SAIIER
Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research
Annual Report 2016-17

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to all report contributors:

Agnes, Aha facilitator team, Aloka, Anna, Aryamani, Ashatit, Bhaga, Celine, Chandrah and Ribhu, Chitra, Deoyani, Devi, Erik and Fanny, Eva N., Frederick, Gala, Grace, Hari, Harini, Heidi W., Ing-Marie, Jaya, Jean-Christophe, Jean-Yves, Jill, Jothi, Jürgen A., Kaeridwyn, Kalou, Kalyani, Kripa, Kumar, L'aura and Restorative Auroville, Laurence, Lucas, Luk, Maggie, Manoj, Marianne, Marie-Claire, Martin S., Mary and Transition School team, Matt, Matthia, Meenakshi, Mike, Miriam, Mita and Nandanam team, Namah, Nele, Nikita, Nishtha, Noeul, Ok, Paula M., Priya, Rajeev, Rosa, RV and Claire, Sagadevan, Sangeetha, Sanjeev R., Saraswati, Saravanan, Satyavan B., Selva, Shraddhavan, Stacy, Subash, Suriyagandhi, Surya C.R., Swati, Rajesh, Tamar and TLC team, Tatiana S., Thambidurai, Thomas, Usha, Varadharajan, Walter G., Yvelise

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This report is available on the Auroville Wiki, with supplementary photos and links:

wiki.auroville.org.in/wiki/SAIIER_2016-17
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Report from the SAIIER office

Overview

The Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) coordinates educational activities in Auroville and undertakes educational research toward giving practical shape to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. SAIIER was started in 1984 and has since been growing along with the growth of Auroville. Its sub-units include Auroville schools, Outreach schools, and diverse education-related facilities, programs and projects.

Regular activities of the SAIIER administration include managing accounts and assets, coordinating construction projects, publishing books and other resources, and exchanging and collaborating with others in the field of education.

Three executives (Ashoke, Chali, and Sanjeev A.) manage SAIIER’s operations. The SAIIER Board (Ashoke, Chali, Clare, Jean-Yves, Jyoti K., Lucas, Michael H., Sanjeev A., Sanjeev R., Sauro) is the advisory body and approves major financial expenditures; it meets once a month. Administrative staff and support (Arun, Bhuvaneswari, Iyyanar, Lijun, Kristen, Meena, Michael G., Parvati, and Ramu) work in the SAIIER office.

Construction projects

SAIIER undertook many construction projects this year.

Continuing projects:

• **Aikiyam School - “Harmony” building, classrooms:** Started in 2015-16 and completed this year. (Total: Rs. 55.93 lakhs.)
• **Auroville Botanical Gardens - Kitchen building:** Started in 2015-16 and completed this year. (Total: Rs. 21.70 lakhs.)
• **Deepanam School - Awareness Through the Body (ATB) Hall:** Started in 2015-16 and is expected to be completed in early 2017-18. (Estimated total: Rs. 38.85 lakhs.)
• **Deepanam School - Classroom block:** Started in 2015-16 and completed this year. (Total: Rs. 48.08 lakhs.)
• **Kindergarten - Office building:** Started in 2015-16 and completed this year. (Total: Rs. 16.87 lakhs.)
• **SAIIER Staff Quarters Phase I Block A:** Started in 2015-16 and expected to be completed in early 2017-18. (Estimated total: 94.18 lakhs.)

New projects:

• **Auroville Library - Building extension:** Expected to be completed in 2017-18. (Estimated total: 27.81 lakhs.)
• **Last School - Dining space:** Completed this year. (Total: 14.45 lakhs.)
• **Mitra Dormitory (Udavi School) - Cafeteria and veranda:** Expected to be completed in 2017-18. (Estimated total: 10.51 lakhs.)
• **SAIIER Staff Quarters Phase I Block B:** Expected to be completed in 2017-18. (Estimated total: 94.18 lakhs.)
• **SAIIER Staff Quarters Phase II Block A:** Expected to be completed in 2018-19. (Estimated total: 99.91 lakhs.)
• **Savitri Bhavan - Picture Gallery:** Expected to be completed in 2017-18. (Estimated total: 73.54 lakhs.)
Bajaj CSR grant

A major highlight of the year was SAIIER's receipt of a Rs. 1 crore grant from Bajaj Auto through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme. SAIIER set up a new ‘Special Grants’ channel of administration in order to coordinate the new work of allocating funds, communicating with project holders, and reporting on the projects supported by this grant. So far 12 innovative projects submitted by members of the Auroville community have been chosen to receive support through this grant (see Annexure for descriptions):

1. Completion of Watchtower at Auroville Botanical Gardens (Rs. 88,080)
2. Garden of Indian Culture and Heritage (Rs. 18,03,000)
3. Isai Ambalam School Transformation Program (Rs. 6,52,370)
4. STEM Smart Classroom and Training Center (Rs. 10,90,954)
5. Blue Rays Ultimate Frisbee Development Program (Rs. 1,31,000)
6. Research & Development of a New Integral Music Paedagogy (Rs. to be determined)
7. Creating Awareness of Azolla Production among Adolescents and Promoting Azolla Cultivation by Farmers in the Auroville Bioregion (Rs. 3,53,100)
8. Scholarship Fund with enlarged budget (Rs. 10,00,000)
9. EcoPro Sanitation Education in Boodheri (Rs. 4,50,000)
10. Promotion of sports and culture in Auroville and the Bioregion (Rs. 10,00,000)
11. Awareness programs for a plastic-free world (Rs. 2,69,500)
12. Upcycling Studio Gallery and Permanent Exhibition (Rs. 7,19,500)

Communications

This year SAIIER published the first two issues of a SAIIER Newsletter meant to reach out and connect with those involved with education in Auroville. The newsletters included short articles about SAIIER history and staff, news from sub-units, and highlights of special events happening around Auroville.

SAIIER also hosted two gatherings in the Conference Hall in which representatives of relatively new sub-units and projects gave short presentations about their activities. Presentations were given by Auroville Campus Initiative, Evergreen Horses, Kulaippalayam Cultural Centre, Telos, STEM Land, and Eluciole Circuit (first session); Auroville Botanical Gardens, Nature Camp, “Integrating Auroville conservation work with CBSE and Tamil Nadu Board syllabi”, and the Cooking Apprenticeship Program (second session).

Outcomes

This year SAIIER provided maintenances to 240 Aurovilians working in education, and allocated funds to 62 projects proposed by members of the community. (Reports from most of the projects are included in this Annual Report.) SAIIER also supported the functioning of its 51 sub-units throughout the year, including approval and sponsorship of Rs. 35.77 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.
Annexure:

Bajaj CSR project summaries

Project #1
Completion of Watchtower at Auroville Botanical Gardens
Rs. 88,080

The majority of the school children who visit the Auroville Botanical Gardens (around 3,000 per year) live in simple rural communities as our target group of schools are the local government schools of the Vanur and Marakanum blocks. The experience of the children is quite limited, especially that of the girls. We have seen the excitement and engagement created by giving these children the chance to climb up into the canopy and look out across the forest that is growing at the Botanical Gardens. It is something different, outside of their normal set of experiences and as such it creates a powerful and lasting memory. With this project we will complete the Watchtower at the Botanical Gardens so as to be able to offer it again as an experience to the children.

Project #2
Garden of Indian Culture and Heritage
Rs. 18,03,000

This project involves the creation of a garden at Auroville Botanical Gardens that celebrates the knowledge and traditions associated with the native species of India, hoping to motivate Aurovilians and visitors to protect and nurture the environment of India.

We are constantly searching for ways of engaging people in environmental awareness, looking for ways to motivate people to get involved in actions which will protect the planet upon which we exist. We feel that the garden of Indian Culture and Heritage will be a point of interest for many Indian visitors who are proud and interested in their country. By creating a space that celebrates the knowledge and traditions associated with the native species of India, we hope to provide motivation for these people to protect and nurture the environment of India.

The Garden will have nine thematic areas: Perfume and Incense; Vedic and Ayurvedic traditions; Contemplative area; Astrological and Planetary connections; Lord Shiva; Kubera; Ganesh; Vishnu & Krishna; and The Goddess.

Project #3
Isai Ambalam School Transformation Program
Rs. 6,52,370

Isai Ambalam is an Auroville Outreach school serving village children from kindergarten to 7th standard. Various initiatives and methodologies have been tried in the school so as to provide the children with the best learning environment, but every effort seemed distinct in silos. In the last few months of the 2016-17 school year, we found that connecting threads of value-based education, critical skills and Education By Design (EBD) allowed us to synthesize the various activities together and create a collaborative learning community.

This project aims to take forward what we have developed and to expand its possibilities through technology and through connecting with like-minded schools and resource persons. We will also work toward systematizing our curriculum, developing our physical education program, re-skilling our teachers, and meeting compliance requirements for us to be a registered school.
Project #4
STEM Smart Classroom and Training Center
Rs. 10,90,954

STEM Land in Auroville is an innovative learning environment of Mathematics and Science where children learn by taking responsibility of their learning, creating projects using technology and supporting others’ learning. We aim to make this environment available to all with a ‘smart classroom’ that will document the best of what happens in STEM Land and make it available online. This will include children’s projects, presentations as well as videos made to learn Math and Science through materials, creating and building. Our interactions with scientists, educators and master trainers will also be made available online (with permission from participants). The smart classroom will also be used for teacher training that we are requested to provide by schools. We will experiment with live virtual classrooms between the two locations of STEM Land in Auroville schools, which will allow the children to interact and inspire each other, and see if expanding this network would be interesting for other schools.

The smart classroom will also address the gap between theory and practice in higher education, and will complement the online certification courses offered by the IITs with practical work that will help with understanding the theory. STEM Land will develop its electronics laboratory and expand its offerings to include training for older youth and college students, as well as for technical people working in Auroville who wish to update their skills.

Project #5
Blue Rays Ultimate Frisbee Development Program
Rs. 1,31,000

This project aims to engage with youth in and around Auroville through Ultimate Frisbee, developing the life skills that come with practice of the sport. Ultimate is a demanding sport that has low entry barriers and places emphasis on gender equity. It is one of the few sports in the world where men and women compete together on a level playing field. Ultimate is also a demanding self-refereed sport that teaches important values such as personal integrity, sportsmanship, mutual respect, non-violence and trust. This project will support and expand the opportunities for youth to develop themselves through this sport, by offering trainings and regular practice.

Project #6
Research & Development of a New Integral Music Paedagogy
Rs. (under discussion)

We are researching and developing an innovative music teaching and learning methodology to train up-coming musicians and aspiring music teachers in a sophisticated and holistic way. Our study incorporates the latest research in neuroscience, education and music. There have been a lot of discussions in the recent years on the modernisation and development of music education worldwide and the integration of music education into the Indian school curriculum. We can contribute to these discussions through the research and development of teaching and learning methods and their respective content relevant to education and society today. We aim to nurture an educational approach that takes the whole being into consideration and provides standards of excellence to students in search of higher music education.
Project #7
Creating Awareness of Azolla Production among Adolescents and Promoting Azolla Cultivation by Farmers in the Auroville Bioregion
Rs. 3,53,100

Most cattle farmers in Tamil Nadu depend on traditional and seasonal fodder for feeding their animals. However, they are extremely vulnerable to climatic extremes, in particular drought. Last year low rainfall in Tamil Nadu led to a decline in grassland and cultivable land for growing fodder. This leads to a two-fold challenge: farmers are faced with declining incomes due to poor agricultural yields, and they are forced to buy livestock feed which is expensive. Therefore many are unable to feed their cattle, leading to illness and reduced milk production. Through this project we will help address this problem by promoting awareness and production training of azolla for adolescents and farmers. Azolla is an alternative cattle fodder crop that is organic, sustainable and locally produced. In comparison to purchasing a conventional feed such as groundnut oil cake, azolla can be produced 40 times cheaper whilst yielding the same amount of protein. Through encouraging update of azolla production we will improve cattle health, reduce farmer’s expenditure, improve milk production yields and reduce stress on land and water resources.

Project #8
Scholarship Fund with enlarged budget
Rs. 10,00,000

The Scholarship and Educational Fund (SEF) provides financial support to Aurovilians, mainly to youth, who seek educational opportunities currently not available inside of Auroville. This includes college and university fees and related costs and CBSE courses (at New Era Secondary School, Auroville). The SEF was created in 2008 to provide support in the form of interest-free loans, payable when recipients begin to earn an income.

Originally the SEF team believed that scholarship funds could be raised without too much difficulty, in India and abroad; however, it was found that, while scholarship grants for outstanding students in specific subjects are available, support for a community of students in general does not meet open ears. SEF tries to provide opportunities for this community of students, allotting funds based on the criteria of a student’s motivation and aptitude as well as the family’s financial needs. Part of this grant will be utilized for a study of the impact of the fund to date.

Project #9
EcoPro Sanitation Education in Boodheri
Rs. 4,50,000

Since 2011, EcoPro has built 54 ‘dry toilets’ in Boodheri village (a ward of Tindivanam Municipality). EcoPro’s involvement was in response to a request from a young woman hailing from Boodheri, and had the aims of introducing toilet sanitation (ideally in all 250 households), implementing total sanitation without significant water needs, and engaging farmers to make use of Ecosan ‘products’ (i.e. human urine and fully-sanitized compost derived from human feces) in gardens, orchards and fields. EcoPro’s monthly audits show sub-optimal usage levels of these toilets, with villagers opting to defecate in the open. This project aims to increase sanitation awareness and trigger a change in the villagers’ mindset through Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), a methodology that aims at achieving long-term behavior change. EcoPro’s long-term goal is to improve environmental sustainability and ecological balance in the village through eradication of open defecation, increase of toilet usage and reuse of humanure.
Project #10
Promotion of sports and culture in Auroville and the Bioregion
Rs. 10,00,000

This project is an umbrella for various sports, cultural and life skill activities which are organized under the supervision of Auroville Sports Resource Centre for beneficiaries in Auroville and the five surrounding panchayats. The aim of this project is to foster healthy physical activity, role-model positive lifestyle habits, stimulate excellence, provide opportunities that can arise through sports, and build unity and harmony between Auroville and the local villages.

Support for this project was granted in two categories: (1) creation of a Kalaripayattu arena and facility, which will provide opportunities to learn and practice this traditional Indian martial art; (2) support for the project holders’ overall priorities in their other initiatives including Auroville Nature Camp; basketball, Kabbadi, tennis and table-tennis leagues; rural youth volleyball training; promoting physical education in government schools of the bio-region; and events specifically for local women.

Project #11
Awareness programs for a plastic-free world
Rs. 2,69,500

The villages and towns in India are over-polluted by plastic bags and plastic bottles. We are not able to recycle them; instead we simply throw them away. Our surroundings are full of plastics, and we think that it is not enough to clean again and again, because the next day, people just throw them again and again. This project through Kuilaipalayam Cultural Centre aims to change the habit of using plastic bags and to give people an alternative. For this, we will create awareness programmes and provide cloth bags in the surrounding villages of Auroville, to make them plastic-free in future. Our programmes will include theatre productions, dance shows, videos, short films, walking with postures and cleaning up on the village streets.

