pavilion offered the space and helped with the setup and snacks, the AV bakery donated biscuits for the kids, photographers (3) came to help document with photos, the class teachers supported the teams, and Arpana has been working with me since March in game sessions and planning.

I am grateful for having experienced this whole process of coming together. It reminds me what we work towards – Human Unity.

The kids want it to continue again next year. This is possible. Unity Pavilion has already offered the space. If more teachers at these and/or other schools learned how to play, then they could support their students. I am happy to guide anyone interested in learning the how-to of cooperative memory games, to help with student photos and printing, and to support planning for a future coming together of kids at Unity Pavilion.
“On the way to the Inner Chamber”: Researching and developing a new dramaturgy and theatrical form for a new consciousness

by Philippe and Thierry

Inspired by the Integral yoga, how to create a new kind of performance that integrates body language, body memories, energy, sounds, legends, mythologies and mantric poetry?

Inspired by the writings of Sri Aurobindo, by new technologies and science, how to create a new kind of dramaturgy for a new kind of performance, in order to reach all audiences, especially the youth, and to transmit the power of the ancient scriptures in a contemporary way?

Description of project:

This research project was under the direction of Philippe assisted by Thierry and Gopal and with the guidance of Barbara. We collaborated with Svaram (Auroville unit) for the work on frequencies and music, and Mohit Arora for the video. We started this research in May 2018 and ended it in March 2019. It happened mainly in Ritam in our working space in a hut, and also outdoors in the open air directly connected to Nature.

First we tried to define and explore a process, a method, practice to approach this new kind of theatre made with: self-concentration, work on frequencies, mantric poetry, body memories, improvisation and then creation of a performance as an output of the research.

a) Self-concentration

The practice of the Integral yoga invites us “by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart, and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come.” (Sri Aurobindo, “Letters on Yoga – II”)

In this new dramaturgy inspired by Integral yoga, the actor/dancer is invited to be present to the Presence. The artist becomes a real yogi looking for the truth. Truth of his emotion, of his feeling, truth of his relation with the world and his partners on stage.

Silence is the first experience for the actor/dancer who wants to explore this: silence in the mind, in the cells and self-concentration to welcome the Presence and to surrender.

The actor/dancer becomes like a yogi, a seeker of the truth and he must have from beginning a clear aspiration to explore in the unknown.

b) Frequencies: Nonverbal vibrational universal communication and communion

“Different scientific studies have established today what the Indians established thousands of years ago without the aid of any equipment... Sound pulsates throughout the body and makes it a force. The human consciousness is affected by sound. It affects the different layers of the mind.” (Sameer Khanwalker)

Neuroscience has proven that sound interacts directly with brainwaves and provokes different states of consciousness and emotions, and then different kind of movement.

We experienced how some frequencies can create the sensation of a dislocated body creating broken movements.
We experienced the opposite as well: how some frequencies can create harmony and reconnection with the center.

We choose during our process some frequencies for concentration and focus. And some other frequencies which can help for creativity.

It was important to research and experience different frequencies which can provoke a movement in brain and body from ordinary to expanded consciousness, to trance and waking dream and finally to extend that to dance, expression on stage.

In our research we used principally the frequencies:

- Isolation dance: Frequency interaction 340 Hz, 173 Hz, 170 Hz with pulsation of 3 Hz, 8 Hz
- Shaking dance: Frequency interaction 480 Hz, 360 Hz, 120 Hz with pulsation of 4–6 Hz

c) Mantric poetry

“When the mantras are chanted in a peaceful atmosphere, they generate a positive effect. And when more people chant the mantras, specially the Gayatri, together, it generates a tremendous energy that resonates throughout the body and has a great impact on the body and mind.” (Sameer Khanwalker)

In the Inner Chamber research project we experienced ‘organically’ some mantras connected to the body’s perceptions and sensations. We started by the famous “Hanuman Chalisa” written by Tulsidas which has been fervently recited by millions of people for centuries. We started with the Hanuman Chalisa because Gopal, our dancer, is a Hanuman devotee and also because, this poem/prayer is very famous in India.

A moving and beautiful choreography and dance was created to welcome the pulsation of the mantric words as an impulse that gives life and allows a movement to flourish.

Philippe who directed all the choreography and research asked to Gopal the dancer to really listen deeply the poem, to try to drop all his dance habits, to be fully present and be surprised by the inner impulses.

At the very beginning of the research Gopal repeated Hanuman Chalisa and let his body move freely in the space without any control or aesthetic direction. Then very quickly the emotion came, the tears, the feeling of struggle and lot of personal memories and we didn't stop for hours repeating this poem; and step by step this connected the dancer to inner and unknown dimension, totally Vast and full, dense.

We tried to experience in our body the effect of Mantric poetry, also in our flesh, in our breath and movements. We understood by this practice that this interaction is possible thanks to the rhythm.

We experienced that we could reach the highest intensity of energy by the repetition of the poem and by movement based on regular rhythm.

“What Sri Aurobindo calls the highest expression, which is poetical in character is, let us say, it is mantra. And in India, mantra is that rhythmic expression which, when recited, produces a physical effect” (Kireet Joshi)

After Hanuman Chalisa we experienced some parts of Savitri. Working on the experience of mantric poetry in Auroville, it was natural to try exploring a bit Savitri. The dancer Gopal didn’t understand the meaning of the words, but his body after a time of concentration and silence, when the recitation of the poem respected a certain rhythm, started to react with inner movement. Then Gopal was surprised to see his body dancing alone like in a deep inner world. He felt his body radiating larger and larger. He entered in another dimension. In a way totally new and in another way totally known from within, and finally the dancer was living exactly the scene, the action that Sri Aurobindo was describing in his text. Beyond the mind, the body, the soul in the body resonates to the mantric vibration in the poetry in Savitri.
d) Body memories

Body memories were awakened by sounds and frequencies, mantric poetry and breathing.

We also experienced ‘Rebirth practice’ and ‘shaking dance’. Both are deep practices coming from ‘first people’, which help to modify safely the state of consciousness and to connect with deep body memories to transform and heal them, and to reconnect the dancer with the Universal source and a highest energy.

We also used Gopal’s mother’s voice for the connection with a deep memory.

“Because of the physical, emotional, overall connection with the mother from the beginning of life, the mother’s voice has special psychological and developmental components”. (Monika Nöcker-Ribaupierre)

e) Improvisation

“Develop your inner being – find your soul, and at the same time you will find the true artistic expression.” (Mother on Art)

After working on self-concentration, frequencies, mantric poetry and body memories, and all these processes of inner-being development, the actor/dancer is now ready to improvise and to experience expression.

Philippe the artistic director decided to work through improvisation, giving a free space to the performers to find their dance, movement, character, inner energy. “[Improvisation] is experienced as a tool to disconnect the body’s potential from the mind’s limitations.” (Thomas Hauert)

We improvised dance, movement, theatre on different themes and directions. First was the connection with the five elements and nature: we explored our relationship with trees, plants. We also explored and improvised about disconnection with Nature.

Then we explored the feeling of suffocation, limitation and the opposite: the call of the Vastness, our relationship with Vastness. Many quotes from Sri Aurobindo and Mother inspired these improvisations.

Then we explored the connection with Himalaya. And Gopal, with his Nepalese origin, had to find in his body the memory of this Himalaya and also the exile, the rupture and the reconnection. We also improvised about the notion of Mother. Divine Mother, Mother Earth, blood mother, Sagarmatha, Goddess of the sky and mountain (Everest).

f) Process of creation of VAST, as output of our research for a new dramaturgy

Nothing was predetermined neither written; the experience of the improvisation revealed a direction for Vast and step by step from the bodies of the dancers/actors a story came and a form, offering an integral experience with bodies, movements, frequencies, voices, emotions, archetypes.

Words and texts came in the very last phase of the process.

**Story:** This is the story of a young boy from Nepal who has been snatched from his family and home in the Himalaya mountains. Kidnapped and abused, he now lives in a slum in a big city in India.

He is all alone in the world, stifling in his small room. Beyond confinement and misery, he tries, day after day, to find in his body a door that opens to the Vast, a path to his Himalaya, Nature, and his own unlimited nature.

An encounter with a strange character helps him on his journey. This is the god Hanuman, with monkey and human features, who is heroic, wise, and full of humor.
For this character we were inspired by the story of the Ramayana. We developed in a contemporary way the character of Hanuman as an archetype of the monkey god so important in Indian mythology. The monkey god can be found in ancient scriptures all over Asia in different forms, like Sun yu Kung the monkey king in Chinese opera. He is accessible to everyone in the world today.

It was important for the actors to explore the character of the monkey as it is an important archetype in the acting tradition. Hanuman is god, human and animal, allowing the performer actor to explore all these dimensions in himself. This also has been an experience that we can say is inspired by new dramaturgy and Integral yoga.

We also experienced how the story of the character performed by Gopal, the young exiled man trying to reconnect with his own vastness, can be a universal story.

Outcomes:

a) A methodology for the research of a new dramaturgy

We created a process to experience a new dramaturgy inspired by Integral yoga with different steps: silence and self-concentration, work on frequencies, experiencing mantric poetry, body memories, improvisation and creative process.

b) In the spirit of Integral yoga, we created a path for a new dramaturgy. We call it: “Theatre of Manifestation”

“Guided by the conviction that intuition allows much more complex and unexpected results than a process based on initial verbalization, the choreographer deliberately leaves his projects very open, aware that the encounter between his initiative and that of the dancers will unleash an unforeseeable result.” (Thomas Hauert)

In this new dramaturgy process there is nothing pre-determined, nothing written before the starting of the experience. If it was predetermined, it would have been a reproduction of the past. In our process, we just look for an empty space and calm inner state for the expression of what need to be expressed here and now, connected to the Presence. It is fully open and the creation is made to its multidimensional potentials.

c) We proposed a transformational experience

This new dramaturgy experience proposes a transformation of the performer as the transformation of the audience. It is also the transformation of our superficial and fragmentary way to see the world, to feel the world into a deep and new consciousness where there is no more duality, where everything is interconnected. It is a poetic way to experience the oneness of the world and to propose a path from our ordinary human way to live into a divine way of life. The goal of this theatre is to awaken the divine consciousness which lie in the cells of the performer as in the cells of each spectator.

d) Output: Creation of the show VAST

• Big success: three performances at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium on the 15th, 16th, 17th of February 2019. The venue was full for each performance. We welcomed about 1,800 people in total on these three evenings, both Aurovilians and guests.
• One performance at the Tantrotsav festival in Edayanchavadi.
• One performance at the Festival des Francophonies in Pondichéry.
• We’ll go soon for a national Indian tour including Auro University in Surat, Indian festivals and the French Alliance.
• In 2020 this show will be performed abroad. For performance and tour we work under Auroville Art Service.