Project #12
Upcycling Studio Gallery and Permanent Exhibition
Rs. 7,19,500

Our experience during the 3 weeks of workshops of ‘Litter-Free Auroville 2017’ showed us that there is a need for people to learn and understand more about environmental issues. We saw that it was possible to make them appreciate things upcycled from ‘waste’ and to change their conceptions of waste, in a joyful and creative way. With this project we will build a permanent exhibition at the Visitors’ Center where Auroville’s many daily visitors can see creations made out of ‘waste’, learn about environment issues, and start changing behavior patterns towards a better planet. We also find that making useful things out of ‘waste’ offers ideas and opportunities for creating new jobs. Our gallery and exhibition will be a place where visitors can create and play in order to produce new things and change their way of dealing with waste.
Projects supported in 2016-17

This year SAIIER received over 90 proposals from the community, of which 61 were chosen to receive full or partial support.

**Projects of SAIIER sub-units**

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Subtotal (Rs.) 32,86,288
# Independent projects

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Subtotal (Rs.) 22,63,701

Total (Rs.) 55,49,989
SAIIE sub-units:

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Aha Kindergarten

Introduction

Aha Kindergarten is a school for children 3-6 years of age, following a self-directed, free-progress philosophy of learning. Inspired by the teachings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, our objective is to develop conscious inner will to grow and progress.

Children naturally possess the curiosity to know and learn. This is to be nurtured consciously. It is by their free will that children have to grow up into self-determining individuals, striving consciously to blossom to full inner potential, not only in respect of academics but physically, emotionally, aesthetically and spiritually as well.

Activities and outcomes of the year

Communication with the parents especially has been a focus for this year. The facilitators have ensured that this communication is frequent and complete. As a result, the parent body has had ample opportunity to share and to hear from the facilitators. They have expressed satisfaction with the school and the progress of their children.

Highlights of the year included:

- **Aha Fair:** In September, through a parent initiative, Aha hosted a Community Fair to gather together children, parents, teachers and the wider community for a celebration and a sharing. There was a whole host of activities, including music by Krishna, drumming by the African Pavilion, chanting, a circle dance, face painting, and a crafts corner. Participants could get an astrological reading, have fun with bubbles, and then help themselves to a variety of snacks and then a wonderful dinner by Well Café. The atmosphere was joyous and lively. We all had the benefit of the togetherness and harmony that this event created.

- **Vegetable garden:** Led by Krishna of Solitude Farm, the Aha community participated in creating a vegetable garden, planting a wonderful variety of things: pumpkin, basil, papaya, corn, tomatoes, eggplant, beans and plenty of chicken spinach. All hands helped in the digging, bringing in the compost, planting and watering. The children and parents have since been helping to nurture and water the garden to keep it going happily. We have been able to share the produce with the children at snack times.

- **New playground structure:** Amos designed an adventurous play structure for us, and it was manifested with the help of other parents. Made of bamboo, rope, wood and net, it invites the children to explore, overcome new boundaries, understand each other’s capacities and cooperate with each other. The platform on the top creates an opportunity for gathering together in camaraderie.

- **New ‘cosy corner’:** A brand new indoor play space was created up on the loft under the roof, reachable by a wooden step-ladder. This is a quiet space for reading, blocks and other quiet play.

- **Srima Beach camping trip:** We closed the year with a two-day camping trip to Srima Beach. The children had a most wonderful experience playing in the sand together, swimming in the sea, building their own tents, gathering around a bonfire, and sharing music and food.

- **Involvement of the Aha Support Group:** The Support Group was involved from time to time to the great benefit of the school. Aha continues to seek advice and support from this group.
Reflections

We have been able to see the growth and progress in each child’s physical, emotional, and mental aspects. This growth is reflected in their spirit of cooperation, in increased patience and perseverance, and in the nurturing and growth of 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 been able to address one of our last year’s goals: the creation of new physical spaces for the children. We expect to continue to work on this aspect of the school.

A change in the constitution of the Aha team has meant that we have had to work particularly hard to reconcile various ideas of ‘free progress’ and integral education. Each team member comes with a unique perspective and their own strengths and understandings, and this presents us with a challenge as well as a learning opportunity to figure out how to integrate different approaches and create a sense of balance.

Conclusion

We will continue to focus on team work and team spirit as we go forward. We look forward to creating more opportunities for discussion and communication about a shared vision and plan. We will continue to clarify our idea of ‘free progress’ and our role in creating this opportunity at Aha.
Deepanam School

Introduction

The work of Deepanam School is based on the principles and thoughts on education put forward by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It aims to achieve integral development of the students and to cultivate a joy and love of learning.

The school caters to children of ages 7 to 14. Currently there are three mixed-age classroom groups: ‘Light’ (7-8 years old), ‘Peace’ (9-11 years old) and ‘Faith’ (12-14 years old).

Light group (7-8 years old)

This year our class included 16 children. They were a happy, enthusiastic and curious group. ‘Love to learn’ was one of the main attributes of the group, both children and teachers. We enjoyed working together as well as with the other facilitators who offered various ideas and activities for nurturing the children’s creativity.

Our class explored clay modeling, crafts, painting, gardening, science, field studies, Awareness Through the Body (ATB), singing, and languages.

We see that children love to feel responsible and independent, and keeping this in mind we encouraged them to participate in deciding on rules together, setting daily duties, and choosing among options in their work plan.

Working through projects is another tool which makes the learning process very organic. Our main two projects of the year were ‘animals’ and ‘story building’ (creative writing). These themes became windows to other areas of learning. We also included theater performances as a way of fostering learning, completing our projects with a drama and presentation.

Peace group (9-11 years old)

This year Peace group included 18 children. Some of our activities were:

- **Visiting the Matrimandir:** At Deepanam we are lucky to have the Matrimandir on our doorstep. This year, Peace group visited Matrimandir every Tuesday, to help clean the petals and surrounding areas. We learned about the qualities, colours and order of the petals from Tulsi. John shared about the technical aspects of the building. The aim of this project was to create a connection with this special place and to go beyond the classroom.

- **Mime, waste and birds projects:** For the first two terms, the children were engrossed in learning to mime, and finally gave a performance for the community. The second term was focused mainly on a WasteLess project with the assistance of Ribhu and Chandrah. The children learnt about recycling, reuse and packaging, as well as the coding of plastics through games and different activities. The term also included a project on birds, which involved bird watching in and around Auroville and at Kaluveli Tank.

- **Auroville week:** During this special week in February, the children were familiarised with the Charter of Auroville. For this, the young students from Last School came to explain the Charter. We also visited Savitri Bhavan where Shraddhan further explained it, so that the children understand it from a different perspective. The children later gave a presentation on the Charter for their parents.

- **Tamil Nadu project:** The last term focused on a project on Tamil Nadu, during which the children learned about the history, geography and culture of the state. The students created
a puppet-drama based on what they learned, using puppets made in their crafts class. (See following report: 'Integrating Art, Craft and Puppetry with Regular Academics'.)

- **Creative writing**: The students wrote stories which they illustrated and presented in the form of comics.

**Faith group (12-14 years old)**

This year Faith group included 20 students. Primary emphasis was given to performance arts and hands-on learning. The aim was on developing academic skills, life skills and cultivating character-building experiences. This year’s curriculum subjects were: science, mathematics, English language and literature, social studies, technology, geography, Tamil and French.

- **Literature, History and Theatre projects**: We see history and literature as closely related, and that literature can help history come alive. With this approach, students studied Egyptian stories (“Cleopatra on the Nile”), Greek myths, and Arthurian legends. An hour-long comedy play, “King Arthur: The Legend of The Lost Excalibur”, was performed in February for parents and friends. The students were involved in designing costumes, painting the set and making props. For the end-of-year Open House, the students also performed in the play “Helen of Egypt”, which presented the Egyptian side of the story of the Trojan War.

- **Great Poets project**: In this project, students were familiarized with life and works of Blake, Tennyson, and Wordsworth and were introduced to the Romantic movement. The junior class presented Blake’s work through song at the school fête in February. The project enabled the students to appreciate and be inspired by poetry, and for some to develop a love for it.

- **History of Art**: Corinne offered art history classes to the older students of the group. In each class, an artist’s life, works, and movement of art were introduced. They studied Picasso, Chagall, da Vinci and Van Gogh.

- **The Journey of rice, from seed to plate**: (See project report: ‘Growing food in Auroville Schools’, p.168.)

- **Service Week**: Every year a community service week is organized for the students. It gives them the opportunity to learn about the world of work in Auroville. Units that welcomed the students included Matrimandir, PTDC, Foodlink, Naturellement, Free Store, Lively Boutique, Kindergarten, Nandanam, Shraddhanjali, Baraka, AuroOrchard, Bamboo Centre and Buddha Garden.

- **Puppet show**: Gabriel from Upcycling Studio offered a puppet-making workshop for the students. Recycled material was used to make animal puppets. The students chose a story and made the characters accordingly. They also built a puppet theater out of waste boxes and fabric. The final result was a puppet show performed at the school’s fundraising event.

- **Electronics at STEM Land**: Every Thursday, Faith group visited STEM Land at Udavi School for electronics class. It was a wonderful opportunity for the students to do electronics and tinker with certain materials. We started with learning about basic electronics and went on to build bamboo torches and oscillators.

- **‘Genius Hour’**: We had the idea that once a week, an hour could be devoted to working on each individual student’s passion. This became ‘Genius Hour’. Photography, fashion design, and foreign languages were some of the topics chosen by students. The students were provided with resources from within and outside the school to facilitate their learning.

- **Use of MOOCs in the classroom**: Some of the students were keen to learn specific subjects such as animation and programming, and this was made possible through the MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses) we could access through the National Knowledge Network. The students were self-motivated and willing to learn through this medium.
• **Class blog:** Finally, we have a class blog which students write and maintain ([faithclass.wordpress.com](http://faithclass.wordpress.com)). Parents can browse and see the activities happening in the classroom.

**Common programs at Deepanam School**

Several activities are offered to all the age groups at Deepanam. This year these included:

• **Painting:** Learning to express oneself without the pressure of being judged was the aim of the painting classes. The students explored different art techniques and media (printmaking, puppetry, moving toys, pop-ups, pencil, charcoal, paint, collage). The evolution of visual art was also explored (ancient paintings, the Middle Ages, and the modern era).

• **Clay:** Students from Light and Peace attended clay classes once a week. They learned and practiced various techniques such as pinching, moulding, rolling, cutting and printing clay. The children produced forms of animals, foods, pots, architecture, figures, decorations, aliens, dinosaurs, insects and many other weird and wonderful things!

• **Crafts:** Students from Light and Peace groups attended craft classes twice a week. Activities included the making of masks, puppets, dolls, houses, flowers, festive decorations, bracelets, dream catchers and more. Techniques included crochet, knitting, sewing, beading, embroidery, quilling, papier maché, paper rolling, patchwork, and origami. This work develops students' fine motor skills and demands focus and concentrated attention, complementing academic study.

• **Gardening:** Students from Light and Peace groups attended gardening classes once a week. Deepanam has a beautiful school garden, which recently has been developed with permaculture principles in mind. This year each group was given a raised bed in the garden where they were able to plant, nurture, observe, harvest and cook different vegetables, fruits and herbs. Besides being responsible for their beds, the students learnt about the importance of the soil and how to nourish it by constantly giving back organic matter (mulch!). They learnt about the plant life cycle, different seeds, preparing food fresh from the garden, soil composition and decomposition, and how to build different types of garden beds. Thanks to our volunteers, we also made a film about building a bed in the garden.

• **Life Science:** Students from Light, Peace and Faith groups took Life Science classes each week. Deepanam benefits from its own Life Science Lab which accommodates fresh and saltwater aquariums, terrariums, and a snake pit, which the students actively participate in maintaining and cleaning. The students are able to design and create habitats, and to closely observe and handle the snakes which are our temporary guests. This year the students learnt a lot about shells from Bruce, who showed and commented on his phenomenal collection of different shells from around the world.

• **Languages:** Language classes are offered to students of Deepanam according to their needs and level. The two main languages taught are Tamil and French, although tailor-made classes can be offered on request (e.g. Hindi and Japanese). For the main languages, two groups of students are formed: native speakers and foreign learners. Teachers use literature, films and games to make the contact with the languages fun and accessible.
Integrating Art, Craft and Puppetry with Regular Academics
A project of Deepanam School

A project by Tatiana S.

Introduction

The Deepanam Puppet Project was created to support social studies, science, and language development (both receptive and expressive), integrating visual/performing arts into core curriculum standards. As part of the educational approach at Deepanam School, special emphasis has historically been placed on artistic education. Subjects such as painting, crafts, ceramics, music and drama are considered as important as the regular academics. The Puppet Project was aligned with this approach and brought in some new elements as well.

Description of project

The students of Deepanam School aged 7 to 14 years were involved in the activities of this project, which had two distinct aspects:

1. The first phase involved a series of classes where children were invited to create the puppets. Each participating student created his own specially designated puppet.
2. The second phase was a dramatic one: at the end of the school year, children gave a presentation as a part of a cultural program where songs, drama and dance were performed for the community.

Puppets were created to embrace unique educational, cultural and ecological themes including endangered species, local cultural appreciation and environmental awareness. Puppets were created through fun and creative workshops, which charged and encouraged the imagination of the children. Puppetry was adopted as a special activity through which the children learnt the full process of puppet theater production, including computer design, prop-making and enacting the play.

Outcomes

Each classroom group at Deepanam created a puppet scene about a specific theme.

The ‘Light’ group children (7-8 years old) did a project on wild and domestic animals. They had an introduction to the traditional puppet theatre of India and other countries, and learnt about different styles of puppet theatre. The children were taught to make and manipulate simple paper puppets including finger puppets, masks and paper rod puppets.

The ‘Peace’ group children (9-11 years old) did their project on Tamil Nadu. They learnt about a large variety of different types of puppets, and learnt techniques of making puppet heads with papier maché and paper pasting, foam and fabric. The children created a show based on some of the customs, traditions and holidays of Tamil Nadu.

The ‘Faith’ group students (12-14 years old) did a ‘reduce, reuse and recycle’ project. They were taught how to build puppets out of easily-available and waste materials, in the theme of conveying educational concepts and creating awareness of social issues in a classroom setting.

Manipulation of all these puppets was taught after each practical session. Special sessions on drawing, movement and mime, creative writing, creative speech, dialogue delivery, and voice modulation were also organized for participants to enhance their communication skills. And since a good educational message is the core of the puppet play, emphasis was given to the writing of the scripts for the plays.
With the guidance of the teachers the children flourished in the workshops, and over time their enthusiasm for puppetry grew considerably. The children didn’t get just a ‘puppet show’. They got a rich educational experience that provided a springboard for further learning opportunities in the classroom, such as the skill of expressing feelings through role-play.

Some outcomes of the project were:
• Hands-on learning of regular academic subjects;
• Development of aesthetic sense, patience, and problem solving skills;
• Improvement of hand-eye coordination and motor skills in the younger group of students;
• Learning teamwork and appreciation of other people’s work;
• The joy of participating in a creative process, and satisfaction on completion of a project;
• Increased self-confidence.