• For VAST we did photo shooting and editing and created a booklet. We shot and edited a video and a trailer, in collaboration with students of Last School.

• We collaborated with different units: Auroville Radio TV, Auroville Art Service, Svaram, French Pavilion, New Creation dance studio, News & Notes, Outreach Media, Bharat Nivas, Ritam and Nandini.

• Artistically and technically the level of the performance was professional at international standard level.

Reflections:

In this new dramaturgy action and creation are “the expression of the true, the light, the divine Ananda bliss. But for that the surrender of the mortal mind, life and body to the higher consciousness is indispensable, since is too difficult for the mortal human being to pass by its own effort beyond mind to a supramental consciousness in which the dynamism is no longer mental but of quite another power.” (From the Dictionary of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga compiled from the writings of Sri Aurobindo by M.P Pandit)

So clearly this new dramaturgy is only possible with actor dancers who are ready to surrender and ‘to accept the call of such change’. It is to experience art, performing art and dramaturgy like a practice of Integral yoga.

The challenge was really to be sure that the artists were totally ready for this inner adventure.

What we learned is how to create a sadhana to reach this new dramaturgy.

Conclusion:

The aim of this new dramaturgy like the aim of Integral yoga itself is: “To bring the Supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.” (Ibid.)

The final object for this yogi, dancer and performer is “to enter into and be possessed by the Divine Presence and Consciousness” and to be on stage the instrument of the divine.

We want to keep this intent and this level of energy and quality, consciously, in our daily practice. We also wish to spread the show VAST.

Thanks to the performances of VAST in Auroville, in India and abroad and also thanks to the courses and training programs proposed, we hope to share with the maximum of people this new dramaturgy inspired by the Integral yoga of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Our intention now is to develop and extend our research. This time we will focus on the energy and presence of the actor dancer inspired by Integral yoga.
The Watercolour Palette of Auroville

by Ivana

This research project explored the quality of art and how paintings could be made using only low-cost watercolours of a limited palette: lemon yellow, carmine red, Prussian blue and burnt sienna. The project was carried solely by me and concluded with a presentation of photos of my paintings.

Description of project:

During my research work, I studied and focused on the highest quality of art, consulted well-known artists, and initiated discussions on the quality of art at Mitra Youth Hostel every Tuesday. These discussions were announced as a regular activity in May and June 2018, and a few of the talks were recorded by Auroville Radio.

I painted different subjects related to Auroville and the bioregion using watercolours on paper of varying formats. Over two hundred paintings were created in watercolours using my limited palette of four colours. I made four categories: abstracts, portraits, still life and landscapes.

At the end of my research project I gave a Power Point presentation of my work at the SAIIER conference hall. The presentation focused on explaining the aim of the project and its results and demonstrating my paintings.

Outcomes:

1. Discussions about Quality Art in Auroville at Mitra

I painted a few posters that were displayed in Auroville and announced the events in News & Notes. The people who attending the meetings were encouraged to talk about the meaning of the word ‘Art’ and we brainstormed on all the possible interpretations of that word. People who were there or people who listened to the talk at AV Radio could be enriched by the knowledge of all those who came.
2. Paintings done by a limited watercolour palette

My topics were inspired by my life in Auroville. I chose subjects such as Matrimandir and the gardens, portraits of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. I also painted still life – mostly with everyday objects such as tea cups, tiffins, etc. I took photos of the paintings and published them on social media (Facebook and Instagram) during the year. The costs were low, as a watercolourist needs only a good brush and paper. I used four colours that combined harmoniously. Other media like acrylics or oil are more expensive. And even if an object is accidentally covered with paint it is easily washable – so highly recommended for children. The benefits will continue in the future as people will be exposed to the paintings.

3. Presentation

My presentation was aimed for the general public and happened at the SAIER conference hall on Saturday, 30th March. I introduced myself as a painter who had a registered activity, ‘Roof Studio’ under Auroville Art Service, and presented the main theme of the project. The first pictures shown at the presentation were from our meetings at Mitra where we looked at different aspects of the quality of art. Topics included the nature of art, its composition, harmony, skills an artist needs to have, simplicity and complexity, etc.

Then I showed a few photos of paintings of famous painters such as Vincent van Gogh, Pierre Bonnard and Edvard Munch that are connected by mastery of expression of their strong inner life as it is the main result of my research. For example Vincent van Gogh’s sensitivity for the poor was represented by his painting “Head of Young Peasant”. One could discuss about its right proportions or composition but the painting brings tears into eyes of those who look at it. He showed his empathy for the poor.

Another example was Pierre Bonnard’s painting of a lady. He used the same model for 46 years – his wife. We could see his love through our eyes. His wife was suffering from a psychological disorder but it is clear from his work that he loved and respected her fully.
I went on to introducing my four colours and their specificities with four of my abstract paintings. I showed my lemon yellow as the cool yellow colour to be used with burnt sienna to make a warm colour. The Prussian blue is suitable to mix for dark violet as a substitute for black. The carmine works well with violet and purple. Also I presented a painting which is done by different greens, reflecting the variation in our Auroville greenery. The colours were also demonstrated with my paintings of still life, landscapes, portraits and abstracts. I brought awareness to my inner life through the paintings of tumblers that represent the social life to me, landscapes with Matrimandir to feel peacefulness, and portraits to enjoy the smile of Mother.

At the end of the presentation there was a discussion and I replied to questions concerning what I will do with the paintings and my future activities. The attendance was not huge but I thanked the people who came to the presentation because they had a genuine interest in the project and I felt that it brought a positive change to their lives.

4. Websites

I created a website ([https://ivanafrousova.wixsite.com/mysite](https://ivanafrousova.wixsite.com/mysite)) to display my paintings. A gallery page was also created on the Auroville Wiki ([http://wiki.auroville.org.in/wiki/Paintings_by_Ivana](http://wiki.auroville.org.in/wiki/Paintings_by_Ivana)). I published my paintings at my Facebook and Instagram profiles, “Ivana Frousova”. In this way everybody with access to internet can benefit and contact me in the future.

Reflections:

I feel that the most meaningful part of this project was the discussion about the word ‘art’. We found that the word seems to have lost its original meaning as it went through the centuries and developed as a craft, and ultimately ended up in everyday use as a means of doing things (e.g. an art of business).

The challenge of the project was also an opportunity: to become a painter who paints through her own heart.

Conclusion:

My research was not so much about the quality of art but rather about the quality of the painters who can masterfully express themselves, and how the limited watercolour palette can be helpful in that respect. I discovered that using this limited palette is a feasible and inexpensive way to paint.

I plan to continue with another project: an exhibition of my paintings at the European Pavilion in May/June 2019, including a public demonstration of painting with four colours. Observing this inexpensive way of expressing your self could be useful particularly for children.

I have several projects in mind for the coming year: painting as self-reflection on *The Synthesis of Yoga*; portraits of children with special needs; and portraits of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.
Aikido workshop in Auroville

Cristo received a large part of his training on teaching Aikido to children from his teacher Jean Pierre Pigeau, 7th Dan, while in France in the early 2000s. This year as in previous years the Auroville Aikikai held a workshop with Jean Pierre, as an occasion to reconnect with this teaching and discover new methods and appropriate techniques.

Description of project:
Jean Pierre came with his wife and 3 friends, all highly graded Aikido practitioners and teachers. In the mid-90s he used to come often to Auroville and is therefore well acquainted with the place and its philosophy. The purpose of the workshop was to refresh acquired knowledge and seek improved solutions for a smooth approach to the art for young children and adolescents. The workshop lasted 2 weeks, from February 25th to March 8th. During this short time about 15 sessions were offered to all our students, kids & adults.

Outcomes:
Apart from improving the techniques through a better comprehension of the bases, students were made to realize that there is no short cut in this teaching. So awareness of the difficulties on the path is one of the expected outcomes of such workshops. A minimum of 5 years is required for the passage of the First Dan (Black Belt) and about 50 years of practice to achieve a 7th Dan grade. All students therefore benefited from this teaching in different ways. To the youth it meant learning to be patient, and to the older students to shed the ego. We could witness the positive work accomplished during these two weeks during the end of school year evaluation of knowledge that all our students passed with honor at the end of April 2019.

Reflections:
Aikido is not taught very many places in India. Auroville Aikido is independent from international organizations like the Hombu Dojo – Aikikai Foundation of Japan. Therefore, we rarely have occasions to meet graded teachers (Sensei), which is a current practice in this art. Meeting teachers allows for exchanges on many topics and offers the students new perspectives, as the practice is not a rigid one, once the few bases (basic moves) are well ingrained.

Conclusion:
We feel the need for more workshops of this kind. Due to the peculiar Auroville situation, we cannot send students to faraway places such as Delhi or abroad to attend workshops with famed Sensei. So the Sensei must come to us. And it is very much appreciated that SAIER has, whenever financially feasible, supported this activity. We are very thankful for this trust.
Auroville Rainbow Child

by Gala

The aim of the Rainbow Child program is to help Auroville children learn to be more focused and concentrated, to accomplish life goals with success and acquire new skills additional to a formal school education.

Description of project:

Regular classes of Yoga, Energetic games, and Arts & Crafts for children were held in Pitanga on Saturdays.

Around 25 children from different schools, kindergartens and especially kids that are considered as ‘no school’ kids participate regularly aged from 5 to 15. The classes were held by Gala.

This year the Yoga classes were over-full, even sometimes there were more kids than could fit in the yoga room in Pitanga hall.

In Energetic Games we mostly focused on development of memory, with various games such as memory games with cards, crystals and “Spy Game” (when a child needs to describe all details he/she has remembered within few seconds of seeing a person. Things such as hair style, clothes, colors and other aspects as well).

We have combined games to mix dynamic and static memorizing of various things. Children played games that have mathematic elements at the level of 1st grade and have discovered interesting facts. I have discovered that children have a problem more with subtraction than with adding. The dynamics and action of the game were slower when the aim was to subtract numbers in the mind rather than adding numbers. When we repeated several classes such games’ speed and dynamic progress have improved.