Reflections

The creation of puppets involves a variety of activities which are part of the regular program at Deepanam, including clay, crafts, painting and computer design. Work with puppets provided the children a creative platform for applying these skills and for fostering self-expression and confidence through art.

Such a project helps reveal and develop children’s special aptitudes and talents. The children gain improved knowledge of manual and fine arts, and develop self-control and consideration for others in the pursuit of a common purpose.

Teamwork was the most challenging part of the project for the students, and for teachers too – but I felt empowered by a strong motivation to create a tool to bridge skills, practice and the arts.

Conclusion

The puppetry project at Deepanam engaged students’ skills in problem-solving, creative thinking, imagination, independent work, and teamwork. Puppetry is a dynamic art form that appeals to all age groups, relieves stress, and can bring joy and engagement to academics.
Dehashakti School of Physical Education

Introduction

At Dehashakti School of Physical Education, the aim is to provide an integral development of the physical body while also building in children the capacity to work harmoniously as a collective unit, through various individual and team activities. What makes our program interesting is that we have students from different schools, cultures, age groups and backgrounds who participate together in the various activities organized for them.

Activities of the year

The children were exposed to a variety of team games, individual games, swimming activities and athletics. Each activity develops specific skill-sets with skills such as coordination, stamina, speed, and quick thinking on the spot. The coaches made sure that each child developed the skills necessary to aid their individual growth and at the same time be a good team player.

For the last term the children were given the opportunity to join club sports so that they could dedicate more time and energy to the games of greater interest to them.

This year our students took part in the following activities:

- **Athletics events for older students:** 1) 100m race 2) 800m race 4) 1500m race 5) Long Jump 6) Triple Jump 7) Shot put 8) Cricket ball throw 9) 800m walk race & training for 10km / 21km marathon, 10) Relay race
- **Games for older students:** 1) Football 2) Volleyball 3) Basketball 4) Softball 5) Ultimate Frisbee 6) Kho-kho 7) Softball
- **Athletics events for younger students:** 1) Get-up & run 20m 2) Shuttle run 3) Five-bounding strides 4) 30m race 5) Tennis ball throw 6) Standing triple jump 7) Overhead throw 8) 5-minute race 9) Bean bag throw 10) Relay race
- **Games for younger students:** 1) King & fortress 2) Lungadi 3) Circulation-ball 4) Flag-game 5) Futsal 6) Dodgeball 7)Kho-kho 8) Handball
- **Clubs (last term):** 1) Football 2) Basketball 3) Table tennis 4) Badminton 5) Futsal 6) Horse club

Students from Dehashakti sports team participated in the Pondicherry state-level basketball tournament in which the Sub-juniors reached quarter-finals. The whole team performed really well. The Junior Boys team won their first two matches, reaching the semi-finals in the process. Also the Senior team won a match against the champions of last year’s tournament.

Eleven girls attended the Junior-level Basketball State Championship of Pondicherry in April. They also played in a tournament held at New Creation (Auroville) in August.

Many of our students also took part in the Auroville Marathon this year.

Outcomes

What the Dehashakti program seeks to achieve is to keep the flame of sportsmanship burning in the students at all times – not only on the sports field but also outside of it.
This year many children displayed the qualities of a true sportsman such as:

- patience towards the younger players;
- respect towards others;
- a positive attitude even in defeat;
- the will to excel further and further;
- the ability to lead and take up responsibilities;
- helping the weaker players improve by involving them more and more instead of ignoring them.

These qualities were evident especially during our annual competitions (‘Aurolympics’, see report on next page) which are very challenging for most on many levels.

Reflections

This year the annual competitions were a big success. The children were very motivated and eager to do better. Great progress was made on an individual level as well as in the collective by many.

Our physical education teacher-training program continued this year. It was very useful for the young instructors, as it gave them a better understanding of Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s vision on physical education, and also gave the chance to share different ideas and innovative ways to conduct classes. This year there were times when we really felt the need for more teachers.

Conclusion

We hope to have more teachers join us since it would be of great help in making our program better and more complete. We also hope to further develop our beautiful campus. Our team has been very happy and supportive of the other activities taking place at the Dehashakti campus including juggling, Aikido, martial arts, archery and the body-building gym. It is really a delight to have so many different disciplines being practised on one campus. We hope to continue in this positive manner and grow even further.
Aurolympics
A project of Dehashakti School of Physical Education

Introduction

In a physical education program it is important to have children train and then participate in competitions to realise their own progress and capacities. Competitions also have the means of bringing out great achievements in children. At Dehashakti our focus for competitions is not just on winning but on participating and learning the essence of sporting spirit.

Over the years we have conducted competitions at Dehashakti to help children develop greater control in their physical and vital spirits. Our ‘Aurolympics’ events are competitions between teams such that the contribution of every member adds or subtracts from the total points chalked up by the team. This system exemplifies the motto, “one for all and all for one”.

Aurolympics phases

The school year is divided into 3 major phases with emphasis on different skills and training:

- **Phase 1 (July - September):** This is the beginning of the school year, and the focus is on general fitness and development of basic skills in team sports and gymnastics.

- **Phase 2: Athletics Aurolympics (October - December):** Here we begin with athletics training for all the individual activities, and end with the Athletics Aurolympics which are the competitions. All the children participate according to the events as per their age.

- **Phase 3: Team Aurolympics (January - March):** During this phase the emphasis is on team spirit. These are the Team Aurolympics wherein points are given to the best team according to performance and sportsmanship.

Outcomes

Over these 5-6 months of rigorous training and competitions, a lot can be achieved by every child. The students develop strength, speed, stamina, skill and suppleness and are tested in many ways. The Aurolympics help in the development of social conduct, group loyalty, feeling of self-worth and sportsmanship.

In the beginning there is great resistance in children to participate in activities they are weak or not trained in. With lots of encouragement and diverse methods of training, a lot changes in them. Working with higher goals and ideals, the teachers can cultivate in the students a progressive growth toward higher achievements.

Reflections

Over the years we have noticed the immense difference in the attitude of the students before the Aurolympics season compared with after the Aurolympics teams have been made. Early on, the students are just individuals with a lot of energy bursting out on the sports ground, whimsical and arrogant. After the teams are made, they slowly learn to respect and care for their team. There is a gradual shift in their behaviour and their attitude. It is a wonderful to observe this metamorphosis!
Future School

Overview

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.

Program, methods and evaluation

Future School offers a high school equivalent education to primarily Aurovilian students. This year there were 64 adolescents/young adults from 15 nationalities enrolled in the school.

We offer a wide range of subjects to our students: languages (English, Tamil, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian), mathematics, pure sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology), social sciences (History, Geography, Economics, Psychology), and extracurricular subjects (Robotics, Photography, Film, Art). Where suited, we also offer the possibility of practical training with Auroville units, making use of the diverse possibilities offered by Auroville at large.

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

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

Reflective assessments are shared during mentor meetings and other conferences. We also use school seminars to engage the students and teachers in reflective assessment.

Skill-based assessments include the following:

- Internal tests, 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
All-school activities

- **Democratic classrooms:** This year the students initiated a discussion on being able to be more involved in the functioning of the school in a more democratic way. Through student seminars they arrived at strategies that would allow them to participate in their own educational experiences in broader, more participatory ways.

- **Restructuring school timings:** We explored the restructuring of the school timetable in order to consolidate the study hours in the morning, leaving time in the afternoons for self study and for other activities such as art or language exploration.

  This proposal was presented to the students and staff who voted on a trial period of a few weeks. We offered another vote at the end of the trial period, and then there was an even higher response to opt for the change.

- **Seminars:** In keeping with the desire to involve themselves in the functioning of the school, the students took over the organization of the seminars that have long been a feature of the school activities. The seminar topics were chosen by the students and invitations to speakers issued by them.

- **Continuing the trend towards going paperless:** We continue to use Google’s ‘Apps for Education’, offering access to ‘virtual classrooms’ that can be accessed both in the school and from home in addition to our physical classrooms. This enables us to continue to provide a richer sharing experience, using the platform to link documents and videos, make announcements and give feedback, post comments and questions, and increase classroom collaboration.

  We have also continued to automate school processes such as class sign-ups and progress reports, using online tools to simplify tasks as well as to avoid the use of physical paper.

- **Open House:** This year the school decided on a slightly different approach for the annual Open House. Instead of a full day of activities, performances and stalls, we went for a shorter and more systematic, yet dynamic alternative.

  The day consisted of several short performances and presentations, in the Seminar Hall which was packed to capacity. The performances were both artistic and academic, and served as a showcase for the varied talents and capabilities of the students, and as a platform to present some ambitions and dreams. There was enough time in between to explore other installations and happenings around the school. Apart from the performances, there was a food stall serving fresh, locally inspired food created by the cooking class (everyone was full before lunch time), the traditional t-shirt stall, and colorful experiments in the Chemistry Lab with the Chemist crew.

  It was a day for an exchange of ideas and energies, and it left everyone freshly charged.

- **Potluck and Bonfire Night:** In December the students and teachers gathered together for a delicious dinner with a wide variety of mouth-watering dishes from all over the world. Then all gathered together around a bonfire for an evening of storytelling and songs. We were pleased to be joined by some of our friends from Last School for this event.

- **Graduation:** This year saw the successful completion of the program by 15 students. As per tradition, on the last day of school, fellow students, teachers, staff members, and parents of the graduates gathered to acknowledge the accomplishments of these students. Beginning with inspired singing by Jinah and Ahilya, the event included speeches and the now traditional PowerPoint presentation with photos of each of the graduating students at different stages of their lives, which 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 it always reminds us that we are a family.

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. This year our field trips included the following:

• **Exploring Dakshinachitra:** In November we all boarded a bus and headed to Dakshinachitra, which is a living cultural museum of the art, architecture, lifestyles, crafts and performing arts of South India. Walking the spaces and interactions provided, we were able to draw lines between traditional life and our lives today.

  On the way back from Dakshinachitra, we also got to take in the amazing sights, sounds and smells of the Madras Crocodile Bank and Centre for Herpetology founded by Romulus Whitaker.

• **Photography field trip:** Fifteen students from Future School went on an excursion to Dr. Arun’s Photography and Vintage Camera Museum in Kovalam. They spent well over an hour at the museum and were privy to an enormous collection of vintage cameras from the beginnings of photography to the start of the digital era.

  The students were shown various old cameras and were allowed to handle them. They were also given a running commentary of the various models and their place in the evolution of photography. The camera that the students (especially the boys) were fascinated by was a Russian-made camera modeled to look like a rifle, and which pretty much works like one, whereby the idea of ‘shooting’ something with a rifle or camera becomes synonymous.

  The museum is a great resource for introducing the students to the history and evolution of photography. That the whole museum came about through the efforts of one single person (namely Dr. Arun) is worth commending.

Workshops and extracurricular activities

• **Documentary award:** Future School Photography and Film student Rishi was engaged by the ‘Coastal Pollution’ NGO to shoot a documentary video of their work. This video was then entered into a climate change themed documentary competition sponsored by the American Embassy, Chennai. Rishi’s documentary was awarded an overall 2nd Prize, and his team received a cash reward of $800. And as an added bonus Rishi’s impressive camera work was chosen for the Best Cameraman award. Congratulations to Rishi and the Coastal Pollution team!

• **Community Service:** For the past ten years, Future School has been participating in a Community Service program that allows 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 in Auroville. We find this is important as an aid in preparing each child for the future. Students learn to adopt a sense of commitment and responsibility. They get to experience working with and around different people. This activity has been an integral part of the school program and has been well-received by the students and the community.

  The planning for next year’s group, as well as the introductory session, took place at the end of this academic year.
• **“Future Scribbles”:** “Future Scribbles”, the monthly student newsletter which was launched by the Language Arts class two years ago, has been taken forward by the student editorial team. It has continued to serve as a platform for both school and community news, and as a reflection on topical world events. It provides students with opportunities to create and present a wide variety of work: art, announcements, news, poems, comic strips, stories, and commentaries. The newsletter is uploaded to the school website and sent by email to the rest of the school. A few print copies are circulated as well. It provides everybody with an opportunity to share and stay informed. A project that is both entertaining and intellectual, we plan to keep it evolving as a voice of the students.

• **Storytelling workshop:** In December, Future School was visited by three young storytellers from Bangalore who came to Auroville as part of a journey that has carried them all around the country in search of stories. Led by Pankaj Singh, co-founder of www.untold.in, they came to Future School sharing their experiences with us, and to expose our minds to the art of storytelling.

  They showed us how stories could begin and end anywhere, and that following them could mean circling the world, travelling through time or flying off into the depths of space.

  We had two sessions with them, in which we learned about their adventures and shared our own. In the end, we were left with a sense of wonder, amazed by the magic that was clearly at work, and that we had been lucky enough to see.

• **School garden:** This year we gave special attention to our school garden. We planted some fruit trees such as lemon, pomelo, orange, tangerine, chikoo, and banana. We also planted a few vegetables including tomato, green chili, and broad beans.

  The main aim behind this effort is to try to utilize the garden to its full potential, growing some of the resources required for our day-to-day needs as a school. This year we were able to add salads for our snacks. In the future we will be trying to independently grow the lemons we require for the school, and to provide some fruits as well.

**Course spotlights**

• **O-level Art qualification:** 2017 saw the second batch of students undertaking the O-level Art exam, and consequently, some of these students will be doing their A-level Art exam (in 2018) for the first time in the history of Future School. There are 6 talented students in this group, and their work is just as varied and eclectic as their personalities.

  The students are expected to do six weeks of preparatory work based on a set theme. They engage in research on the topic, collecting examples from as many sources as possible, including those from other artists’ work as well as their own inspiration. They then analyse and evaluate their research based on their knowledge of art history, philosophy and theory. Based on their research they explore, develop and refine their ideas leading to a final piece.

  The theme for this year was ‘Possessions’, and the students' work ranges from literal to personal to metaphorical ideas. They used photography, drawing and painting as media for this project.

• **Physics:** This year we received funds to begin the setup of a Physics Laboratory at school. Our science teachers Sergei and Evgenia ordered new equipment for the study of Electricity, Magnetism, Optics and Mechanics. Most of the items have already arrived, and now need to be set up. This means that our students will have more opportunities for experimental physics and will be able to prepare and give live demonstrations.
Reflections on this year

Through the implementation of the ‘democratic classrooms’, as well as by increasing the students’ involvement and responsibilities in the management of our school, we tried to widen the platform for self-discovery and self-application. This environment which favors ‘guidance’ over ‘control’ also brought results in academics, where students exhibited more self-motivation and focus. A side effect of these changes was an increase of individualism in the students.

Goals for next year

1. As we consider the balance between collective efforts and individual freedom essential for an effective education, we would like to concentrate in the next school year on enhancing the understanding that a functioning collective is indispensable for the individual to progress in a harmonious way.

2. We would like to find ways to increase the students' identification with our common educational efforts. We are thinking about having special events to this end, and possibly modifying our school policy.
Kindergarten

Circus performance

This year the circus classes for the oldest children of the Kindergarten (the ‘Green Group’, ages 5½ to 6½) started fairly late in the year, in mid-January. Nevertheless, the Green Group teachers and Kalou the circus teacher decided to plan for a performance to let the children share what they had learnt. Kalou created the soundtrack and the choreography.

There were 18 children in this group: 4 boys and 14 girls. Altogether they had about 16 three-hour circus sessions, including classes and rehearsals for the performance.

We were three teachers helping Kalou, and for the actual performance one sound technician and one more teacher.

Some of the children had a few afternoon classes for Acro Yoga and aerial work on silk, to which the parents had to bring them. Five of the girls had also been participating in gymnastics classes twice weekly. (One of these could not participate in the performance because she left early for vacation.)

The show was about 50 minutes long and consisted of 7 parts:

1. All the children doing acrobatics on the gym mats placed in the shape of a cross
2. Hula hoops by 6 children
3. Balancing chairs by 3 children
4. Aerial silk by 8 children
5. Acro Yoga by 4 children plus 2 adults
6. All the children somersaulting through a hoop
7. Final pose: a sort of tableau with each child holding himself in a position

Through the circus performance the children had the experience of everyone being a part of something bigger and having his own place in the whole. They learned respect for each other and for themselves. They developed teamwork, patience, stamina, balance, focus, stage presence, and trust.

Recycled crafts

The entire Kindergarten is in the habit of using a lot of things from nature including seeds, pods, bark, and dry leaves for crafts and collages. And since some years, the teachers of the Blue Group (ages 4-5) have been trying to use a maximum of recycled material in crafts. A cupboard is reserved for stocking all clean containers. We use empty shampoo bottles, liquid soap bottles and plastic food containers as sand toys.

This year we did several recycled crafts. We stitched our own drawings using the white insides of cardboard boxes. Vases were made from the bottom of plastic soft-drink bottles. We made ‘houses’ and ‘vans’ from tetra-packs, with wheels of bottle caps. Toilet paper rolls and stronger rolls from billing machines were used for animal crafts (the body of a sitting lion, or a peacock).

Over the years, a load of cardboard boxes of all sizes had been collected for future use. This year, in March, the teachers took the opportunity of the “Litter-Free Auroville” exhibition at Kala Kendra, organised by Upcycling Studio and other units, to impress upon the children that what is considered waste material can be used to make beautiful things. (See project report: ‘Litter-Free Auroville 2017’, p.173)

The cardboard boxes we had collected (from cereal, medicine, tea, soap, toothpaste, and so on)
were flattened, turned inside-out and then glued again, showing their grey or white insides. During a week where the age groups were mixed, 44 children from 4 to 7 years old, in three groups, were offered a big pile of these reconstituted boxes and invited to make whatever they liked.

Thirty of the children chose to come for this activity. Some children chose boxes on the basis of their previous content, like cornflakes for instance. Some knew immediately what they wanted to make such as a house, bus, lorry, airplane or robot. Other children saw these and wanted to do the same. Houses were the more sought after: 22 children, mainly girls, made one or two. We noticed that the tiniest houses were made by the oldest girls. Big lorries were the choice of boys, and 2 boys managed to make a robot. Once finished, their creations were painted with watercolors or poster colours.

The teachers discovered some very creative children with strong ideas about what they wanted to achieve. Some children showed a lot of perseverance when they had to poke out a row of windows on a bus. The role of the teacher was to help fixing parts in place with glue, staples and cello-tape, sometimes suggesting ways to make roofs or staircases.

When visiting the exhibition at Bharat Nivas, the children brought their creations and left them for visitors to see. They were proud but also a little worried that they would not be able to get them back. After 10 days when the exhibition ended, the crafts were returned to the Kindergarten and exhibited in the central hall of the school, along with photos of the children making them. Parents and interested people were invited to have a look.

Experimenting with mixed-age groups

Every year at the Kindergarten we hold some sessions in which we mix the children of ages 4 to 6+. For this we try to create three balanced groups of about fifteen children each, taking five children of age 4, 5 and 6 in each new group.

We do this for a variety of reasons. Firstly we have noticed that the social climate improves a lot as there is less competition. Everyone becomes a learner and a teacher.

We also want to help the children to learn to choose for themselves: to become more self-motivated. In the regular program there are a limited number of choices, but on the days of mixed sessions there are at least 7 activities to choose from in one morning. The children are expected to remain a minimum of about twenty minutes at one of these. To monitor this we have a chart where the activities are listed and on which they need to pin their names. We also record their choices so as to get an overview of who likes what.

A third reason is simply that it improves our sense of community, by having fun together and getting to know different children and each other better.

Example of a mixed-age group session

The topic of this session was ‘Earth’. We named the three groups of children: ‘Sky’, ‘Mountain’, and ‘Sea’, and gave each child a badge accordingly. Each of the seven mornings began with a presentation done for the children sitting in a large circle in the hall. During these we learned about:

- The globe
- Countries, nationalities, languages
- Trees
- The sun
- Joy of sharing, need for community
- Beauty of nature

The presentations were each done by a different teacher. We used pictures, songs, movement, stories, puppets and music.
The activities we offered in our ‘Earth’ sessions included:

- Painting the tunnels on the playground, first with a brown wash and then with colourful drawings and designs
- Mud bath
- Creating landscapes by placing a sheet of plastic on the floor and putting soil on it. These ‘islands’ then were sculpted by the children into mountains, valleys, lakes and rivers. On these we planted seeds of mustard, gram and wheat, and populated the land with plastic animals and other creatures.
- Blocks
- Doll house
- Stitching on postcards
- Cooking (waffles, potato cutlets)
- Necklaces with real stone pendants
- An outing to the “Litter-Free Auroville” exhibition
- Books
- Games

The mixed-age sessions needed more preparation time than normal classes, as we had the challenge of creating open-ended activities where there could be multiple outcomes according to different children’s abilities. The teacher also needed to learn to communicate to a mixed-age group, keeping in mind the age gap and therefore the different abilities of comprehension of 4 to 6 year-olds. But, the sessions themselves were more relaxed than usual as there was less conflict between the children and little need to redirect their energy.

The children enjoy these sessions as we tap into their natural enthusiasm which is enhanced by novelty and choice. Mixed-age groups create a good social environment, as older and younger children interact without competition. We all get to know each other better; everyone learns and teaches.

A few children are not so happy with these sessions. These are usually children who are introverted or shy. Also some areas of weakness or learning disability may become apparent as a child repeatedly refuses certain activities. The teachers learn from all of this and become better able to help each child.
Introduction

A Secondary and Higher Secondary level school facility, Last School is unique in following the ‘Free Progress’ approach by inviting the students to progressively define their own program of development. The teachers assist the students in finding what they truly are and want to become, and in building in themselves a rich multifaceted personality, through a great variety of learning activities. This approach has a demonstrable structuring effect on the students’ personalities 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 and spiritual beings.

The school program

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

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

Mathematics and sciences are approached with the objectives of sharpening the analytical mind and developing the intellectual integrity embedded in scientific methods.

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

At Last School no subject is seen as an end in itself, but all are used as 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 and in the different activities of Auroville, using these as fields of hands-on and experiential learning.

The evaluation of the year is made with each of the students with a stress 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 25 full-time students this year. We also offered courses to young Aurovilians and adults in the subjects of Indian Culture and Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. The Art Center was used regularly by students who are part of other Auroville schools’ programs, as well as by adults. Some students from other schools also joined us for complementary English classes.

Included in or completing the regular and intense work of the school time table, some of the highlights of the year were:

• Our morning assemblies in which we started every day with a concentrated silence.
• The art workshops that took place each semester, in which everyone – both students and teachers – worked intensively together for five to ten days, concluding with a presentation and display of the work.
• Some students participated in different intensive programs happening in Auroville like the Ultimate Frisbee tournament, tango and capoeira festivals, and fire juggling performances.

• 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.

• Following some questions asked about Auroville last year, we tried a weekly session on the theme ‘Why Auroville?’ as part of the regular timetable. We studied numerous important texts inspiring Auroville, met and listened to several Aurovilians, and attempted to create living connections between the Auroville experiment and what is happening in the world today, such as with environmental, economic and food-related issues.

• During the ‘Why Auroville?’ sessions, we spent one semester on the theme of death, including Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s perspective on it and the way it is dealt with in Auroville. As a follow-up, several students involved themselves in activities with Farewell, i.e. flower decoration and cremation.

• Several students participated in treks in different places in India.

Reflections

This year saw increased commitment and autonomy of the students in managing their interests, time and projects. Many have taken responsibilities within the school as well as outside. All of this corresponds to our objectives, seeing school as a preparation for a meaningful life of endless progress.
Introduction

The vision of Lilaloka (‘the universe of Play’ in Sanskrit) is to be a self-learning 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 wants to work in collaboration with schools and parents, considering each child as an evolving being.

This year, the raw structure of Lilaloka’s Phase I building was completed. Our main focus was on conducting activities on the premises, in order to get in touch with the real needs of the community, open the place to the energy of the children, and slowly introduce Lilaloka to the schools and the ‘no schools’, a step we feel is necessary as a way to get ready for the real opening of Lilaloka. Fundraising, communication, and project coordination were also a big part of the work.

Lilaloka building and garden

- The roof was completed on September 25th, 2016, and a completion certificate was issued.
- The bill of quantities for the finishing phase was completed by Imago Architecture with the help of SAIIER. It amounts to approximately Rs. 48 lakhs.
- Maintaining the existing construction and fence, and caring for the land and nursery is ongoing on a daily basis.
- This year we put some energy in creating the ‘magical garden’ of Lilaloka, with the help of children who came to Lilaloka as well as adult volunteers, led by Anna, Rajan and Celine.

Fundraising and communications

As Lilaloka is a project under construction, public relations, communications and administration are currently a big part of the work. This includes communicating about Lilaloka, creating communication tools, meeting people, and organizing events.

This year, Sandrine, a co-founder and project executive, left the team. Her work was mostly in this area, so we found ourselves having to rethink and reorganize the team and ways to go about fund-raising and communication.

- We organised eight ‘open days’, between November 2016 and January 2017. These events were well attended and allowed the community at large to see where the project was at. During these open days, we offered activities for children of all ages, and answered questions from Aurovilians, parents, school teachers and guests, with the objective of transparency and getting in touch with the real needs of Auroville.
- We kept our Facebook page up to date, as it has become our main tool for direct communication with our well-wishers.
- We set up a totally new website which is more user-friendly and more representative of the project today, with the help of Tixon (Redambiance). The website will be useful for fundraising and communication next year and in the long-run.
• Jean Eisele from the Foundation for World Education (FWE) visited Lilaloka, as last year FWE allocated a grant of Rs. 3 lakhs for the purpose of completing the roof. She was happy to see that the funds were well-used and happy to feel for herself the atmosphere of the project.

• A report about Lilaloka was written for FWE and submitted to Auroville’s Project Coordination Group (PCG).

• An ongoing work is introducing and sharing the vision and aims of Lilaloka with various individuals and groups.

• Lilaloka had agreed to not request funds from Auroville for a duration of five years from June 2012 onwards. This period ends in June 2017, so in our plans we are taking into account this new possibility.

• A unit of Auroville called “Naturally Auroville” has offered to give Lilaloka a budget of Rs. 3,000 per month towards the running costs. This should start in June 2017.

• We changed our accountant to Mukti Accounting, in order to lower the costs of accounting and to have the accounting done in a more convenient location.

• Anna and Celine organised 4 workshops for Aurovilians and guests during the months of February and March 2017, as a trial to see if this could be a way to raise funds, at least for the running costs. Anna organised a workshop introducing Nature’s Theater for parents and educators, and one on how to make fairy and acrobat dolls for parents and children. Celine centred her workshops on clay-modelling: one was designed for children and parents (“Hands in the Earth”) and the other one was for adults (“Giving back to the Earth”). Two workshops were well-attended, while two didn’t happen due to lack of interested people. We managed to raise around Rs. 5,000 from these workshops. This gives us a better idea of how to handle this next year and how to choose the right time to offer workshops.

The total amount raised in 2016-17 was Rs. 7,60,000.

Connecting with Auroville children and schools

This year we focused on creating contacts with the education community in Auroville – a very important part of the manifestation of Lilaloka. Lilaloka is for all children: those who go to school and those who don’t or are part of other initiatives. We want Lilaloka to be a place where all can meet and each feel safe and loved as he or she is, and discover what really interests him or her.

We would like here to introduce a volunteer, Celine Perroud, an art therapist from Switzerland, who worked with us from November 2016 to April 2017. She had a previous introduction to Lilaloka and our vision the year before, and when she came back she was ready to give her energy for the project. She helped us very much on the ground, in handling the groups and offering activities.

Our work of connecting with schools and others included:

• We made contacts especially with Transformation Kindergarten, the natural learning group led by Egle and Morgan, and Oli School; and Anna kept in touch with The Learning Community (TLC). Transformation Kindergarten was very interested in Lilaloka and next year will send a group for regular sessions of Nature’s Theatre.

• We’re also very happy that after Anna met several times with the Interactive Learning group, it was decided that Arthi would offer sessions for the games created by Auroculture, at Lilaloka. These games are for learning arithmetic and geometry. Auroculture gave Lilaloka its name, so being able to play her games in Lilaloka will be a tribute and a joy.

• Claire Le Touze, who was one of the founders of Lilaloka, expressed interest in holding sessions of Play of Painting at Lilaloka, once they can be accommodated. Claire holds the vision of Lilaloka deep in her heart and we are happy she still wants to be involved.
• Anna, Celine and Rajan offered activities based on free choice, non-judgement and exploration of one’s creativity to a group of 4-5 unschooled Auroville children on Thursday mornings. Activities included crafts, clay modelling, creations in the garden (s little pond, labyrinth, cave...), gardening, planting, and more.

• We invited all the primary schools and kindergartens of Auroville to experience a morning at Lilaloka, as an end-of-the-year outing. Groups came from Oli School and the natural learning group. During these mornings we offered various activities based on free choice including clay modelling, creations in the garden, and gardening.

We now have a better overview of the needs and possibilities regarding Lilaloka's role in Auroville. We will be able to start Nature’s Theater with some regular groups on site next year. We have now made the first steps connecting with various educational bodies in Auroville, and will continue to build on that. We were so happy to have children colonize Lilaloka with their Joy and Creativity!

Nature’s Theater offered by Anna

This year, Anna could not fully offer this activity, as her energy was focused on making contacts and exploring the education scene in relation to Lilaloka for the coming future. The spirit in which activities were offered was the same, but without a regular group, it is difficult to go deeper into Nature’s Theater.

Two schools are now interested in receiving training from Anna: Transformation Kindergarten and Oli School. From the explorations of this year, the groups for Nature’s Theater for next year emerged.

Individual play sessions

Yvelise set up a room for individual play sessions at her house, with both personal funds and project funds, so that she could start working with children while construction of Lilaloka is still going on. She offered this to one child from November to April, as her other activities for Lilaloka took up most of the time. We hope that next year more time can be dedicated to individual play sessions. The room is now set up and equipped, ready for a smooth transition once the building is finished.

Conclusion

This year we expanded our communication network. Our activities benefited many individual children through the open days and the Thursday group, two groups from Oli School, children of the natural learning group, and adults who attended the workshops.