This year we decided to continue to work deeper on the aspect of emotions especially impatience, anger and infuriation as I felt these feelings were important to work on to manage in life. I implemented new games and activities connected with the emotional being. For example working with different feelings such as sadness, happiness, anger and other feelings to be able to know ourselves better and understand and control our feelings which are needed in life.

Outcomes:

The result of these activities was that children of different ages and from different schools (including home school), and with different health specifics (such as asthmatic and hearing and speech difficulty), improved their ability to integrate in this life and to be able to communicate and socialize with other people. The mathematical games exercised their minds, and the activities related the emotional being helped them to know themselves and their emotions.

Reflections:

In working with memory games and activities the best way from my point of view is to make them dynamic instead of the usual static memorizing. This was done this year by combining activities, and we found that this way helps activate long term permanent memory. Activating long term permanent memory helps children in learning their school knowledge, and will help them throughout their whole life.

When we worked with anger and frustration and analyzed where the source of this feeling came
from, girls where more easily switching and changing their emotions to calm and understanding compared to boys. For boys we had to add more mental and life examples for them to switch and understand how to be more calm and understanding.

As we work with emotions, we see that if children understand how to direct their emotion into the right path, then they are able to take it under control and communicate more easily with people.

**Conclusion:**

This year was successful especially with working with emotions. I was glad that children were still interested in arts and crafts. I thought that the children would get bored with such activities but together with them we have created new activities and work together successfully.

In the beginning of the next school year, July 2019, we will together with the children decide on which emotions and aspects to work on throughout the new school year.

Next year we will also be working with new materials we have bought with help of the SAIER grant, such as the Spirograph tool for the smaller kids to develop their mental ability and improve imagination. For the older ones we got pyrography tools for wood, which help them develop concentration and coordination. We will still continue to play with different energetic games from our collection, and see how the program goes in the coming years.
Awareness camps on capacity building on Bio-diversity
A project of Aranya Forest

This project involved the following activities at Aranya Forest:

1. Organizing camping / Adventure Zone for children from Auroville and the surrounding villages to learn to enjoy and love nature.

2. Organizing field exposure visits at Aranya, with its varied landscape of forest, canyons and lake ecosystem around. The children love to explore this with freedom.

Aranya has a scenic atmosphere filled with birds, butterflies, snakes, reptiles and animals and is an ideal place for experiential learning activities. Aranya has a recently established rope bridge, ‘flying fox’, tree huts, rope climbing and mud pool to keep children engaged in fun filled activities in nature. We also offer materials including posters, books, periodicals and audio-visuals which help the children learn and which they can share with others.

Beneficiaries of our exposure visits, awareness campaigns, trainings in medicinal plant identification and use, workshops and seminars included school students, teachers, research scholars, NGOs, Self-Help Groups, Government organizations, Panchayat leaders and others.

Report from Grades 4-6 of Transition School

We went for an overnight outing to Aranya Forest. When we arrived, we went for a sunset walk through the TDEF forest, and the steward of Aranya, Saravanan, showed us some of the beautiful tree species which had been planted, such as the Ebony tree, the Yellow Silk Cotton tree and the Flame of the Forest, some of which were in bloom. In the evening, we had a delicious South Indian dinner and the children sang around the fire. Later we went for a night walk where we saw dozens of different spiders and some beetles. The next morning, the children walked across the rope bridge over the canyon, overcoming their fears and having lots of fun.

After breakfast, Saravanan gave a little presentation about the reforestation work which had been done in Aranya forest over the years, the work done in water catchment and conservation and spoke of all the birds, snakes and other wildlife which had returned to the land. It was a wonderful outing filled with lots of learning and fun.

Under the supervision and guidance of the Project Director, experts in plants, animals, ecology, social and cultural sectors were also involved during the programme days. This year we reached a total of 4,862 beneficiaries through our programs.

Details of programmes conducted:

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Contemporary Theater for All
by Compagnie SDF and Unicorn Collective

by Celine

This project strove to bring more artistic happenings into the community of Auroville fostering unending education and growth of spirituality. We engaged with all ages and beyond languages to bring high quality contemporary physical theater in the community. As skits and classical theater prevailed for decades in Auroville, we intended to present new forms of theater to Aurovilians: abstract, visual, connected and poetic. Our theater want to express the shared values of Auroville’s ideal. Our research aims at finding the most achieved form to stage beauty, souls, truth, conscious living and spiritual quest with the necessary amount of lightness and modernity.

Description of project:

a) Drama in schools

The idea was to offer a full process including theater exercises, writing, staging and performance. Very few teachers/schools responded to the offer. I started to work with “Faith group” (ages 13-14) from Deepanam School on the basis of a weekly class for 4 months. During holiday break in December I learned that the kids didn’t want to continue. I felt that we should have talked about the process of doubt a bit more which is very common in artistic experience instead of just allowing the kids to give up at the first difficulty. Although the format of a weekly class is absolutely not fitting to the dynamics of teens, as it means slow progress and too much time to question the process, leading to a decreasing motivation and doubts. With a shorter and more condensed process, I think the group would get caught in the dynamic fully and at the end really enjoy the result as much as the process in full trust.

Based on this experience, for next season I intend to train the teachers directly, to give them a taste of my offer that they can experience for themselves practically on stage.

b) School of Drama

The implementation of the drama school, as a free choice activity out of school timing was not possible this past year mainly because of lack of slots in rehearsal spaces suiting to kids and teens’ timings. With the extension of the CRIPA complex, I have good hope to be able to have more slots and finally offer some classes and intensive workshops for kids and teens.

c) Research in mute theater and Odd-Eye-See performance

The team of the Auroville Art Camp & Festival, which took place in March 2019, asked us to present a performance inspired by Mother’s quote: “A new world is possible, because it has never been before.” We decided to take the opportunity of this event to create a mute performance. It has been a long time since this idea of creating and performing a play beyond words came into my mind as it is particularly relevant in the context of Auroville. Our research focused on a form of theater for which words are not the main component of the play. Instead of words and language as a main form of expression, our performance used bodies, moves, sounds, music and videos to evoke and represents situations understandable by all, telling a story, through scenes both abstract and concrete, fairy and funny, for the delight of all.
We worked with improvisations to find ideas and images, then we wrote a small storyboard and set up each scene. We ended up with a performance called ODD-EYE-SEE performed by 6 actors and actresses (3 Aurovilians, 2 Newcomers and 1 pre-Newcomer) and one kid.

I imagined, created and recorded a soundtrack with music and sounds to go along with the performers on stage. Tom Mo realized for us a short video that was included in the performance.

We performed it at the Visitors’ Center and three times at CRIPA – one of these was in the morning for the schools (Kindergarten, Deepanam, Transition and Last School).

The performance was very well appreciated by a wide range of people and feedbacks were very enthusiastic.

d) Within/without

Last summer, Anne Hildebrand submitted a text which she since updated. It is an intimate dialogue between two characters, sharing their thoughts, their challenges and their joys about the inner quest as souls living in bodies, seeking for deepness and significance in their experience on the Earth. We are working on this play now. Through this play we want to express the complexity and in the same time, the simplicity of just being ‘here and now’ in an integral surrender, evoking the intimate everyday work of our soul which leads to just being intensively in the divine world. This will be expressed through the words of Anne Hildebrand and a simple, efficient, connected and inspired way of performing it. It will be a 40 minute theater play in French with English surtitles, a pure product of Auroville, easy to perform anywhere in Auroville and outside (Alliances Françaises for example) to share with a wide range of people the inner work we are aiming at here in Auroville. We intend to present it in August at CRIPA.

e) Puppets

“From seed to love” (working title) is a wordless puppet show from which a children’s book and animated movie will be made. This set of art pieces is a poetic evocation of the joy of offering and the cycle of life and love. It is mainly for children but also enjoyable for the inner child in each grownup. I am currently building marionettes (facing technical difficulties), doing and redoing two characters and one prop out of at total of 6. I am also working on sketches for the book.

Outcomes:

• Weekly class for Deepanam Students: they learned theater exercises and challenged themselves with abstract form of theater.
• One show closely connected to Auroville’s aspirations performed by 6 adults and 1 kid at the Visitor’s Center and CRIPA. One of these performances organized for the schools and attended by five groups of children aged 6-12 as well as the Last School full group. The audience and school students discovered and enjoyed a new form of theater fostering imagination and reflection. The performers discovered themselves and their capacities through a collective and creative work requiring focus, discipline, commitment and humility.
• One stop-motion video and one soundtrack. Three set pieces: one black wooden stage (90 cm x 200 cm) with 2 acrylic boxes, one big doll/puppet, 3 marionettes (one to be finished).
• Videos on YouTube and photos and comments on social media, which contribute to give a positive image of Auroville and the activities we develop here. After the show, we were contacted by people who wanted to work with us on coming projects.
• One software designed to ease the diffusion of surtitles. This will help to develop the use of surtitles, not only for French plays.
• Reflection and maturation of 4 to 5 new coming projects.
Reflections:

Meaningful aspects:

• Bringing Aurovillians that never performed before to their best shape on the stage (this year it was for Elena and for 6-year-old Kimaya). Each was extremely touched by and grateful to receive so many positive feedbacks on their performance, increasing their level of self-esteem and self-confidence which are undoubtedly very precious for our life in Auroville.

• Receiving support and enthusiastic feedback from so many people from the audience including kids, skilled artists from Auroville (Paul, Jean, Mahi and others) and old Aurovilians was also very meaningful. Non-French speakers discovered our work for the very first time and old Aurovilians were touched by such a new poetic and connected form of theater.

Challenges:

• As usual, the time and space are the biggest challenges: finding the appropriate place to perform, finding enough slots at suitable time to set up activities and workshops, finding people with enough time to work on this demanding project were the biggest difficulties. As everyone has its own work to sustain him/herself, his own priorities, commitments, limitations and must-do, the schedule becomes quickly very limited. Indeed a certain level of commitment and proficiency and a big amount of time are required to produce a high quality performance.

• Another challenge was to accept the difficulty of implementing my activities in schools. I still need to gain trust of the teachers (and kids) to properly run workshops in schools.

Conclusion:

The creation of plays and performances continues to be quite smooth and with a regular rhythm of 2 to 3 per year. This season we were able to present only one due to a lack of performing spaces and slots, but a second one is ready and will be performed soon. We intend to present more performances for the coming year.