The most meaningful progress of the year was the contacts we started to create with Auroville educational initiatives and schools.

Our main focus for next year will be to continue activities with regular groups of children.
Nandanam Kindergarten

Overview

Nandanam is another beautiful kindergarten of Auroville which follows integral education as its approach. Nandanam came into existence as a need of the community when the main Kindergarten could not accommodate all the children in Auroville.

At Nandanam 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 taskmaster, [but] a helper and guide.” We frequently work through projects as we find this is a very effective and holistic educational method, 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 try to balance between these two ways of working (projects and free exploration) as we also try to balance between group activities, where children learn to coordinate with their friends and develop social qualities, and individual activities, where they have the freedom to do things in their own way.

The year was rich with learning, discovering, growing together and growing each according to his or her own temperament.

We have decided that in the coming year the main teacher of each group will follow the children into the next group, to deepen the process of following each child’s need and achieving a balanced group dynamic.

Jalam Group (2½ to 3½ years old)

15 children (5 girls and 10 boys)
Teachers: Kiran, Snehaprabha, Thamu

This year Jalam group had better nationality balance than last year. Our first aim was to create a safe and interactive space for the children, where they would feel at home in their environment and comfortable to explore. The second aim was to help integrate their senses and physical being; and the third aim was to observe and help each child grow integrally according to his or her own temperament.

We took ‘colour’ as the main theme this year, and wove all our fun and learning activities around it. We became colourful butterflies, rainbow fishes, colourful flowers, colourful birds, colourful trees, colourful animals, and we were immersed in a colourful world with beautiful sounds of different musical instruments which we made together with the children from recycled materials.

Our circles, where everyone sits together, were beautiful with colourful mandalas of various materials and natural objects. Arts and crafts sessions were full of colourful playdough (made together with our children) and colourful materials like paper of different textures, fabric, thread, beads, buttons, seeds, leaves, sticks, stones, tiles, etc. Clay work, painting, colouring, stitching, cutting and pasting were all part of our fun. Games and puzzles, songs, rhymes and colourful stories were part of the children’s day.

The children played on the trampoline every day. Rope games, animal games, running, jumping, catching, throwing, crawling, hopping, waddling, swimming, animal action games, balancing and sliding helped develop the physical being and physical co-ordination of the children. We enjoyed our expanded playground and big sandpit very much. The ‘Children’s House’ and Play of Painting were explored near the end of the year.

Relaxation was a very important routine after story time. Children would wait for this time of
relaxing music and teacher’s touch with feathers, cloth or massage to make their bodies strong.

We did ‘cooking’ with the children as part of our rich sensorial exploration, making juices with squeezed lemons, hibiscus flowers, and tulsi leaves, and making samosas.

We went walking to nearby areas in the second term, and visited Baraka, Botanical Gardens, Matrimandir, Matrimandir Nursery, and the Solar Kitchen. We visited different children’s homes in the third term.

Communication between parents and teachers was on a daily basis and was very beneficial for the children. Individual and collective meetings as well as potlucks with the parents were part of our programme.

Prithvi Group (3½ to 4½ years old)
14 children (10 girls and 4 boys)
Teachers: Jyoti, Anna, Carmen (volunteer for two terms) and Bhavani (third term)

In Prithvi group we focused on creating a balance between free space, where children could choose from a fairly large range of activities, and activities proposed by facilitators for the whole group together. Our aim was to help the children develop independence and a capacity to utilise their freedom constructively; to learn to get engaged alone or with a peer in a free space while also being able to work with the whole group and follow its dynamics.

A typical day would start in the morning with one hour of free play. The children could engage in any activity corner in the class either individually or in small groups. The corners were: craft corner, playdough corner, puzzles and games corner, reading corner, and building blocks corner. In the craft corner we proposed new craft activities every day that children could explore with a facilitator in small groups.

The free play time was followed up with circle time all together, where we sang songs, had group conversations and played games. The circle games would be for either developing one of the five senses or introducing and revising concepts like shapes, colors and numbers.

After circle time we would go outdoors to engage together in a physical activity. This would be followed by snack and recess, after which all the children of the school would play freely together. After recess we had story time, followed by an organized group activity.

The regular activities children did during the year included craft activities, exploring sand and water, games and puzzles, circle time games, activities for physical development, Awareness Through the Body (ATB), Play of Painting, building blocks, swimming, bi-monthly field trip to units and farms, weekly visits to Matrimandir, singing classes, book corner and storytime, Children’s Corner, and the Doll House where the children did activities based in Montessori and Waldorf approaches.

Throughout the year we explored new activities and also took ample time to revise and repeat old activities. Children had time to explore new things while also being able to stabilize and go deeper in their learning. In our weekly planning we kept the program rich and well-rounded so that all the different parts of the being could develop, helping the children’s body, heart and mind to be connected and allowing each child develop in his or her own unique way.

This year we had a child in the group who was very energetic and impulsive, with very little motor control, concentration, social skills and listening skills. She needed constant individual attention. This child always wanted to be with the group. We felt that it was really important to keep her in the group and offer a clear framework and a space for social interaction, yet we could see that very often this was very disruptive for the group and too much even for her to handle. So at every moment we had to find a balance, to see what was right for her and what was right for the group. We tried to slowly and steadily support her personal development and her integration in the group. This was a challenge and a big learning experience for the class teachers.

This year we did not take up any particular project nor did we focus on a specific topic, but
instead focused on a well-rounded program where everything in general was touched upon. While this worked very well, next year we would like to take up short projects from time to time, based on the interests of the children, to enhance the well-rounded general program.

**Vayu Group (4½ to 5½ years old)**

14 children (4 girls and 10 boys)

Teachers: Sarasu, Durga, Shalini and Lifang (one term)

In Vayu group we had four goals:

1. To receive the children into their new classroom and help them familiarize and create a new, very safe and comfortable learning environment together with the new teachers.
2. To balance the energies in the group between the girls and boys, as the energy was very active due to gender imbalance (more boys). We had prepared ourselves to be there fully present so we could cater to the needs of all the children.
3. To integrate a child who needed special attention among all the children in the group.
4. To make house visits to all the children’s houses, so as to have better communication with the parents and children and to connect school and home.

1. In the first term we received the children with three teachers who knew the energy of the children. The classroom had new corners including language corner, maths corner, nature corner, visual chores chart, and date and day of the week chart. We also had corners that the children were familiar with from the previous year, like games and puzzles corner, art and craft corner, playdough corner and reading corner. We had great fun exploring these corners, and getting to know the children day by day we became very comfortable together.

   We took different concepts like colours, shapes, and numbers as our main focus for the first term. We played many games relating to the concepts and explored the concepts through the body and senses. Activities were planned where children learnt the concepts through exposure to different kinds of materials, like seeds, leaves and educational toys, which they engaged by beading, stitching, sorting, mixing, collage work, etc. These activities gave children physical representations of what they were learning. We also told stories and rhymes connected to these concepts.

   The first term was very comfortable and smooth. Unfortunately for some official reason two of the class teachers had to go back to their native countries and could not return immediately, so a fourth teacher and helper came in. Integrating into a new group dynamic in the middle of the year was a big challenge for the children as well as the teachers.

2. This year each child was very individualized with very specific emotional needs. They mixed well when we started taking walks, played a lot in the Matrimandir rock garden, played together in the sandpit and playground and with mud and clay. This group played a lot in the sandpit, creating castles, mountains, tunnels, volcanoes, and ‘cooking’, much more than previous Vayu groups. We noticed that the gender balance was maintained during such play.

   This group had some difficulty following organized activities, and activities often had to be prepared on the spot according to their mood and need. This was a big learning and very challenging for the teachers. The projects taken up this year were ‘gardening’, ‘insects’ and ‘the five senses’.

   In the garden the children grew beans, lady’s finger, spinach, flat beans and radishes. It was a pleasure for the children to pluck the vegetables and cook them to eat. Flat beans and radishes are still growing in the garden and the children have connected to the growth cycle of these vegetables.

   The insect project was very fascinating and we spent a lot of time outdoors exploring
insects. It was amazing for the children to see how small the ladybird beetle actually is. Both of these projects were very good learning experiences for the children. We are exploring the five senses presently till the end of the last term.

3. Among the ten boys one child needed special attention. He had difficulty integrating within the group. The previous year this child had been followed by one teacher all the time, and when he came to Vayu group he showed interest to be with his friends. He did not like the idea that he had someone always with him – he wanted to have a flow like his friends. We prepared to welcome this challenge and did our best to help him integrate with the rest of the group. He learned to be in the group even though he had a lot of difficulty following. He could manage for periods of five or ten minutes with the group. It was a very big challenge for all of us, and we stayed together to help this child. He has progressed very much but it has had lots of ups and down. The insect project was taken up because this child would all the time crush insects. After the project there was a marked improvement in the behaviour towards insects from this child.

4. The house visits did not end up happening because of the change of teachers, and also because the group’s need was to explore big spaces. The main teacher will follow this group next year, and this aspect of connecting home and school will be looked into next year.

Agni group (5½ to 6½ years old)

15 children (9 girls and 6 boys)

Teachers: Pushpa and Rabi

In the first term the Agni group children explored the new space and corners, new games and puzzles which were more challenging for them. It was a time for the teachers to better understand each individual child and help them follow their own interests. In the second term, as we got more comfortable, we took up the project ‘water’.

Water project

The project ‘water’ was taken up with an aim to bring an awareness about water to the children. We looked at water’s importance in our day-to-day life, where we get water from, basic understanding and discovery of the water cycle, and experiential knowledge and science at the level of the children.

We kept the physical environment ready by arranging the display board to show water bodies like lakes, rivers, waterfall, wells, the ocean, underwater plants and water creatures. Seeing the display, children started to ask questions, and thus we began our project.

Children pondered on where the water goes when a wet cloth is placed to dry in the sun. They compared how long it takes the cloth to dry in the sun and in the shade, and understood the power of the sun. This led to the first understanding of the water cycle. They created a rainbow with a mirror and water, and they observed it and painted the rainbow.

For giving children a practical experience, we created a small pool inside our classroom. Children explored the concepts of floating and sinking, by using stones, paper, bottles, seeds and other materials. They enjoyed playing the water a lot.

To bring an awareness about water we touched upon many questions such as: How does water help us in our life? Why do we need water? Where do we get water from? How does it help us to keep our body strong and healthy? Do we need to conserve water – if yes, how and if no why? All these questions led the children to express their thoughts and to become engrossed in the topic.

The children explored if water has shape, colour and taste, the states of water, and the water cycle though small science experiments. They observed how the rain falls and painted it on their
paper. Their imagination was activated by the questions, stories and explorations.

Children saw a play on how to take care of water and how to avoid polluting water, presented by a group brought by one of the parents. After seeing the play they showed interest by making stories on their own in small groups, and acting them out for their friends.

The topic was made more living for them by a resource person, Bruce, who brought many different types of shells and shared his experiences with marine life. Children listened to the different sounds from the shells. We visited the aquarium at the Pondicherry Botanical Gardens, where children could see many sea creatures including seahorses, clown fish, baby sharks, and jellyfish.

The children did crafts in the theme of water, making different sea creatures and water transport using the skills of stitching, cutting, pasting, and utilizing waste bottles and other waste materials. They made a big ship out of cardboard, and coloured and painted the ship.

Language and maths were also explored through the project. Children measured water using different sizes of cups, bottles and small bottle caps. They got to know how many glasses of water can fill a small bucket, and how many caps of water can fill a bottle. They took an account of how many glasses of water they drink every day.

The water project was presented to the parents by the children and displayed for the open house. Overall through this project the children worked on their language and expression, fine motor skills, imagination, and observation skills. It was a very joyful learning experience for the children.

Throughout the year and along with the project, the children participated in regular activities like learning alphabets and their associated sounds, reading and writing alphabets, new words, rhymes, numbers and manipulation of numbers, music and chanting, ATB, Play of Painting, ‘Write Dance’, circus classes, building with blocks, learning Tamil, and going on outings. The last term was especially taken up for individual growth, and attention was given to each child to grow according to his or her own needs and interests.

On the whole the children had a year full of joyful learning, progress and growth, and the teachers grew along with them.
Teachers’ Center

The Teachers’ Center continued to sponsor activities in several different areas in 2016-17:

• We maintained and circulated books from two professional libraries for educators: the ACCESS Center at Transition School, and a small collection of the most asked-for books in the Teachers’ Center itself. Most of these books have been photocopied and many are in constant circulation. If a teacher or a school desires a book in the Teachers’ Center collection we can photocopy it for you (or if not, we can order it, as we have small book budget).

• The making of materials for teachers continued. A few people worked for much of the year on creating a resource bank of materials for teaching math and science, based on materials from the internet. These teaching materials are available for teachers to borrow from the Center.

• The Supportive Learning course met almost every Saturday morning for three months at the Center, and the room was also used for planning and conferences with parents in regard to supportive learning. A few other small workshops were sponsored by the Center including one on Democratic Classrooms, another on Media Literacy, and a Conversation to discuss recommendations arising from three surveys on Auroville education. In a separate location there was a series of workshops for parents based on Gordon’s book, *Parent Effectiveness Training*.

• The Center was open by appointment for teachers seeking resource materials or advice, and for people from outside wishing to learn more about Auroville schools or to share their own teaching experience and expertise.

• The main work of the Center, the invisible work, is the work of four permanent advisors and two visiting advisors from the U.S. Between them they network between schools, train new or beginning teachers, serve as advisors to individual teachers, attend teachers’ meetings and serve on policy making boards, initiate new programs, lead school-based workshops, and occasionally teach classes.

• Networking in the bioregion also occurs under the auspices of the Teachers’ Center when we are able, for example, to offer a teacher training program through one of the Outreach schools for teachers of a school in Chennai.

The noise from the construction of the Auroville Archives building next door has often made it difficult to hold meetings or workshops at the Center, but the room remains open for any teacher-related activities and for the distribution of professional materials.

The decentralized and less-visible work of the advisors and networkers continues to raise the level of professional development available in Auroville.
Supportive Learning Teacher Training
A project of the Teachers’ Center

Introduction

A “Consortium For Special Needs” was formed in 2014-15 with facilitators, parents and educators, and from this group a suggestion emerged to create a teacher training programme for Auroville teachers to better meet emerging needs in Auroville schools. In 2015-16 the first course on “Foundations for Supportive Learning” began, with main facilitators Stacy, Marion, and Maya, and guest facilitators Angelika from Deepam School and Heidi Watts. Eleven teachers from various Auroville schools and Outreach schools participated. This year, a repeat of that course was given for six new participants.

Description of project

This teacher training aimed to upskill Auroville teachers by providing information on the subject of ‘special needs’, creating dialogue and offering 1:1 supervision in context, and providing access to a specialised library. Through the course, teachers identified children and families in need of support and learned strategies for better management.

The six applicants for the course included two teachers from Udavi School, two from Nandanam Kindergarten, one from Deepam School (who withdrew), and one from Transition School. The course sessions took place at Nandanam.

The participants were given training materials:
1. *Enhancing your Child’s Development* by Sonja Witthous (Bsc.OT)
2. *How the Special Needs Brain Learns* by David A. Sousa
3. (optional) *Positive Discipline for Children with Special Needs* by Dr. Jane Nelson

These manuals were the foundation of the course. Self-study and school supervision enhanced the framework described in the books, and participants applied their observational skills in their respective schools. They each presented individual case studies of children with special needs to the group, and gave realistic recommendations for the family, child and school toward creation of an Individualized Educational Program (IEP).

Teachers then referred the children and parents to Marion and Stacy for specific supports if needed. Parent meetings took place at the Teachers’ Center, where a resource library is available to parents and teachers which addresses specific areas of special needs.

This year we again had a Consortium gathering for the teachers who have gone through the course together with others who work in the field of special needs. We plan to continue having these gatherings once a year.

The schedule and topics covered in this year’s course was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 26, 10:30-12:30</td>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>The wonder of childhood development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 3, 10:30-12:30</td>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>The wonder of childhood: Atypical development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 10, 10:30-12:30</td>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>The wonder of childhood development: Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 17, 10:30-12:30</td>
<td>Angelika (at Deepam School)</td>
<td>Children’s drawings and a deeper understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jan. 14, 10:30-12:30
Heidi
Childhood process work

Jan. 21, 10:30-12:30
Marion
How the special needs brain learns

Feb. 4, 10:30-12:30
Heidi
Yardsticks: A developmental approach to learning

Feb. 11, 10:30-12:30
Marion
How the special needs brain learns

Feb. 18, 10:30-12:30
(SAIIER conference hall)
Research presentation

Feb. 25, 10:30-12:30
Marion
How the special needs brain learns: Dyscalculia and maths difficulties

Feb. 11, 10:30-12:30
Marion
How the special needs brain learns: ADHD and ADD

March 4, 10:30-12:30
Stacy
Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)

March 11, 10:30-12:30
Stacy
Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs)

March 18, 2:30 onwards
(SAIIER conference hall)
Consortium gathering

March 25, 10:30-12:30
Stacy, Marion
Summary and closure to the training

Outcomes

Teachers and schools who have so far completed the course and receive support in their respective schools include: Nandanam Kindergarten (5 teachers, with an Early Learning support room and equipment in place), TLC (3 teachers, with IEP structuring in place for three years), Kindergarten (1 teacher), Transition School (2), Udavi School (2), Aikiyam School (2 teachers, and six IEPs facilitated with six teachers who have not done the training), Deepam School (1), Aha Kindergarten (1), and student from Last School. There have also been numerous parent meetings.

Feedback from a teacher participant of the course training:

“Very well organized, excellent teacher and very good material. I would like to take this course one more time but in a slower pace (over a longer period)... It brought good contact with my peers, we could learn from each other. I have the opportunity to implement what I learned with a child in my class who has signs of ADD.”

Feedback from a parent about IEP work through the Teachers’ Center:

“For the past months, on the recommendation of SAIIER, our family and the Teachers’ Center have been closely working out an IEP for our child with special needs for the next school year. After the past years of fumbling including at times isolation and much distress, we have come to appreciate the listening, loving care and professionalism of their approach towards creating, as a team, a supportive realistic network that will accompany our child over the next steps in life in the best of ways. Being parents can be a challenge at times. Being parents of a child with special needs is even more so. A structured framework such as an IEP fosters wellbeing for all, parents, teachers, and most essentially the child.”

Feedback from a parent about Early Learning support at Nandanam Kindergarten:

“We thank you for the work that you have done for our daughter. We think that it has been very important for her development and for us as parents to know better how to do in regards of her needs and to better understand them. Also what has been particularly important is the training you have given to her teachers at Nandanam School especially for her. It was of very high competence and humanity.”

Reflections

The value of the course is not reflected in the number of participants, as each teacher represents their school and becomes a beacon to their colleagues on issues related to supportive learning and special needs. That said, we hope that in time more teachers will take an interest and will apply to
participate in the course. The course is intended for all teachers and encourages teachers to embrace the ‘Inclusive Integral Classroom’ rather than making a separate classroom for special needs.

Participating teachers benefitted two-fold. Most teachers had not been previously trained in early childhood development and sequential learning, which is a foundation of our course and applicable to all children. They also developed an awareness of learning disabilities and how these manifest in the classroom.

The IEP process brought together groups of teachers and therapists to contribute to realistic goal-setting for each child’s educational portfolio. As Auroville has many skilled therapists and teachers, the IEPs reflect the unique lifestyles of Auroville. IEPs have included classes in animal care, ‘Nature and Spirit’ (See ‘The Learning Community’ report, p.47), art therapy, occupational therapy, one-to-one mentoring in a subject, and life skills, for example.

The participants in the Consortium gathering had the following reflections:

• As a result of the course there has been improved synchronisation between teachers, therapists and families, with better follow-through on recommendations. In the past there was often a sense of crisis management, or avoidance of issues related to learning difficulties, but now a supportive network is more strongly felt.
• There is improved communication between different professionals who can provide support to children, in the fields of psychiatry, homeopathy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, art therapy, Tomatis learning, equine therapy, and various social activities.
• There is an established feeling of trust from educators handing over to Marion and Stacy.
• Teachers are better equipped when managing situations in class. There is less fear and more confidence in practice.
• There is an increase in empathetic awareness amongst Outreach school teachers.
• There is a joy in working with the students. No one would opt to change their job, in spite of the difficulties.

Conclusion

As facilitators we have enjoyed the process; we have also gained from the teachers’ insights and try to create an atmosphere of confidentiality, professionalism and trust amongst the group.

We have received requests for the course to be offered to all the teachers at Aikiyam School and all the teachers at Transition School in 2017. A student from Last School would also like to join the training. We have also received requests from teachers for ongoing meetings and study groups to refresh on the materials covered in the course.

Next year we would like to:

• Continue to draw teachers to participate in the course training.
• Continue to grow the multidisciplinary team as resource people at the Teachers’ Center.
• Provide opportunities for teachers to deepen their training practically.
• Provide opportunities for Auroville youth and visiting youth to explore this field of work (as we have done in the past with Last School students and Swadharma programme students).
• Research Supportive Learning within an integral education framework, and look into its success stories.
• Continue to develop our resource library of books, games, therapeutic equipment and software for supportive learning.
• Collaborate with other professionals in the field who can enrich the course material and ultimately the child and family.
The Learning Community (TLC)

Introduction

This year The Learning Community (TLC) worked with 38 children and their families. We have continued to use Base Camp for many of our activities, with 2 main classroom buildings, an art center, and a separate space for individual and small group tutoring. This year we also added a kitchen to the campus, where children and adults are involved in snack and lunch preparation. In addition, we spend much time in other communities and outdoor spaces in and around the wider community. Our programme this year has deepened in the concept of independent learning, where older children were offered free choice in the content of their educational program, while with the younger children, the focus was on learning how to plan their days using a variety of learning materials that offer an exploration into different subjects. There has been focus on developing aspects like following through on commitments, planning ones work and time, reflection on process, input and outcome. The schedule has allowed each child to find and follow his/her own rhythm and work cycle.

Focus on social relations and respect for each other has been a main theme during the year. Much work has been done on how to share a space for learning, by not disturbing one another, and learning to move around the space and ask for help in a way that does not interrupt one's classmates. The space has materials and resources, internet connection for research and resourceful adults to guide children along their learning journey.

To build on the aspect of care and community, every morning has started with 30 minutes of service work, where the children and facilitators together have cleaned the classrooms, toilets and kitchen, prepared snack, done lice-check and worked in the garden. We have also had monthly workdays, where children and adults have been involved in bigger campus improvements, the making of a safer cycle path, and fixing broken things.

Following is an overview of some of the projects, classes and explorations that we have undertaken this year.

Weekly community gathering

- Direct aim: Including children in everyday life actions and decision-making.
- Indirect aim: Raising responsibility and action from the children.
- Impact: Collective creativity in finding solutions together and taking collective decisions where children & adults have an equal voice.

Community gatherings began gradually in July 2016, facilitated by the adults. In October a group of children decided to take on the role of leading the weekly community gathering. Since then, the organizational team, comprised of 4 children, has been gathering the topics raised by the community during the week and leading the meeting. There is a regular turnover of the children who lead the meeting, and the children are in charge of its management.

There has been constant progress and adaptation of the way the children are conducting the meetings: according to the challenges they have faced, and taking into account the inputs of the whole community. Decisions pertaining to the collective are looked at together by children and adults.

This is a learning process where the community is exploring a way for the adults to step back, allowing more space for children to make proposals, experiment, grow into collaboration, and take more responsibility. It is an imperfect but rich process, full of insights, and a dynamic learning experience for all.
Field trips 2016-17

Field trips and wilderness experiences play an important part of TLC’s educational framework. We believe that wilderness experiences embody the values of tenacity, responsibility, judgment, self-discipline, and compassion. Wilderness experiences can be an effective way of developing these qualities within individuals. Following is a report of two of the field trips that we undertook this year:

‘Building Bridges’ trip to Dharamsala

This year a special field trip was organised in which 6 of the older children in TLC participated. Children from three Auroville schools and one Outreach school traveled together and spent three weeks in a Tibetan orphanage school in Upper Dharamsala. Organized by TLC (Matilde) and the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture (Kalsang), it was intended as a bridge between the two communities, Tibetan and Auroville, which began seven years ago when the Tibetan kids came to spend a month in Auroville during their winter holiday.

It was a very gratifying and rich learning experience with the challenge of having a diverse and mixed group. In Dharamsala, the Auroville representatives made a presentation on Auroville for the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) students. The presentation shared information and experiences from TLC, Transition School, Last School, Udavi School, and the Pavilion of Tibetan Culture, and gave a brief history of Auroville.

The involvement in everyday life was rich and many kids volunteered to help to prepare meals, learning how to prepare local foods such as momos (a few of them got very good at it!).

One of the central parts of the trip was a 2-night sleepover in the TCV homes with the rest of the Tibetan children. This was a very interesting experience because, for two days, the Auroville kids did what the other 1,500 kids normally do: waking up at 5am, chanting prayers, doing the household chores all together including kitchen duties and cleaning, attending school, and having all their meals at the respective homes. This was an eye opening cross-cultural experience for all.

The group was invited by the staff of the private office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and taken directly to the door where His Holiness was coming out to meet the public. He came out happily with a smile on his face, with the warm greeting, “People from Auroville.” He looked each one in the eye, offering warm and powerful handshakes.

The journey back was very long and arduous. In Pathankot there was a delay of ten hours, which resulted in the group leaving Peace house on Tuesday at 8pm and reaching Solar Kitchen on Friday at 7:30pm!

Kalrayan trip

Many parts of the Kalrayan hills are untouched by tourism and urbanization. It is nearby and very accessible but largely unexplored and wild. We planned a camping trip to Kalrayan for nine days in September, for a group of 12 children and 4 adults. Before leaving, team meetings were held with all the children and adults and all were engaged in the trip preparation, gathering food, tents, first aid, games, etc.

This camping trip required intensive collective effort (cooking, daily planning and managing the campsite). Morning/evening gatherings were called for planning and discussion. It was quite democratic and gave much sense of togetherness. Spending hours for basic needs (food, shelter and water) offered a great opportunity to understand each other, feel close to each other and have fun together. Collective work was not always easy, but offered an opportunity to learn how to work/communicate with respect within the limited time.

This trip was an eye-opener for many in terms of understanding other realities. The water problem in Kalrayan was stressed; we practiced different ways to save water, learned that it is possible to live with little water.
Media & Communications

This was the second year of Media & Communications at TLC, facilitated by Petra. It continues to be a project mainly aimed at encouraging the students to write, and leading them to develop their writing skills, including grammar, through editing of their texts as well as through some studying of guidance and hand-outs.

Students continued to write on subjects that interested them, some undertaking interviews as part of the process. This year, the class evolved into mainly hands-on writing sessions, replacing classroom teaching. At times we felt it was a shame to interrupt after one hour, with the only reason being that the classroom was booked. So in order to deepen the work, during the coming school year a full morning will be offered for the class. That should also give enough time for some further instruction, as needed.

The class had a visit by Chris Sperry from the U.S. Well versed in media literacy, he gave a spell-binding session on what media really is (e.g. a wall can be considered media). We also did some theoretical work, looking at the timeline of the history of media, dating back to papyrus scrolls.

Kids also illustrated and created for the fun pages of TLC’s magazine, “The Squeak”, and next year we hope to develop graphics skills further. There is much encouragement for students to take on more of the editing themselves, as in learning how to shape the full magazine that continues to be an outcome of the work. Issues of “The Squeak” were published and shared with the community, with sponsorship from some Auroville units. It is felt that such a tangible outcome gives good impetus for meeting deadlines, and can act as portfolio material for further studies.

‘Our Whole Lives’ (OWL)

Paula M. and her partner Damien offered this sexual education course (8 sessions of 1½ hours) to TLC, and we were very grateful to take them up on their offer for our oldest students (8 students aged 13-15). The course on the one hand explained the more biological side of sexuality, introducing the correct terms for the reproductive body parts, but that was by far not all. The main aim of the course was to give students knowledge in order to make informed choices. An important aspect was to assert ones’ own wishes in the face of peer pressure. Paula and Damien managed to gain the teenagers’ trust on very sensitive topics by not shying away from addressing sexual matters. They engaged the teenagers by eliciting slang vocabulary that the students were familiar with, and explaining terms they didn’t know. A very big part dealt with sexually transmitted diseases, and Paula’s first-hand experience as a women’s health practitioner made the class real for the students.

For the students this frank approach to sexuality showed them that there are many sides to sex in the adult world, and that it’s ok to ask questions about what you don’t know. The course also involved the parents, in a preliminary meeting, as well as in some of the homework, which aimed to open channels for discussion between parents and teenagers.

Evolution project

In this project facilitated by Jesse, a group of the older students studied evolution. Our starting point was defining how scientific methods are different from moral, religious or cultural beliefs. We explored how Darwin’s theory of evolution came about, how his idea about life on earth clashed with that of his time, and that he formulated concepts of inheritance and adaptation without knowing the mechanics behind these processes. The students learnt how Darwin’s ideas on natural selection and the formation of new species relies on a classification of species, and we briefly explored how Linnaeus developed his system of classification. We looked at the different ways in which the theory of evolution can be proven, through the fossil record, in spite of ‘missing links’, and in structural similarities between closely related organisms.

In the second term we saw that Mendel’s experiments provided the missing understanding on
inheritance, and the students followed Mendel’s experiments with pea plants, created punnet squares and grasped the concepts of dominant and recessive genes. We spent some time understanding what DNA is and how it works, explored mutation, and investigated the similarities and differences between human, chimpanzee and gorilla genes, as well as those of our common ancestor. In the third term, we looked at the temporal context of evolution, the geographic timescale and when and how life changed throughout the last 4.6 Billion years. The students were amazed to see that for more than three quarters of the existence of the earth the only life forms were bacteria, but how then suddenly life exploded. Moving a step away from science, we briefly looked at how Darwin’s ideas have been used in other areas: how Social Darwinism gave the justification for inequality, racism and Nazi ideology. We also saw that the term ‘evolution’ is used very differently in various spiritual contexts. Finally, the students composed their own graphic versions of the evolutionary progression leading to humans, and let their creativity take over in projecting the future of humans.