I also have good hope that the implementation of a new form of theater in schools will slowly happen.
Developing & Sharing Educational Materials to Promote Sustainable Waste Management

At WasteLess we believe children should be empowered to take action towards the growing issue of waste and depletion of our natural resources. They will inherit these problems which we are creating today. As the consumers of tomorrow, they will be the ones with the power to bring about a better future. Our educational materials aim to provide the next generation with the knowledge, tools and skills to be able to make better-informed decisions on how to manage waste and our valuable natural resources.

We work together with Auroville and Outreach schools to develop and conduct educational programmes on waste management and resource conservation. Auroville provides a unique opportunity to develop and test educational materials that can then be further shared with schools across India and globally. This involves using input from teachers and students, assisting and guiding teachers in using the educational materials, participating and leading community-wide campaigns and events that focus on educating the community on the issue of waste. Through this approach we aim to have a more collaborative engagement between all members of the community by connecting individuals, schools, teachers and groups that manage waste in Auroville.

We want to inspire children to be the change-makers that will have a positive and tangible effect on the future of our planet.

Description of project:

With the support of SAIIER from the period of September 2018 to April 2019, three members of the WasteLess team, Ribhu, Chandrah and Maya as well as other members of the WasteLess team have been working to develop and share our educational materials within Auroville and Outreach schools, as well as with educators and students across India and the world. With the support from SAIIER we have focused on the following areas:

1. Auroville

We used an action-based participatory research methodology to develop and test educational materials that are integrated in Auroville and Outreach schools. These can then be shared on-line to have a wide impact within India and globally. The participatory approach involved continuous input and feedback from teachers and the target group of students (children 6-15 years of age). Throughout the process, WasteLess provided support to teachers to develop a plan for the academic year, assisted in teaching and gathered feedback on the materials. This process helped us to continue to better our educational tools and social impact monitoring systems.

Over the past 8 months the focus has been on sharing two of our programmes: Garbology Lite and the ‘kNOw PLASTICS’ Educational Programme.

Garbology Lite

The Garbology Lite activities were developed with the support of SAIIER in 2015-16 and focus on developing knowledge on sustainable consumption and responsible waste management while promoting communication, reading, critical thinking, and creative skills.

A new version of the ‘Waste Relay Race’ activity was developed based on teacher feedback. Some teachers found it difficult to source items of clean waste for students to sort in the race.
activity. We created an adapted version of the activity that uses prepared cards with high quality pictures of different waste items. We worked with a professional photographer to get high quality pictures of waste items, post-processed the pictures and designed the cards. This adapted activity was then made available for teachers.

Three grades in Transition school conducted the following Garbology Lite activities:
- 1st Grade: Anna conducted the new version of the Waste Relay Race with cards.
- 3rd Grade: Yasmin conducted 5 Garbology Lite activities – Less Packaging, Map My Soft Drink, How Long Does Trash Last, and the new version of the Waste Relay Race with cards. The 5th activity was a Litter Clean Up activity that was combined with a visit to the Eco-service in February to better understand how our waste in Auroville is managed.
- 6th Grade: Swaha conducted the Litter Clean Up activity in February with a follow up visit to the Eco Service.

Community engagement and events

Three litter clean up events were organised in the community where WasteLess as well as schools were involved. The first was the World Clean Up Day on the 15th of September 2018. This event involves all countries in the world coming together on one specific day to bring awareness on the issue of litter and waste and to clean up litter together. The Auroville community as well the participation of many school students were involved in this event. The second litter clean up was organised by the Eco-Service as part of the 50th Anniversary events of Auroville on March 28th 2019. Transition School students from the 3rd and 6th grade were involved as well as the wider Auroville community. The third litter clean up took place on Earth Day 22nd April 2019 which involved multiple smaller scale litter clean ups in the Auroville community.

The ‘kNOw PLASTICS’ Educational Programme

The ‘kNOw PLASTICS’ Educational Programme focuses on the growing global issue of plastics. The aim is for students to learn the language of plastics and which plastics are safer and unsafe, understand the impacts of plastics on animals, our health and the environment and avoid disposable/one-time use plastics and replace these with reusable alternatives.

This programme was launched in June 2018. It was conducted in 6 Auroville and Outreach schools targeting a total of 152 students. At least two members of the WasteLess team were present in every class assisting teachers, teaching and observing. The schools we participated in were:
○ Transition School:
  ▪ Grade 1 with Anna and 18 students
  ▪ Grade 5 with Emma and Elke and 19 students
  ▪ Grade 6 with Swaha and 21 students
○ TLC with Fred and 17 students
○ Deepanam School with Bhakti and 14 students
○ Aikiyam School Grade 8 with Shankar and 20 students
○ Udavi School Grade 5 with Sudhir and 16 students
○ Isaiambalam School Grade 3 and 4 with Sevanthi, Arun, Poovazhi, Raghu and 27 students

The social impact data has been collected from the Auroville and Outreach schools and will be analysed for the research and publication of the findings together with data gathered from schools across India and the world. Based on informal feedback from students, teachers and parents, the programme has been very well received and feedback has suggested that students have already taken initiatives to change their own plastic use.

2. Teacher trainings in Garbology Lite and ‘kNOw PLASTICS’

To further spread the scale of our Garbology Lite and ‘kNOw PLASTICS’ Educational programmes in collaboration with the School Education Department of Tamil Nadu, we conducted teacher trainings and provided the educational resources for both programmes for 306 schools evenly spread across every district in Tamil Nadu.

Garbology Lite: A total of 210 teachers were trained in Rajapalayam on the 9th and 10th and in Cuddalore on the 12th and 13th of November 2018. The turnout of the teachers who were invited to come for the training was 94% and teachers showed a high level of motivation and interest. The Chief Education Officers of Virudhunagar and Cuddalore inaugurated the trainings. The media was present and published something in the regional newspapers about the Garbology training and educational materials.

kNOw PLASTICS: A total of 96 teachers were trained in Trichy on the 22nd and 23rd of November with a 100% participation rate. Thiru K. Selvakumarm (Joint Director of the Educational Department), gave a wonderful speech on the first day and Dr. M. Ayyaraju (State Project Director, R.M.S.A.) was an incredible motivation to all on the second day.

3. Research towards publication

The kNOw Plastics Educational Programme incorporates three social impact analytical tools: two student questionnaires and one teacher questionnaire. The first student questionnaire, completed in lesson one of the kNOw Plastics programme offers us insight into the baseline habits and behaviour of students with regard to their use of plastic. This information then provides a basis for comparison that can be compared with the findings from the second student questionnaire completed in lesson 8 of the programme. From the change in responses given to the questionnaires we can infer and evaluate the knowledge gained during the programme.

During the development of the programme WasteLess developed online versions of the teacher and student questionnaires with the hope that this would help to facilitate the process of data collection. Unfortunately only a very small proportion of our partner schools had access to the resources necessary to complete the online version of the programme. WasteLess is continuing to receive a considerable number of hard copy questionnaires through the post. These questionnaires require manual entry into a digital format for analysis.
In order to ground-truth this information and ensure that the insights gained from the two questionnaires reflect real behavioural change, rather than just a change in knowledge, we will undertake follow-up interviews with a representative sample of the kNOw Plastics participants. These will take place within 6 months to 1 year of their completion of the programme and will be designed to understand what changes in the students’ behaviour with plastic has changed because of the educational programme.

Changing behaviours and habits takes time and must be sustained in order to be meaningful. As a result the period over which social impact data will be gathered extends from the duration of the eight-week educational programme itself to one year after programme completion. This process of gathering social impact data forms a key component of the educational programme, as it will serve to quantify the extent to which the work has positively impacted students and contributed to changes in their plastic use. The extent to which behavioural change has occurred will be determined through analysis of the range of social impact data available to WasteLess. This information will form the basis of one or more papers/reports intended for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

We are currently working towards the development of these publications and efforts to bring these to fruition are on going. This work includes the process of entering questionnaire data into an analysable format, undertaking statistical analysis of the relevant data, reviewing relevant literature, identifying and liaising with appropriate journals and preparing the manuscript(s) for review.

Publishing research in a peer-reviewed academic journal has a number of complexities ranging from the cost to the extensive peer-review process. Our goal is to publish our findings in a leading international environmental education journal. However, we are aware of the timescale and possibility that this may need to be a longer-term goal. In the meantime, we plan to publish through more easily attainable routes such as national-level journals or conference proceedings. We also hope to be able to publish in a format that will be readily available to the Auroville community.

5. Developing content for chapters of the Tamil Nadu SCERT textbooks

We have partnered with the School Education Department of Tamil Nadu to include educational content within the state board textbooks. This has allowed us to scale the distribution of our research and educational materials to over a million students across Tamil Nadu state.

We have been involved in writing content for the following chapters:

- **Class 6 Science – Social Sciences:** Unit 4 – Our Environment (3rd Term) included a section on waste, its management and recycling. The differences between biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. This book has already been published.
- **Class 7 – Chemistry:** Unit 7 – Wastes and Its Management (3rd Term) including a section on polymers, types and uses of plastics, impacts of plastics and various methods of disposing of plastics, which is in the process of being written and edited.
- **Class 8 – Chemistry:** Unit 4 – Water (3rd Term) including water pollution and controlling water pollution, which is in the process of being written and edited.
- **Class 9 – Chemistry:** Unit 4 – Carbon and Its Compounds (3rd Term) included a whole section on plastics based on our research from developing the kNOw PLASTICS Educational Programme and the memory game to reinforce the ban on one-time use/throwaway plastics being implemented in Tamil Nadu. This book has already been published.

**Reflections:**

Our dream is that ultimately children become engaged in society and act as changemakers. One powerful outcome from students has been an initiative to educate others by the grade 6 students from Transition School (the White Tigers). After completing the kNOw PLASTICS Educational
Programme we worked with the children to audit their own plastic consumption at home. This plastic was taken to Eco-Service and based on this experience, they were very motivated and wanted to spread this education. They started the “Kids Talk Trash – Plastic Patrol” and created materials for the News & Notes. We would like to continue working with this motivated group of children next year and explore how we can get more children inspired to work on bringing change to the wider community and not only their families.

Expanding our scale and being able to collaborate with the School Education Department of Tamil Nadu to include content in the state board textbooks has been a huge positive step forwards. If we want to bring about the change that is needed it is important to augment our scale of reach beyond Auroville. The collaboration has enabled us to move forwards to have our research and materials reach over one million students.

During our engagement with teachers in Auroville and Outreach schools it became apparent that moving forwards it would be good to integrate the materials within the existing schools curricula as a subject. This could involve training one to two teachers that would be responsible to teach the content (similar to the ATB classes concept). This would provide the children in Auroville with a more regular and consistent learning. This is something that we would like to approach schools and explore.

Future direction:

When we launched WasteLess in 2011 we intentionally chose a name for the organisation that was not only solid waste specific, but one that could be applied to a focus on any scarce resource that we must waste less of to secure a holistically informed sustainable future. We aim to expand our content from solely focusing on the growing issue of waste to include the management of our resources – namely water. Water, and the risks and challenges posed by its supply and demand within the context of both a changing climate and growing population, could be a logical next area within which WasteLess wishes to conduct research, develop educational materials and change behaviours for a positive future.
“Divine Flowers” exhibition

The vision of this ongoing project “Divine Flowers” is to create a learning environment for the children, Aurovilians and visitors to connect with the flowers in a deeper way. This is an innovative educational project whereby through contact with the real flowers and the photos/paintings, common names and messages by the Mother, many parts of our being get stimulated and become conscious of them on a subtle plane. The presence of flowers in the Physical; colors, shape, fragrance, beauty in the Vital; the messages and significances in the Mental; and the beautiful atmosphere in the Psychic being is one of the aims. In other words, education in an integral way. It is an effort to share the Mother’s vision and to co-create a psychic atmosphere involving the community and children.

Description of project:

To prepare for the exhibition, a nursery of 200 pots was created with the support of Maret Garden and Matru Udyam (Lake Garden) of the Ashram in the beginning of January, and was watered and taken care of by the team members. These plants grew and produced flowers and were then ready for the exhibition.

The exhibition opened on the Mother’s birthday, Thursday, February 21st 2019. The opening featured meditation with the Mother’s music, led by Shraddhavan at 10:30 in the Savitri Bhavan Amphitheatre. The exhibition continued for 8 days culminating on February 28th. About 60 different fresh flowers, with their common names and the significance given by the Mother were arranged artistically, in a variety of vases in the Square Hall of Savitri Bhavan. Flowers for the exhibition were collected every day in and around Auroville, and the vases and pots were watered and re-arranged regularly. Paintings of the flowers and live orchids in test tubes mounted on glass frames were aesthetically displayed.

The Square Hall lobby was decorated with the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s messages on flowers over five big panels, and tables displayed ceramic work on flowers. Four different symbols – the Mother’s symbol, Sri Aurobindo’s symbol, the Auroville symbol and Aum – were created with flowers on different days. One of the corners was beautified by glass frames with orchids. Ten bamboo frames were utilized to display some more orchids in the Main lobby.

The passageway from the Entrance to the main door of Savitri Bhavan, including the area around the statue of Sri Aurobindo was adorned with 150 pots of different kinds of live flowering plants.

The Colonnade (around the outside of the Square Hall) was beautified with photographs of Auroville Flowers which were named by the Mother, interspaced with orchids. The Savitri Bhavan Amphitheatre was surrounded by about 100 more pots. A member of New Earth team used the space around the Service Tree to make and maintain a flower mandala.

This year we also started Children’s Activities. About 90 students of the age group 5-10 years from Outreach schools and Auroville schools participated in the event. Eight different kinds of activities were organized for two days, in the open green spaces of Savitri Bhavan: clay work, jigsaw puzzles & memory games, free painting with spray-paint, origami, drawing and colouring, flower mandala, flower card making, and matching and labeling of flowers. Snacks and drinks were provided. Origami flower necklaces and flower seeds were the take-aways for them.
On the closing day we had a meditation at 9:30 inside the Square Hall. The occasion was graced by the presence of some our inspirators from the Ashram including Richard, Kailas and Narad.

Free gifts of flower-seeds, the Mother’s blessings and few CDs of last year’s exhibition were distributed as souvenirs. Snacks and drinks were provided on the first and last day of the exhibition. Around 10 volunteers and 10 members of the core team worked, some even from early morning till late at night. But all of them were highly motivated and delighted to work and contribute.

Outcomes:

More than 100 visitors, tourists and residents of Auroville attended the exhibition every day. From the verbal and written comments of the visitors, it is obvious that the atmosphere touched their hearts and they could feel the peace and harmony in Nature. They were able to connect with the inner beauty of the flowers and their arrangements. As a team, this exhibition helped us to gain the detailed knowledge of and build a deeper relationship, with the flowers.

Children were happy and joyfully engaged in all the activities. The entire atmosphere led them to live in the world of the flowers and experience a deeper aspect of nature. The whole program helped the children to express their creativity and inner beauty.

Reflections:

The core team and the volunteers learned to work as a team, how to organize an exhibition with proper planning and execution through mutual discussion and understanding. We came in touch with of the reality of these wonders of nature (flowers) and of life.
Environmental education in Auroville's bio-region
A project of Auroville Botanical Gardens

At a time when environmental degradation is at the peak, society needs quality educational programs that can succeed in moving values and changing behavior in the direction of sustainability and environmental conservation. The main objective of the project was to involve the student community and the general public to maintain a sustainable and eco-friendly environment. The Auroville Botanical Gardens has over ten years of experience in the field of environmental education.

Description of project:
Our educational content for students emphasizes the conservation of Tropical Dry Evergreen Forests, the protection of wildlife and a waste-free lifestyle. Our educational programs have a positive impact on students' self esteem, motivation and engagement. Though our focus was mainly on students, we also organized educational programs for teachers and self-help group members. The content of training programs to teachers was designed in a way to impart environmental education to students during academics. The self-help group members were trained on waste segregation and traditional medicine preparation. Our educational package helps them to improve their knowledge on environmental concerns.

In this academic year, 2,412 students from 74 schools from Villupuram, Cuddalore and Pudhucherry districts have participated in the education programs. Adding more value to the programs, 115 teachers and 120 self-help group members have marked their presence with active participation.

Outcomes:
The basic requirement of achieving our goal is motivating teachers, who spend more time with the students, making environmental education as a central focus and equipping them with all sorts of skills and knowledge. The content of training programs to teachers was to show how to impart environmental education to students during regular classes. This makes sure that environmental awareness is embedded in their education rather than seen as a separate practice.

The teacher training programs received an overwhelming response from all the teachers who participated. The education programs for the self-help group members have helped them to become more environmentally conscious, both individually and at the community level. Many self-help groups have started their own vermicomposting units and have set up home gardens. They have started using their household wastes as manure to the gardens, and we have witnessed many self-help group members having good waste segregation units in their houses.

Reflections:
Caring for the environment will not require us to all become environmental activists; there are small things even individuals can do to make an impact. There are many challenges for environmental educators in India. The challenge of reaching out to large numbers cost effectively is one of the main challenges we face. We would like our education programs to extend beyond the Auroville bio-region. We get regular calls from schools of various districts requesting to take part in the education programs, but we are limited by financial constraints. We are planning to bring in
more students from various schools, virtually a school per day and to increase the number of visitors to the gardens.

**Conclusion:**

Environmental education is an educational methodology that involves the students’ community and the general public in maintaining a sustainable and eco-friendly environment. We put our energy into encouraging the students’ forum and the general public to take responsible actions to bring back the earth’s balance.

In the future, other than hosting visits at the Gardens, we are also planning to form eco-clubs in villages and motivate them to undertake environmental friendly activities including rain water harvesting, plastic free villages campaigns and planting indigenous flora in villages.
Film Making Apprenticeship
with Auroville Pictures

by RV and Claire

We are making movies on and for Auroville. We are also teaching film making. It’s a project-based learning process whereby the competences/skills/knowledge are tackled through practice.

The filmmaking apprenticeship program covers the areas of pre-production, production, and postproduction. It’s an individual tuition where each student writes, shoots, directs and edits his/her own film and contributes to others’ projects on specific areas. The apprenticeship is opened to students after High School, who are motivated and have a project. The duration of the apprenticeship depends on the pace of work of the student and on his/her needs.

This year we taught 5 students. We had the collaboration of several Aurovilians for different projects, participating with script-writing, voiceover and other work.

Student films:

• One student is still working on her full length documentary about single mothers of the bio-region that she started 2 years ago. She is in her fourth year of apprenticeship with us. The movie is almost completed, it has required a lot of research work. The student has chosen to collaborate with an Aurovillian musician to create an original music track for the movie.

• One student completed one short movie, “Walking meditation,” which was screened at Kino Auroville. Some of her footage was used in a movie done by OutreachMedia about the proposed highway through Auroville. She is working on a mid length documentary about Eco-Service, and is in her second year.

• One student started working on a short movie about daily routines as a metaphor for the path of transformation. She decided to stop in the middle of the year, due to other commitments and changing life circumstance.

• One student is working on a short documentary about artists in Auroville. She is at the shooting stage, and has started learning editing through short exercises on different subjects. She is in her first year.

• One student stopped this term. It was our decision as she could not commit, the work was not sufficient to progress.

• Two students contributed to the Auroville Art Camp 2019 by filming the event, each one with a specific project.

Auroville Pictures:

• We will complete a movie on Isai Ambalam School in April 2019.

• We will complete a movie on Nandanam Kindergarten in April 2019.

• We created 5 teasers for the Auroville Art Camp 2019 (watchable on our YouTube channel, ‘aurovillepictures’).

• We worked on the project “The Vedas” with Jean Yves. The script is written, the structure of the introduction and the first chapter are almost completed (images/structure of the editing).
Reflections:

Of 5 students this year only one was a youth; we did not receive any requests from the youngsters despite of having spread the information by different channels. It means for us that there is not a need for now.

The project for Isai Ambalam School was challenging as we had to work with the existing footage that was done for the movie on SAIIER. We chose to do a more classical documentary as Isai Ambalam wishes to use this movie for showing to the parents of the potential students and to fundraisers. One of our previous students accepted to do the voice over, it was a very nice experience and a great collaboration, as the fact that he learned how to make movies with us enabled him to understand immediately our need.

The project for Nandanam Kindergarten was also challenging as we had to work as well with the footage we already had. We chose an impressionistic way of telling the story.

The project on the Vedas is a research project. And it has been a research on many levels: the first challenge was to read The Secret of the Veda by Sri Aurobindo, the second to find the right posture to serve the purpose of the movie.

The main challenge for us this year was time. We had to postpone our projects as the amount of work with the 3 projects we took this year plus the apprenticeship was too much.