Independent Learning

Independent Learning (IL) is central to the educational program being developed in TLC. Independent Learning has this year allowed each child to follow their own individualized program in ‘academic’ subjects.

Based on the three principles of education outlined by Sri Aurobindo, “nothing can be taught,” “the mind has to be consulted in its own growth,” and “from the near to the far,” each child works at her or his own pace and has long uninterrupted time that allows concentration to develop and for an individual work cycle to form.

Educational materials and assignments have been made to serve as guides in the children’s more independent work. The facilitators have worked with preparing an environment and materials for self-directed learning to enable this. Experimentation with areas like time-management, goal-setting, planning and review have been key skills for the children to develop. This has given the children an opportunity to go deeper into a specific area of inquiry.

Independent Learning encourages individual expression, initiative, creativity, responsibility and ‘ownership’ of the work in a community setting. In past years, the younger children (ages 7-10) had been working in this way. New for this year was that the older children (ages 11-15) were also offered this way of learning. Next year we plan to expand the IL to all areas of learning, not just the ‘academics’ as it has been until now.

‘Nature & Spirit’

The topic of this class was Spirit in Nature, facilitated by Aikya. The idea was to slowly go deeper into the connection, with activities done in an attitude of openness, spontaneity, receptivity, and a capacity to be (or to learn to be) silent at moments. Classes were held at Aikya’s house in Anusuya Forest.

This year we had two groups: one was for a special project called ‘One United Roar’, a call to participate in a global talent challenge. Eleven children enrolled to make a movie clip roaring their heart out for Lions and for Nature. We spent time preparing the topic, watching relevant documentaries and exploring ways of expressing clearly and creatively. Two of the children won the very special prize of a 1-week journey to the White Lion Protection Trust in South Africa, chaperoned by one of their parents. Afterwards the kids gave a PowerPoint presentation at Cinema Paradiso in which they recounted their journey and experiences with the big animals and with a different culture.

The other group was comprised of 6 kids, 7-10 years old, and met weekly for an afternoon. At these sessions the children could explore freely what they wanted to do, and then do proposed
activities related to nature, creativity, and sense-training games. We did a lot of natural expression through drawing, writing, making mandalas, storytelling, flower arrangements, making video clips, world games, and artwork with nature.

Beside this, sessions with the World Game (Sand-Box or ‘Sandplay’) happened throughout the year, with some kids coming on a regular basis to do project-based work, and others coming once in a while. Here the joy of being the creator of one’s own world is seen again and again.

Survival! Sessions

Thirteen students aged 11-14 participated in the project ‘Survival! Sessions’ in 2016-17. The project comprised 4 elements – survival stories; survival psychology; wild craft and first aid; survival trip (the trip has been postponed until July / September 2017 due to the scarcity of water bodies after deficient rainfall). Sessions were every other week, giving time for guided assignments in the Independent Learning space. The idea for this course originated from discussions with students in the previous year.

In developing the course, I (Jesse) wanted it to be relevant, skills-based, experimental, encouraging authentic research, open to peer-learning. I was explicitly not a ‘teacher’, not an expert, but a participant and a guide.

We encouraged an attitude to be held in our sessions together, encapsulated in an oath which we took at the beginning of the course on the theme of cooperation and survival, and continued in games and activities with which we began each session in the first two terms. We also established a learning motto: “learn from others, learn by experience, learn together, keep on learning”.

The course aimed to allow students to work with and develop a range of skills. These pertained to the act of surviving life-threatening situations, and to transferrable skills for effective learning (comprehension, organization and presentation of thought). It involved hands-on and theoretical dimensions.

For survival stories, the students selected stories about people who had managed to overcome extreme situations, and then presented these stories to each other, extracting the key learning points. They developed working knowledge of PowerPoint. This strategy allowed the students to take ownership of their story, and represent it using visuals and graphics using their own initiative and creativity.

In survival psychology, we worked on a set of 11 skills, which included work on awareness, self-reflection on emotional triggers and impulses, resilience, knowledge of physiological reactions to threat, flexible thinking, etc. This component involved more conventional instructional elements and in-session activities.

The third component (wild craft) revolved around guided small group-work on wilderness survival themes: food, fire, water, shelter, trapping and fishing. The groups conducted research, which drew on survival manuals, the Internet and knowledgeable people; performed experiments on techniques discovered in the research; documented what worked and what failed; and presented to the others their results.

The course will culminate in a survival field trip where the participants will test what they have learnt, in terms of skills and techniques as well as attitude and approach. They will also learn navigation skills on this trip.

Although many of the skills developed in this course came out of survival contexts, we made it clear through activities, discussion and assignments, that they are relevant to daily life – in the way we react to each other, how aware we are of ourselves, others and our surroundings, how a survival mentality is a humble one that is open to the new and unexpected, how real cooperation is a challenge.
Baking English and children’s tea shop:

Baking English (facilitated by Tamar) aims to provide the opportunity for an innovative approach to the study of the English language as well as other integral skills. We aim to provide children with an experience where learning is alive, spontaneous and relevant to what they are directly experiencing through practical, hands-on work. The class takes the study of English out of textbooks and worksheets and into a real-life situation, providing children with an opportunity to learn from context, with joy, and allowing for content to flow from spontaneous, real-life situations.

This year, the Baking English project began by building a wood-fired mud oven in TLC’s Base Camp. The oven was built together with the children participating in the class, during the first 2 weeks of the first term. The classes took place in the newly-created outdoor kitchen space. Three weekly classes were offered, involving 14 children aged 9-13.

The older children (those who have already participated in the project) worked in a more independent format than previous years – they were required to bring their own recipes (rotating between each child in the class) and to work on a project derived from their recipe over the weeks that followed (until it was again their turn to bring a new recipe). The students' projects incorporated 4 elements:

• Creative writing (poetry/short stories inspired by the recipe/and or class)
• Research inspired by the recipe (into nutrition, ingredients, historical context, etc.)
• Pricing of the recipe (incorporating relevant mathematic skills and calculations)
• Spelling

The younger group (participating in the project for the first time) were guided in an exploration of basic skills such as spelling, grammar and techniques of story writing/poetry.

The whole baking process was photo-documented, and towards the end of the academic year the children began to work on a recipe book, which will include the recipe texts and step-by-step photo illustrations, as well as the written work that they have completed throughout the year (poems, stories, research, recipe pricing, etc.). Many other elements have naturally come into the classes such as co-operation and teamwork, hygiene, and time management.

The children have opted to continue working on their recipe books over the summer, and to complete them by the beginning of the coming academic year. This choice ties up with TLC’s overriding approach of blurring boundaries between home and school, ‘school time’ and ‘holidays’, etc.

As an extension of the Baking English project, we opened the children’s tea shop (“The Dewdrop Inn”), where the produce of the Baking English project was offered to the wider community. The tea shop offers further opportunities to learn through doing, incorporating explorations into business models, cost-profit scenarios, alternative economies, promotional strategies, service skills, and teamwork.

‘Fantasy, Food and Free-writing’

This class combined several tools and approaches to encourage creative writing in children, inspired by the manual The Writer’s Jungle: A Survivor’s Guide to Writing with Kids by Julie Bogart. Ms. Bogart’s idea of “Friday Freewriting” evolved into the class ‘Fantasy, Food and Free-writing’, where a group of five 9-10 year-olds met once a week for a 2-hour ‘literary picnic’ in the forest.

Tea and cookies were shared as together we read the novel The Girl Who Could Fly by Victoria Forester, one chapter per class. Thereafter, the children would find a quiet space to write for the remainder of the class. The children were encouraged to focus on free expression, without over-focus on spelling, grammar, etc. The aim was to allow their creativity to flow unhindered by the formalities of the language. At the end of each class, children were given the choice whether to share their writing with the rest of the group or not. Each essay was collected in a personal folder.
After five such ‘free writes’ the children were asked to choose one essay. For the remainder of the classes, they worked on perfecting their writing. The focus of the work depended on the need of each child. Some spent much time correcting spelling errors (by looking up correct spellings in the dictionary), others worked on punctuation, while others focussed on story structure: creating rich introductions, setting the scene, developing characters, and ending the story. Finally the group worked on a cover and the chosen stories were compiled into a book.

The class brought out the freedom and fun of creative writing for the children, while offering the opportunity to go deeper into different areas of the English language in general, and creative writing in particular. The faculties of creative freedom, persistence and patience were nurtured during this work.
Baking English
A project of The Learning Community

A project by Tamar

Introduction

Baking English aims to provide the opportunity for an innovative approach to the study of the English language as well as other integral skills. We aim to provide children with an experience where learning is alive, spontaneous and relevant to what they are directly experiencing through practical, hands-on work. The aim is to take the study of English out of textbooks and worksheets and into real-life situations, providing children with an opportunity to learn from context, with joy, and allowing for content to flow from spontaneous, real-life situations.

Description of project

The Baking English project was initiated in The Learning Community (TLC) five years ago and involves small groups of children (maximum 5 per group) exploring various aspects of the English language (including poetry, short story writing, parts of speech, punctuation, to name but a few) as well as research methodologies, mathematical concepts, computer graphic work, photography and teamwork skills, all through the medium of baking.

This year, the Baking English project began by building a wood-fired mud oven in TLC’s Base Camp. The oven was built together with the children participating in the Baking English project, during the first two weeks of the first term. The classes took place in the newly created outdoor kitchen space. Three weekly classes were offered, involving 14 children aged 9-13.

The older kids (those who have already participated in the project in previous years) worked in a more independent format than in previous years – they were required to bring their own recipes (rotating between each child in the class) and to then work on a project derived from their recipe over the weeks that followed (until it was again their turn to bring a new recipe). The students’ project incorporated 4 elements: creative writing (poetry, short stories inspired by the recipe and/or class), research inspired by the recipe (into ingredients, nutrition, historical context, etc.), pricing of the recipe (incorporating relevant mathematic skills and calculations), and spelling.

The younger group (first time participating in the project) were guided in basic skills such as spelling, grammar and techniques of story writing/poetry.

The whole baking process was photo-documented, and towards the end of the academic year the children began to work on a recipe book, which will include the recipe texts, step-by-step photo illustrations, as well as the written work that they completed throughout the year (poems, stories, research, recipe pricing, etc.). Many other elements have naturally come into the classes such as cooperation and teamwork, hygiene, and time management. The children have opted to continue working on their recipe books over the summer, and to complete them by the beginning of the coming academic year. This choice ties up with TLC’s overarching approach of blurring boundaries between home and school, ‘school time’ and ‘holidays’, etc.

As an extension of the Baking English project, the children’s tea shop (“The Dewdrop Inn”) has been developed, where the produce of the Baking English project is offered to the wider community. The tea shop offers further opportunities to learn through doing, incorporating explorations into business models, cost-profit scenarios, alternative economies, promotional strategies, service skills, and team work.
Outcomes

A methodology has been established whereby the study of the English language can be taken out of the textbooks and into a real-life situation. This real environment can awaken a joy for lifelong learning. The child is supported in keeping the joy of learning which he or she naturally has, allowing him or her to express and explore or her natural curiosity.

Through Baking English the individual needs of the child are nurtured as they emerge out of experiences. Children are increasingly empowered to take responsibility for their own learning process, and they experience the nurturing of the faculties of co-operation, self-discipline and patience.

In addition to the exploration of the basic skills of the English language, children experience the overlap with mathematical concepts (among others) which emerge out of the baking process; this de-compartmentalizes learning and gives a practical example of how the different contexts of life can offer diverse learning opportunities.

Reflections

Over the past five years we have seen how the children have developed their skills in many diverse areas covered by the activities in the class: from basic skills in English, to research methodologies, photographic skills as well as cooperative techniques and teamwork. At the end of each term the students are given the opportunity to invent and bake their own recipes, documenting the recipes in their notebooks. The products are proudly shared with the rest of the community, and they demonstrate much skill and creativity.

Future direction: Independent Learning

Next year we will be adapting the methodology of the class to suit the concept of Independent Learning which we are implementing in depth in TLC. Children will be encouraged to assume more independence in the baking process, and mixed-age groups will enable the older or more experienced learner to guide younger or less experienced learners. Assistance and/or facilitation of the baking process will be offered by adults only when required by the students.

The material for language exploration will be offered through a range of possible activities which will cater to the full spectrum of levels, and learners will be encouraged to take up different areas according to interest. They will be encouraged to work with the materials in an independent way, requesting assistance when reaching a new topic which requires an explanation in order to proceed. This approach will engender ownership of their learning process and develop the faculties of self-regulation, cooperation, independence and responsibility.
Transition School

Overview

According to the Auroville Charter, education and progress are put at the center of Auroville society: the aim and means of its life. We are all learners in an Auroville that is constantly in the process of inventing itself. This implies an ‘unending education and constant progress’, striving for a new way of living and a new consciousness.

Transition School, a primary and middle school that serves the Auroville community, has been running for more than thirty years now. Through this time it has grown and changed in many ways. We are constantly learning — from each other, from the children and from all that the world has to offer us, but our objectives and aims have remained constant. Inspired by the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, we aim to foster human unity, and to help our children to develop integrally so that they may reach their full potential.

The material development of the school and the program are constantly being adapted and developed to better serve the needs of the children who continue to come to us, thanks to Auroville and the efforts of many involved and dedicated Aurovilians working together and sharing common goals and aspirations. The program is full and varied, including reading, writing, maths, sciences, computer, environmental studies, social studies, French, Tamil, Awareness Through the Body, arts, crafts and music. The children also participate in a regular sports program. Each subject is viewed as a tool for self-discovery, as well as an instrument for children to develop their faculties, capacities and abilities and learn to express themselves while gaining understanding and knowledge about themselves and the world. The adults who work with the children collaborate and try to provide the best conditions that we can to aid the children’s growth. This helps our children feel safe, grow in confidence and to develop all aspects of their being.

We now have about 145 students, ages 6-14 (grades 1 through 8). The students and teachers come from many different countries and different states of India. This creates a multi-cultural environment that provides many opportunities for dynamic, creative teaching and learning experiences for students and teachers alike. Importantly, it exposes teachers and children to humanity’s rich cultural heritage. These children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds grow and work together in an atmosphere of protected freedom and harmony, which fosters an aspiration for human unity.

The child as an Individual Learner within the Learning Group

This year a focus of our research and attention was on observation of the child as an individual learner within the learning group (the classroom which caters to 16-20 students). The teaching team is deeply concerned with the progress of each individual in the group, and at the same time, the interactions and relationships in the group are very important. We observe that they are reciprocally dependent on each other.

Individual work helps students:

- Gain independence and think things through in their own work, at their own level, rather than having to adapt to suit their group members.
- Gain creativity and effective thinking processes that can be applied to problem-solving across a range of subjects and types of issues.
- Take responsibility for their own progress.
Group work emphasizes skills in:

- Listening to and respecting others' ideas.
- Working on interpersonal difficulties.
- Thinking about one problem in a variety of ways.
- Getting to a deeper level of understanding through having to explain a perspective and discuss it.
- Working together, dividing up tasks and delegating responsibilities.
- Sharing knowledge and getting a better hold on a problem than could have been done individually.