Future direction:

• We wish to continue our collaboration with Jean Yves for an educational documentary on the Vedas.
• We wish to focus more on movies on Auroville.
• We wish to rethink the apprenticeship program as it is today. The current students we have are now autonomous, and there is no need for a program at this stage; we will be available for them as mentors and will accompany them in their further path on film making. As there is not a visible need from the youth after high school, we wish to dedicate ourselves to the projects of movies for Auroville.
• We have a new documentary project, “Why Auroville?”, a full length documentary on the raison d’être of Auroville. The script is already written.
• We received again this year requests from Aurovilians to collaborate on movies but we have had to refuse as we had no time.

We wish for next year to commit ourselves to creating documentaries for Auroville, having apprentices working with us on each project from the phase 1 of preparation till the final stage of postproduction. This offer will be available for our current students but also for new students to come.
“Let’s Play with the Diversities”
A project of Accessible Auroville

The purpose of this project was to promote awareness about the lives of people with different disabilities and conditions, inspired by the simple fact that every individual has a right to participate in the cultural life. Our goal at Accessible Auroville is to create and sustain an inclusive society without any exclusion. We promote the idea that “If you plan with accessibility in the mind, you will create a welcoming environment and avoid creating new barriers”.

Description of project:
The event “Let’s Play with the Diversities” happened on March 1st, 2019 from 9am to noon. Our intention was to involve all the residents, newcomers, volunteers, guests, especially the schools: children, parents, teachers.

The day began with a “Walk in wheelchairs” from the Solar Kitchen to Town Hall, which was a great success. Participants could experience the feeling of sitting in wheelchairs and moving with wheelchairs. They could notice for the first time the architectonic barriers which prevent those in wheelchairs from moving around like everybody else. We received very positive feedback from the participants, especially from parents.

At 10:30am we gathered at Town Hall for the opening of a photography exhibition about accessibility and architectonic barriers in Auroville and Puducherry, inaugurated by the Puducherry Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi.

At 11am in front of Le Morgan Café there was a play performed by the Yatra team and some Aurovillian actors. The setting was a restaurant run by differently-abled staff. The goal was to show the great skills that people with some ‘diversities’ develop in order to feel included in society like the others.

Outcomes:
The morning was very special and joyful indeed! The message of creating an inclusive society was sent very well by playing and laughing.

This event has created more awareness about Accessibility to All. It strengthened the understanding that “The City of Human Unity” has to include all kind of human diversities.

Reflections:
It was very relevant that Lt. Governor Kiran Bedi participated in the event. I (Susmita) had an interesting conversation with her about accessibility in general with a particular attention to Puducherry. That was our aim: to invite her to make the town more friendly and safe.
“Link to heART” at New Colors

The purpose of the project was to provide art and creative knowledge for children, and let them in their work express themselves with a wide range of possibilities. Their creative work was turned into a personal and unique letter that connected them with other children outside of New Colors.

Description of project:

The activity “Link to heART” was provided for children who come and study at New Colors, a progressive educational and social support center for underprivileged and disadvantaged children in Edayanchavady village. The project was led by art teachers Renana and Eve.

The general activity hours of New Colors are Monday to Friday from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. “Link to heART” was an activity starting in July 2018 and running through February 2019 (8 months). At the beginning it was for one day a week, mainly on Tuesdays, but sometimes also on Thursdays and Fridays. On rainy days it was not offered because of no convenient conditions to work. Also during periods of high humidity the artwork took a long time to dry.

Nevertheless, we took the time to prepare for this project and created 5 types of works from all the ideas we thought to create this year. Some of the works took several weeks and some less. We would begin with an abstract drawing with pencil on white paper on various subjects that are close to the child, such as the house, customs and symbols. From these we chose and created stencils which were a major component in the following works. We worked with a wide variety of colors with different compositions, including different types of paperwork, and even on canvas (which was actually a recycling of fabric pasted on cardboard). We created slides with an old projector, and took photographs playing with the light and darkness of the slides. Some children created art nonstop and some learned for the first time to touch the different materials.

Outcomes:

Through this project, the children were able to express themselves and to connect with others through art. All the artwork was compiled and sent to other children living abroad by postal.

Each and every child’s artwork was unique, as the children had freedom to express themselves and their environment. Beyond the artistic side, we were able to connect on the emotional and spiritual aspects. At present, the schools abroad are very positive and excited to receive such letters. They are in process of creating their own artworks in turn and once they are ready they will connect with us.
The most important thing in this project was to see how the children were ‘thirsty’ for knowledge about art and creativity. All activities were fun and full of joy, with the artistic freedom that they were allowed to create, the main border being only the borders of the page.

Reflections:

We had hoped to receive more funds for this project and it was a challenge to make do with what we had. We taught the children how to use the materials correctly and economically.

We discovered that for a large number of children there was a lack of experience with free drawing without copying a book or a friend. We worked with them on this and encouraged them.

Conclusion:

We discovered how important it was to the child’s development to gain knowledge of art and creativity. How much it contributes to the child and their environment and curiosity to know more and more.

In addition to preparing the letters, there was a demand for more schools and groups of children to receive letters of this kind. We could not meet the demand and sent only to a limited number of schools and children.

We hope in the coming year, we will be able to report on the progress of this project.

We are very interested in continuing this project for another year, allowing a more complete range of art activities for the children to discover.
Mandala Practice

by Rosalba

This project aimed to help students increase their awareness and rebalance and realign their whole being, following a system discovered by Carl G. Jung and his followers.

Description of project:

This year I offered the experience of drawing and coloring mandalas at Udavi School, Last School, TLC, Life Education Centre and as an open class at Baraka.

At Udavi School I held two courses, one for the kids of first grade and the other of the kids of fourth/fifth grade. In this case it only lasted for the first three months of the school year. I found the situation too difficult, because of the language and cultural barrier. The teacher told me that the kids were very happy to work with mandalas the way I was guiding them, but I felt I should stop.

At Last School I worked with mandalas and gave Bach flower courses. There it was very nice. The students were very receptive and they joined my classes with enthusiasm. At a certain moment I saw the number of students for mandala class increase, and some of them started participating also in the course that I run regularly in Baraka community, which is open to everyone.

I worked also at TLC, where in the same way as Last School the kids got involved with a lot of interest. So the facilitator asked me to continue next school year with more hours.

I offered a workshop on mandalas at Life Education Centre, and the women there enjoyed it so much that our class stretched almost one hour longer than planned.

I made an exhibition of my mandalas at the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, from December to the end of January. This received a very good response, including several proposals to go out of Auroville to give seminars and workshops (but this I didn’t do yet). The regular course of Exploring Mandala became so full that I was not able to receive all the people booking because the physical space is not big enough.

Outcomes:

An amazing collection of mandalas was created by many people. Participants say it feels like meditating when they are working with mandalas. The benefits are visible in many students: they are more aware, more focused, more centered, more mature... in a word they are much more grounded, aware, conscious. This is what Jung discovered about the mandala practice.

Reflections:

From my side I found it really enjoyable to see people young and old transforming into the better version of themselves, which for me is the real goal of the activity I am offering. It is great any time I see someone get a surprise by what appears on the paper – surprised by their own mandala. I know this is a way to integrate all those elements kept in our unconsciousness which are pushing to be brought into the conscious level.

Conclusion:

I experimented with one workshop of three days at Last School, which got a really interesting response from students and teachers as well. I would like to offer this workshop again in different places, along with continuing my regular classes in the schools.
Outreach art activities

by Sathya

The purpose of the project was to support CREEVA’s art activities: outreach art programs, open studio, art workshops and art classes, and to paint landscapes for SAILER to display in Mitra youth hostel.

Activities and outcomes:
I continue facilitating in CREEVA’s open studio, giving a weekly class about exploring different medium of paints, and conducting monthly watercolor workshops. We put on a student and artist’s exhibition called “Pot pourri” at Kalakendra art gallery in Bharat Nivas.

We had one painting session with kids in Isai Ambalam School, and enjoyed the interaction with the students. I also participated in mural educational awareness events at Chidambaram and Pondicherry schools. By doing this outside Auroville I am establishing contacts for CREEVA and our artists.

I created three large paintings for display at Mitra youth hostel that show Auroville landscapes, and now am working on my fourth painting.

Pitanga hosted an exhibition of my paintings called “Visual hike”. My paintings were also displayed at a festival in Solitude Farm, and I have an ongoing semi-permanent exhibition at Joy Guest House.

Reflections:
I am very happy to have participated in this year’s project; I learned a lot from CREEVA’s activities as well as painting for Mitra. This project has given me the opportunity to paint more, share my experiences with others and enlarge my perceptions. I felt that I had my time and space to explore my painting process. I feel more confident in the future as an artist.

Being active in CREEVA introduces me to points of view I would have never been exposed to. My English improves and my ability to communicate with others increases. I have the freedom to explore different experiences, which has helped me to add to our programs in CREEVA and will certainly help in the future.
Payanam cycle trips

Payanam is a service-oriented project run by youth of Auroville, for Auroville and the bio-region in coordination with youth from the bio-region. It is supported by SAIIER and Auroville Botanical Gardens.

The main objective is to give the kids a more conscious education. Education should be a platform for knowledge of the region and then culture, nature, technology, agriculture and resources. We travel to the destination in nature and maintain the harmony. We avoid plastics and leave no/minimum waste behind, and this is part of what the kids learn.

Through these trips children develop stamina, will power, and explore the leadership quality in them. They practice team work, adapt to changing conditions (weather) and experience a new adventure.

Any children who wish to participate in the Payanam trips get approval from their school principal and a letter from their parents.

Before each trip the children are briefed with simple road rules and instructed to follow the leader in a line. All the trips go through the village roads (avoiding Highways) explaining historical temples/monuments, culture, resources and heritage of the bio-region.

This year we had three cycle trips to Perumukal and one trip by bus to Devathanapettai. Students were from Udavi School, New Era Secondary School and Aikiyam School.

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</table>

Perumukkal is a small village in Tindivanam municipality, Villuppuram district. There is a beautiful temple situated at the top of the Perumukkal Hill. The deity of the temple is known as Thiruvanmikai Eswaramudayar as well as Perumukkal Udayar in Tamil. The donations made by the Chola, Pandya, Sambuvaraya and Vijayanagara rulers have been recorded in more than 60 inscriptions found on the rocks. There is a cave found on the western hillock, called ‘seetha cave’.

Devathanapettai is a remote mountain village between Gingee and Tiruvannamalai. It is a beautiful trekking area with nice hard walk about 4.5 km, around 2 to 3 hours of climbing. The place has still not become touristic so there is no question of proper road or stairs. It has a small building on top of the hill, and 3 small ponds which the local people use for drinking and cooking.
This year Payanam was honoured by the Chief Education Officer of Villupuram District, K. Munnusamy, for organizing our programs. We received a plaque with inscription: “We sincerely appreciate the kind gesture of approval and the sincerity and attitude shown in implementing the project ‘Cycle Field Trip’ for the school students of Auroville Bio-region.”
Satsang Project

by Francesca

The purpose of the project was to expand Satsang Project activity, born in 2017. It is a multifaceted project that mainly deals with cultural diffusion, creative writing and theatre, both from an educational and performative point of view. I am quite satisfied with the work done during this year.

Creative writing classes:
The creative writing classes have reached several Aurovilians who have shown interest. The class also achieved a fairly high level of notoriety in Auroville. In fact, I often find myself stopped on the street and asked for information about it. The Aurovilians, the newcomers and the volunteers who attended my classes during the year have all benefited from the experience and are now able to use creative writing on their own – as a tool for self-exploration and healing, as a tool for purely creative and artistic expression as well as being a valuable way to find practical solutions for one’s own working activities.

“And she was writing”:
In October I started applying the creative writing process to the theatre. In fact I want to mention that before being a writer and multi-creative person, I have been dealing with theatre for at least 20 years. So I started writing “And she was writing”, an innovative monologue that combines a new use of music and sounds (recorded in the recording room), movement and text.

The monologue was a tribute to Julia Cameron, the writer who made creative writing a well-known activity available for everybody.

The premiere of the show was in CRIPA on December 7th, 2018.

Collaboration with Pondicherry University:
There have been unplanned and very positive work experiences such as my collaboration with the performing arts department of Pondicherry. I was contacted by Mr. Ravivarma Raja in September 2018 and in November 2019 I conducted a class for the second-year students in that department. These students went through a month of rehearsals. The show was based on the study of the Italian style of Commedia dell’Arte. The script on which we worked is “The Servant of Two Masters” by Carlo Goldoni. On this script the students have taken one of the last exams of their course of study.

Directing a play in Auroville:
In February 2018 I was asked by a group of Aurovilians to direct a comedy again. I had been the director of “The Odd Couple” staged 4 years ago, with Otto, Krishna, Lyle, Hamish, Charu, Elke and others. Aurovilians still remember that event with joy and I am glad for that. So I said yes, without a second thought.

First I focused on finding the right script. Once I found the script – “Noises Off” by Michael Frayn – I started to organise the set and the group. I have also started a theatre education campaign for people who have never had any experience and who want to learn more about it to better appreciate it.
This staging will take care of maintaining a close dialogue with the community until the day of its final realisation. I aspire for the whole community to be involved at least from an educational point of view. That’s why I created the Facebook group “Comedy in Auroville”, where I am posting informative videos and posts on the art of comedy and theatre in general. And about the whole process of creating a performance, documenting the evolution of the project “Noises Off”. I am also creating an Instagram and Youtube page related to this project.

“My Creative Writing”:

I had originally planned to collaborate with Auroville Radio on this, but they are undergoing a process of change inside their structure and collaboration isn’t possible for the time being. So I resolved to do what was intended to in a different way. I opened a page on Facebook called “My Creative Writing” and a Youtube page. And I started to upload self-made videos there, on how to create a short story a week. It is an intense work to publish these videos regularly.

The outcome is that the Facebook page is starting to have many followers in India. That was unexpected, since I intended to do this having Aurovilians as a target.

I have now found collaborators among Savi volunteers, and we will expand this project on Instagram and Youtube with new activities and videos.

The next step now is to put this activity together with the new educational activity in the field of theatre.

**Collaboration with Swadharma:**

In October 2018 I was contacted by the Swadharma programme team, and led a creative writing class aimed at young Aurovillians under Swadharma itself.

In December 2018 I was asked by the Swadharma team to lead a class within the 5 weeks of the Swadharma programme. I was asked to use my knowledge on theatrical techniques to help the participants in the program explore their emotional and vital worlds, and to help the most timid and closed be able to express themselves without anxiety before an audience. I therefore conducted 10 classes during December and January 2019.
Outcomes:
1. The weekly classes on creative writing.
2. Classes on investigating the link between a good written script and a good theatre play.
3. The performance “And she was writing”. Written, directed, performed by me. I also composed the music for the stage.
4. Launched a Facebook page with videos on creative writing and how to write a short story every week.
5. Launching a page called “Comedy in Auroville” which will document the process of building a performance following the project-performance “Noises Off” which will take place in Bharat Nivas on October 2019.
6. One month of workshops at Pondicherry University’s performing arts department staging “The Servant of Two Masters” by Carlo Goldoni. A Commedia dell’Arte study.
7. Swadharma’s creative writing classes.
8. Swadharma’s classes exploring the vital through theatre exercises.
9. Creative writing inspirational cards.
10. Launched the spiritual poetry event “Wings of the Spirit”.
11. Since last February I have been organising the cast, the location, the stage costumes and the fundraising for “Noises Off”, the next comedy played by Aurovilians for Aurovilians.
12. Workshops for Aurovilians, newcomers and volunteers to spread some knowledge about the theatre culture.

The beneficiaries of these activities are always and primarily Aurovilians, newcomers and volunteers. The Swadharma programme participants benefited as well.

Reflections:
The most interesting aspect of this project was how things developed by themselves, without any particular programming on my part. It was all very organic. I did things which had been on my mind, but I also went through completely unexpected experiences (such as the work at Pondicherry University and my participation in Swadharma). There were also unexpected difficulties, such as the lack of collaboration with Auroville Radio. But from this unforeseen difficulty another activity has flourished that will bear fruit not very long from now. Looking back today at the entire journey, I would say that there is an almost logical sense of how things have developed.

Conclusion:
I think this last year has given an interesting and unexpected base for my activity. Now it is more clear and organic than a year ago.

I intend to develop my classes on Creative Writing in a different way. I also want to write a workbook on creative writing and continue the experiment through the Facebook page “My Creative Writing”. I will use Instagram as well. I have a feeling that something interesting will come out of this. Maybe in the future Auroville will become a reference point for creative writers in India. And theatre people as well.
Stewardship for New Emergence
Continuation programs with Dr. Monica Sharma

The purpose of the project was to invite Dr. Monica Sharma, who is former director of leadership and capacity development of the United Nations and winner of Nautilus Book Award 2018 for her book “Radical Transformational Leadership”, to engage and continue supporting the Auroville community in our work of value based strategic actions for the manifestation of the Auroville Dream.

Monica is committed to mentor facilitators and projects being carried out by alumni of the Stewardship of New Emergence program, and has offered new tools to enhance participants’ progress. This year programs not only strengthened the framework of existing practitioners but also offered two intensive half-day session open for all Auroville educators.

Description of project:

Monica was in Auroville from August 29th till September 11th 2018. During this time she was fully engaged in giving sessions and mentoring groups and individuals:

- Half day focused sessions with the teams of STEM Land, Auroville Consulting, the Thamarai core team & village youth.
- Review and envisioning meetings with unit executives of Upasana, Earth & Us, Unity Pavilion and other individuals.
- Alumni session over 3 days with 33 participants to refresh the Stewardship tools and their application.
- Stage 2 workshops deepened the capacity of alumni with Stage 2 tools over 3 days with 32 participants.
- Two half days on an Education intensive, with 161 registered participants.

Monica also worked intensively with the organization team to prepare and debrief all sessions. She created a platform of support by inviting Stewardship for New Emergence enthusiasts to envision future potential of this work for the Auroville community.

Outcomes:

More than 260 people profited through the interaction with Dr. Monica Sharma by gaining insights and learning tools to apply in the workplace. Some teams and individuals attended multiple sessions.

Evident was a deeper commitment and courage to take up challenges for transformational leadership in Auroville. Key issues that emerged in 2018 such as discrimination got addressed through the examination of ‘isms’ such as group-ism, class-ism, idealism etc. with the realization that they are embedded in cultural/social norms and need to be noticed, named and transformed. Many people expressed the value of this.

161 educators came together for the sessions on education; this created a field of shared learning, common language and it further created a cohesive network of people willing to work together. Looking at day-to-day issues of education in Auroville through the lens of Stewardship tools, all were able to envision future possibilities through value based project design. A further outcome of the session was alignment across schools and projects for resource sharing and partnerships.
The Stage 1 resource people (4) and facilitation and organization team (15) were further strengthened with direct coaching and encouragement, to the extent that some of the STEM Land youth became resource people with visiting faculty for the Amma Appa stewardship program for Auroville workers in April 2019.

Reflections:

Some participants shared that the program has given them a value-based design tool that helps them identify patterns that create and sustain problems. Being able to see this makes it easier to manifest projects with sustainable results.

Another participant reported the value of distinguishing assertiveness from aggression and submission, which is very helpful in Auroville’s multicultural society.

Many agreed that discovering and embodying the stand of ‘Inner Wisdom’ is of great importance, as it is the space of unity and inner power. They agreed on the importance of using the tools to shift conversations that are divisive, transforming cultures of blame to possibility.

Conclusion:

We feel this work is of immense value to Auroville and as long Dr. Monica Sharma is offering her services, we feel a need to take advantage from it and to support it.

In 2019, in addition to the team sessions and alumni sessions, we envision to have a open community session with the focus on Organization.
White Peacock ceramic studio

White Peacock is an ongoing project since 2008. It is a place where everybody can explore one’s creativity with clay – a most obedient and yet demanding material. We conduct classes, workshops, participate at the larger events and exhibitions. With the students we undertake community projects. People from 3 to 100 years come to learn claywork with us.

Two ceramic artists, Anna and Saraswati initiated this venture, later Fedor joined them as a technical part of the team. Our technological cycle is fully professional (suitable mostly for decorative ceramics). We have two electric kilns to maintain two firings for the pieces – buisk and glaze firing.

Out of many other creative mediums ceramics is the least likely to be tried at home on one’s own as it requires a heavy equipment and basic technological knowledge. However in a digital era ceramics becomes more valuable and gains popularity as a digital detox option for kids and adults. First, it reconnects with the Earth energy; second, it requires full concentration and presence in the moment with all your senses, restoring the brain-hands coordination. It also exists in a real time, one step at a time – you can’t skip a step or speed up the process. And it holds one’s attention because it’s an interesting process.

Description of project:

We offered regular classes in our White Peacock studio for different age groups (preschoolers, school children, adults). We also facilitated classes within school/kindergarten curricula, and held events, workshops, and exhibitions of students’ works.

We mainly focused on the amateurs’ development and children’s after-school activities, as we believe this is the most needed for the Auroville community trying to follow a concept of unending education and eternal youth.

1. We invited 6-year old students from Kindergarten and Nandanam Kindergarten for weekly classes within their own curricula. We are very well situated (next to their schools) to be a part of their schedule. In future we will try to tune better with the projects they already do as a group, to became more integral part of their life. Otherwise it was an interesting experience, something to learn (for example, how to introduce different ceramics techniques in a most entertaining way). We are planning to continue learning together with our closest neighbors.

2. We held a Ceramic Camp for the elder school-age students of our Sunday Class. During the winter holidays we spent every morning together and focused on a new project each day. The intense rhythm and deeper focus allowed us to achieve the concentration we hardly ever have during a weekend class. A feeling of growth and empowerment was there.

3. We started a fundraising campaign for a new kiln (our main hardworking kiln has served us for 11 years now, survived many small and major repairs and needs to be replaced soon). Having this as an aim, we participated in Auroville Potters’ Market with the pieces made by children between 7 and 15 years old. We gathered some funds (Rs. 42,000 Rs, which is 30% of the new kiln estimate), but also noticed that people appreciate our pieces for the innocence and positive energy they carry.

4. We decided to undertake a community mural project: a tiled shield around a drinking water tub at Certitude. The tiles are ready, and the mounting of the mural will be done during or
after the summer holidays.

5. We separated two streams of the Sunday Class into two different classes. Now we have a Sunday Class fully dedicated to school-age children and a Saturday Open Space Gathering for preschoolers and their active parents. This proved to be a good idea as both groups feel more relaxed and focused. Before we had very crowded Sunday mornings (up to 40 people at once), and the amount of interested people was only growing. (Probably, this shows that there are not many places in Auroville where children can play and grow in a free time!)

One of our team members, Saraswati, was selected for participation in the first edition of the Indian Ceramic Triennale. Her project was called ‘AntiGravity’, made of porcelain. It took a good three months to make it and gathered a lot of positive attention.

Another facilitator, Anna, participated with her own creations (about 50 pieces made of porcelain) in the “Divine Flowers” exhibition in Savitri Bhavan.

As a team we believe that it’s very important for the teaching artists to continue to grow and to deepen the skills and the understanding of the material, as well as the contemporary development of art medium. If your potential grows, you always have something to share with the others.

Reflections:

We had a very intense year. The number of our students grew as well as the number of classes. The popularity of clay-related activities is growing and we have to look for the options to catch up with the demand. Most certainly, we need to involve more volunteer-facilitators in our team. Fortunately, the visa restrictions got softened and we will be able to involve guests and short term volunteers in our activities again.

As teachers/facilitators we would like to improve our own capacities by taking part in a few learning opportunities such as workshops on different ceramic techniques offered in India by Indian and invited artists. In our experience, our own growth boosts the motivation and growth of our students.
Auroville Digital Archives

Auroville Digital Archives aims to organize Auroville’s immense amount of information into a useable format.

We set up our office in March 2018, soon after the Auroville Archives building was inaugurated on 28 February. We learned how to use the file server system and created the first four catalogs for 33,000 photos, 358 videos, a catalog for the Matrimandir from beginning till present, and 348 issues of Auroville Today.

The Digital Archives opened officially on Auroville’s birthday week, 2019 as we had originally planned.

Now Aurovilians and guests can explore these catalogs comfortably on a dedicated computer in the Archives main office. We give help, information and support when needed.

Description of project:

The main work was the planning of the catalogs, creating categories and subcategories fitting the activities of Auroville’s life. Sifting through the large quantity of photos is a tedious work that requires discipline.

We finished the tagging of Auroville Today just last week and we share the joy about the wealth of information that this catalog has to offer; research about certain topics will be much easier. So we are encouraged to focus on the News & Notes in the next weeks.

We established close working contact with AurovilleRadioTV, and store their complete video material in our backup system. They will create a catalog in the next month with our help. The same is planned with Auroville Earth Institute, as soon as possible. Both units are connected with the same local network, so if needed we can connect them to our server (a work in progress).

We can now offer our Auroville International (AVI) centres the standalone catalogs for their offices, as these are in themselves a complete SQLite database.

We shared our video collection with the World Café group which meets on Wednesdays, with the Auroville Video Library and with the Aspiration Program team. We provided selected videos for the “Journey of Auroville” team.

We supply numerous old and new video footage to OutreachMedia, aiding them with their video creations. We delivered the footage for videos on the planned Highway, and are working on short videos of 3, 5 and 10 minutes about Auroville for future VIP’s visits.

Outcomes:

After one year we have created a strong foundation and we are supplying Auroville, Aurovilians and AVI centres with photos, videos and historical information. For the next year we will create more catalogs for different Auroville units in order that they may functions with greater information and ease of retrieval of that information.

Conclusion:

Auroville, according to our Charter, is a site of material and spiritual researches. And for research we need reliable, accessible archives.

As more units understand their need to catalogue their information and centralized it, the model we have used can be repeated. We will be able to assist.
“Gentle Jalaja”

by Jyoti Khare

The purpose of the project was to find ways to create (write and illustrate) beautiful books for children that inspire them to be strong and deep human beings.

What I researched was to find a way of making the illustrations speak directly to the children’s hearts, while the text speaks to their minds, so that their whole being feels elated and inspired by the book.

I have written and illustrated a story where a little fish, through her courage and compassion transforms the competitive and aggressive nature of all the creatures in the pond, and establishes a happy atmosphere of unity and solidarity amongst all.

The illustration work begun last year have been completed and in collaboration with the Auroville Press a story book has been published that will be enjoyed by the children of Auroville and the world at large.

The book was released in Nandanam Kindergarten in Auroville, where coloring activity and a puppet show of the story was organized for the children. Many people came and enjoyed the moment.

Reflections:

Every time I illustrate a story I attempt to do it in a style that will suit the mood of the story and will take me a step further in my own learning. As this story is set predominantly in a pond I had, for the first time to work on underwater scenes, keeping the fluidity, transparency and depth of the pond. This was the challenge and the learning for me.
“Crabs on a Chappal”

by Sara Sponza

The purpose of the project was to publish a children's story (age 6 to 11); a story about an adventure where the protagonists meet different characters along their journey, each one of them representing an emotion with specific teaching.

Description of project:
The project was carried out by me, Sara Sponza (writing and drawings), with the help of Marie Demont as a graphic designer and Mariana Cortina as editor; Auroville Press for the printing. The grant for the publication of the book was given by SAIER in November 2018.

Outcomes:
The outcome was the printing of the book that is being distributed to the Auroville schools, the library and sold in book shops. It is a softcover book will full-page color illustrations.

As the printing was finalized only in mid-April, by which time the Auroville schools were about to close, I am planning hold the book launch in September. It will take place at Auroville Botanical Gardens, with some activities and games. Surely the benefit to the community will be greater after the launching as more people, teachers and children will be exposed to the story.

Together with Marie I am in contact with Transition School teachers, to perhaps organize a few activities for children related to the book, one or two afternoons in September or October 2019.

Reflections:
The most meaningful thing about the project was for me the experience of being part of the community and feeling supported for a creative work that has received appreciation from all people and friends who have read the story and seen the drawings. I am grateful for the active support of Marie, Mariana, SAIER and my friends.

The challenging part was initially to ask for the funds. What I learned was that is if you believe in something and persevere, the results will come.
“The Dance of Life”

by Jivatman

The purpose of this project was to present to a general public, but especially to Aurovilians, a new collections of my songs, which reflect my perceptions of life and the challenges of human beings in the world today and also beyond time.

The songs of the CD were written by Jivatman, with few exceptions where lyrics by others (including Sri Aurobindo) were the inspiration for the melody. The project was completed in about two months, between October and December 2018.

The collection comprises 15 songs in 3 languages: English, Portuguese and Spanish. I received good reviews about the songs and hope to reach more people, as the CD will become more known. It is available at few places in Auroville and is currently announced at Auroville Online Store.

Reflections:

What was most meaningful was to play along with Matt (on keyboard) and Holger (on bass). They are two good and experienced musicians. I learned to be more receptive while playing and more capable of adjusting myself to other players.

I hope to continue progressing in this field of expression (music) and am thankful for all the help I get along the way.
## Projects supported in 2018-19

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<td>Paul (Botanical Gardens)</td>
<td>Environmental education in Auroville’s bio-region</td>
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<td>Claire, RV</td>
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<td>“Link to heART” at New Colors</td>
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<td>Rosalba</td>
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<td>Trekking Program for the Youth of Auroville</td>
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<td>Saraswati</td>
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<td>Auroville Digital Archives</td>
<td>₹ 96,000</td>
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<td>Sara S.</td>
<td>“Crabs on a Chappal” children's book</td>
<td>₹ 141,027</td>
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<td>Jivatman</td>
<td>“The Dance of Life” CD</td>
<td>₹ 65,200</td>
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</table>
Thank you to all report writers:

Abha, Aha! Team, Anna, Arulvazhi team, Ashatit, Bridget and Helena, Celine, Christophe, Cristo, Devi, Divyanshi, Francesca, Francoise, Francis, Gala and Nikita, Grace, Honor and Deepanam class teachers, Ivana, Jean-Yves, Jivatman, Jothi and Fred, Kalou, Katerina, Kavitha and Sanjeev R., Lucas, Marie-Claire and Sangeetha and Guy, Marion, Martin G., Mary and Transition School team, Maya, R. Meenakshi and Radhika, Muthukumar, Nandanan team, Nele, Nikadass, Nirmala and Kavitha, Oli School team, Olivier N., Paula C., Payanam cycle team, Philippe and Thierry, Priya and Ravikrishna, Rabindra and Narendra, Rosalba, RV and Claire, Sara S., Saraswati, D. Saravanan, Satyavan, Selvaraj A., Shankar, Shraddhavan and Dhanalakshmi, Sudhir, Suriyagandhi and Gunasundari and Meera, Surya, Susmita, Tracy Evans, Valentine

Report prepared by: Arun, Kristen, Prabha/AVDzines