Each child is encouraged to participate in class both as an individual with his/her particular needs, interests and talents, and at the same time as a member of a group working with respect and care for the other members of the group. It is important to know the students: what are their strengths, their interests and their talents, both in school and outside of school. Teachers of the classes work in many different ways to create a safe, accepting and successful learning environment for each individual within the classroom. Catering for student diversity is not intended to reach an average, but to enable each student to learn and participate to the best of his/her ability. We know it is very important to help these children from many cultural groups to learn to work, play, solve problems and grow together.

The following report from Awareness Through the Body illustrates the school’s approach to this very important relationship.

**Awareness Through the Body (ATB)**

Facilitating a satisfactory and fruitful relationship between the individual and the group is a beautiful and challenging task all educators face. In ATB at Transition School we aim to create a safe space/environment where the genuine needs of each individual – the individual as an expanding consciousness – are met and where the individual learns to be a positive, responsible, proactive member of a group. From that base we aim in turn to develop a positive sense of group, where the group ‘learns’ to respect, care for and nourish each individual.

ATB is about coming to know oneself and finding fulfilling ways towards self-regulation and self-direction. The more one knows oneself and the more one acquires ways for effective self-regulation, the better one can know and understand others and be able to be a supportive, creative member of a group. Central to this is the development of an awareness of one's inner and outer space, noticing how these two spaces interact, and practicing to find satisfactory ways to balance them.

Coaching children in finding their way into a harmonized sense of group is a continuous process, not confined to some specific exercises alone. On the contrary, being together in the school is already ‘the exercise’, and a lot is learned directly through all the nuances of this being together during school hours.

In our ATB classes we start working on ‘being together’ from the moment that children come into the room, even as they are on their way to the room. We observe how they come in; we take a moment to have a sense of how the group feels today, and how each individual feels in himself and in relation to the group. As they settle into the space, we observe how they are interacting or not interacting with each other: “what is the weather like today?” After some time we invite them to move out of their circles and to talk and listen as a whole group; they can talk about anything they want to, but they must talk together. We facilitate the process, encouraging an orderly way of talking and listening to each other. In this “tertulia” as we call it, children talk of whatever is in their minds and sometimes they come up with interesting questions or topics that we develop. The topics that we choose to develop are meaningful to a more conscious life, to coming to know oneself and
finding better ways for self-regulation. We always bring these talks to a conclusion that leads to our work in ATB.

From our observations and sensations we choose how to start the class. We guide a concentration exercise or any other type of exercise that will bring each child and the group to the right space for a productive class. An important part of the introductory exercise is that it calls children’s attention to pause and notice the mood, the energy, their sense of body and the state of mind that they come in with. We then ask them to allow themselves to practice the suggested exercise, and after the exercise, we conclude by noticing the changes that took place in them and in the group. We ask them to acknowledge that they were the ones who effectuated those changes.

Whatever is the focus for the day, during the classes we attentively follow their interactions and take all opportunities to facilitate better communication and collaboration between them. When conflicts arise we take these as tools for everyone to learn to better relate to each other. We regularly propose exercises and activities specifically directed to work on the relationship between each individual and the group. We present these activities in a way so that conflict is likely to arise, so as to put the children in situations where they can learn to deal practically with all that is needed to relate positively with each other.

The specific exercises we use to work on this relationship which we call “Me and the Group”, are of two types: cooperative games (which we prefer to call group tasks) and group activities. What we find more important than the games or activities themselves, is the way they are facilitated. The way we facilitate them ensures that the progress of each child is taken care of as much as the progress of the group in unity. To start with, we propose high challenges in order to create a bit of struggle in the group. At the same time we are careful not to cause unproductive frustration. All through the exercise the children are coached with questions which are placed at the right time, to help them see what is happening and help them reflect on how they are going to address the difficulty they are facing. We help them notice the double direction of interaction: how the group mirrors individual attitudes and moods, and at the same time how individuals mirror the way the group is functioning. We are careful to intervene only in the most important key moments of the activity. Our interventions range from a simple general comment, to a question for the group to reflect on, or a call for a full stop of the activity (like a ‘time out’ in a basketball game). In this case the children can have a brief whole-group discussion about what they see happening, talk to each other, and find a way to move forward. We may ask them to organize themselves for the discussion, with a few hints from our side when necessary, or we may facilitate the discussion.

Whatever the outcome of the session, at the end it is essential to share and review it. Here, we all discuss what happened, analyze what worked, what did not work, and what the children can learn to take with them for another time, as individuals and as a group.

In these discussions we are attentive to several points: we encourage all people to talk (not only the ones that tend to talk often), make sure the most important highlights of the day come out (and if they do not, we pose questions to make them come out), and help children rephrase their comments when they are inappropriate or abusive in some way. The latter is done without judging the child, but rather simply helping him to first see what is the essence of what he wants to say and to understand what the need is that he is trying to express. When in very emotionally charged situations, or when strong unproductive moods or attitudes get involved, we may also pose some question for him to reflect on the attitude he is adopting and find a way to shift that attitude to an open and productive one. As a second step we help him rephrase the comment, so he can practice positive communication. With children who do not dare to share a concern or their needs, we may help them learn to verbalize their experiences and their requests.

Over time we can clearly see how the groups gain cohesiveness, trust, confidence and get to a sense of ease and harmonization between all the members. We can also see how each individual, in his/her own capacity, progressively integrates the work and it becomes part of themselves. That is relating and collaborating effectively with others becomes to some extend part of their nature. Our
aim now is to find ways to support/encourage children to use all that they gain in the ATB sessions much more in day to day life.

**Example: Sticks activity (Grades 5 to 8)**

Sticks is a group activity that consists of simultaneously throwing and catching sticks in a preset pattern and rhythm. This activity develops attention, concentration, a sense of rhythm, coordination, will, the capacity to be present, quick reflexes, the capacity for leadership, endurance, perseverance, patience, calmness, group cohesion, poise, grounding and the use of peripheral vision.

Sticks is a very good exercise to bind people together as a group: to work on group dynamics and being present and engaging as a positive member of a group. For the exercise to work all the individuals are compelled to be fully present not only in themselves but also to what is happening in the whole group. This generates a sense of unity, strengthened by the fact that everyone is following the same rhythm and the same pattern of throwing. If a person is not able to follow, and if he is in a group that has a basically good dynamic and cohesiveness, he is stimulated by the group, supported and integrated, and this helps him to overcome his difficulty. Conversely, if the group lacks these qualities, one individual out of tune is enough to cause chaos and bring the activity to a halt. In this case the whole group has to face the difficulty and do what is necessary to harmonize itself in order to succeed.

As it is a very demanding exercise, with a difficult coordination of all group members where all of them have to be very attentive for the exercise to work, at the beginning the groups get into a lot of blaming, complaining and putting down, and can get quite chaotic. But over time with our coaching, support and encouragement through their struggle, they learn to let go of those natural tendencies and find a harmonious way to interact with each other, where they are supportive of each other and encourage each other to do well.

In the last sessions of the activity, at the end of each class, we place big paper sheets on the floor for children to write a couple of words of what was for them the highlight of the class. The words that most often come out are: harmony, concentration, restless, nervous, annoyed, love, peace, unity, group work, together, care for others, uses both hands, fear, gratitude, beautiful, peripheral vision, calmness, cold, hot, sweaty, endurance, perseverance, tiredness, frustration, patience...

The following are examples of comments from children’s individual reflection papers about the sticks activity and cooperative games:

- “I have mostly hated to work in a group, more than three people, because nobody listens and I find it useless. But ATB games and activities are making me understand how important it is. Now I find it better because it makes life easier.”
- “With the Sticks activity I learned that communicating doesn’t only work with the mouth. It helped me realize that: I am not the only person in the room, I have to think of everybody and not just myself, I have to wait till everybody is ready before starting to pass the stick and when someone makes a mistake not to just shout at him.”
- “The river game and others taught me that gender doesn’t matter. We are all human beings, and not to place blame but to accept whatever happens and move on. It is about helping, knowing your mistakes and discovering new ways of working without making those mistakes again. It’s about working together even when you do not like people, and also knowing why you do not like them.”
- “I could understand other people more. I could adjust with them and listen to their ideas. And care about others and help them, and get help if needed. I could be patient now when someone was a little annoying in the group, and not shout at them.”
Working towards harmony in a Grade 3 class

This year the children of the Grade 3 class at Transition School came from many different cultural backgrounds, family dynamics, and abilities. This presented an opportunity to learn to work together in harmony. There were some individual as well as group challenges which required creative solutions.

Something that really supported harmony was the creation of class rules at the beginning of the school year. The children themselves wrote the rules they felt were needed to help them reach their goals for the year. Because the rules were created by the children themselves they were more committed to follow them.

Another simple strategy supporting harmony within the class was classroom jobs. Each week these duties changed. Children had to learn the skills necessary to carry out each job responsibly. These were simple duties such as watering plants, class library, and opening windows, but the most responsible job was that of the ‘class supervisor’. In essence this meant taking care of different aspects of the classroom and reminding others when there was something that needed to be done.

Whenever there was a conflict between students it had a negative impact on the harmony within the classroom. The children were taught skills to help them in such situations. In many circumstances they were able to cope and resolve the conflicts themselves. When emotional difficulties prevented a resolution, children requested a meeting with a teacher to support them.

One particular child had difficulties at home and school which created internal and external conflicts. It was difficult for him and the class as well. After many meetings and a shortened class schedule, the child has experienced success. He is now able to attend school full time, better communicate his needs and get support when he has difficulty with another student.

Another important aspect to support the feeling of balance and harmony in young children is movement. Within the classroom children were always free to get up and drink, go to the toilet or even do something physical like jumping jacks to help get back an equilibrium. Whole-class movement breaks were a regular interlude. This was fun and helpful for learning and a general sense of well-being.

Though conflicts occurred in the classroom or on the playground, children began to express to one another how a certain behavior affected them. When the other child really listened, actual behavioral changes began to happen. Supporting this communication between children was much more effective in creating harmony than the immediate intervention of a teacher. Also, as children learned to communicate their feelings it was very effective in bringing about a change in the other children.

As individuals in the class took responsibility, communicated feelings, learned to listen, and worked together, we had more moments of cohesion and harmony. During some of these moments, a few children commented that it felt good to work together in this way. As a teacher these moments were very fulfilling.

Project work

In Transition School the students do a lot of project work. Projects can be done in any subject area and it is a great way to work to harmonize the group work (the scheduled program) and the possibilities for individual choice and progress. Learning through projects creates a learning experience and classroom environment that is interesting, motivating and challenging for children. Learning activities are interdisciplinary, long-term and build on children’s individual strengths. Project work allows children to explore their interests within the framework of a defined curriculum. As the work often includes small group work, it also helps children acquire skills such as cooperation, collaboration, communication and independent learning, preparing them for lifelong learning. Throughout the school year, teachers and students of the various classes chose topics to explore through projects.
There are many different ways that a topic can be investigated, as can be seen through the following narratives that demonstrate just a few of the many different projects done.

‘Poetry for All’ (Grades 6-8)

I have seen that many children in middle school have not yet read poems by a broad variety of poets, and they have some strong ideas about what poetry is or is not. So this year we did a project, ‘Poetry for All’.

To introduce the work we read many poems as a group – sometimes the whole class read and listened together, other times the students worked in smaller groups. I introduced elements of poetry and we found examples of techniques that poets use. The students liked to play with these (similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration and others). Sometimes they sat alone outside to look at an image, or hear a sound, and tried to develop it into a simile, metaphor or any other idea they had. They came back to class and shared their work. They really enjoyed this exercise.

We continued to read some poetry together in class, but I also asked them to explore poetry on their own. They were given the time to look through the many poetry books that we have in class and to finally choose a poem that they wanted to share with the group. I asked them to read it to themselves several times, and to think about why they chose the poem. They then informally shared their poems with their classmates.

At this point the students also wrote some very moving poems which they shared with all.

At the end of the school year we worked with the music teacher and presented a Music and Poetry Open House. The students decided to choose poetry based on the theme of music for this presentation. I helped them find about 50 poems and from that selection they chose the poem they wanted to learn. Throughout the project there was emphasis on learning and enjoying poetry, sharing poems with a group and helping each other understand and learn their chosen poems.

Values project (all grades)

Every year since 2001 the teachers and students of Transition School have participated in an all-school values project. The first value that we chose was Truth, and since then have worked on Respect, Empathy, Goodwill, Human Unity and many more. This year we chose Perseverance. The students of the 8th grade worked with the teaching team to make this choice. The theme was woven through the program in each class. The students in Transition range in age from 6 to 14; teachers modify the approach according to the needs and understanding of their students. The first thing we do is make sure that the children understand what the value means – not just in words but in real life experience. The Grade 8 students proposed that people write a little note card and say what they think they need to persevere with this year. This was made into a bulletin board display.

The theme of perseverance seemed to really resonate with the middle school children. It came up all through our studies in science, literature, and history as well as their personal experiences. Many thoughtful discussions were provoked and lots of encouragement was given to those who needed more perseverance. At the end of the school year when we had our poetry presentation, we had a good example of this. One of the students had chosen a very long and complicated poem to present. He liked the poem and wanted the challenge, but it was difficult for him to memorize. With a lot of encouragement and reminders about perseverance, he happily succeeded.

Bird project (Grade 4)

Ten-year-old children are naturally interested in nature. While they look at nature in wonder, birds evoke a special feeling in them. With this project we put emphasis on observing
and studying the birds in and around Auroville. The children had a small and handy observation notebook. Every time they spotted a bird they noted down their observation. They shared it in our circle meeting. In class, they played the ‘around the world’ game to get familiar with some of the birds they spotted. This also helped them to identify birds in general. Together, the children studied the anatomy of birds. Then they slowly moved on to study birds’ habitats, diets and flight. They also studied bird migration, partly in anticipation of our field trip to Vedanthaangal, which is full of migratory birds.

Children made posters on the birds they chose to study. They made wonderful posters. They also read stories on birds, and learned poems and songs.

A very important part of the bird project was field trips. The children are always excited about the field trips. They made a trip to Vedanthaangal Bird Sanctuary to study the migratory birds. It is an important trip as one never gets to see these birds otherwise. Some of these birds come all the way from Siberia in the north and Australia in the south.

Our second field trip was to Kazhuveli Tank, a very important wetland 25 kms away from Auroville. This year we got to see a lot of birds. We spotted flamingos in plenty. It was an amazing sight to see them all in one place. In this wetland, we normally get to see birds that one cannot see in Vedanthaangal. We walked a few kilometers along the wetland to watch birds. The children enjoyed the long trip with enthusiasm and made it memorable for all.

Transition School long-term goals

• We plan to start to work on an ‘Auroville’ curriculum: to help the children from grades 1-8 learn about Auroville.
• We plan to have more opportunities for teachers to study together. We will plan a minimum of three teachers’ study sessions for next year.
• We would like to further develop our Values for Human Unity project.
• We want to work on the student portfolio and assessment.

Reflection and conclusion

Our aims are long-term and ongoing. We see education of the integral personality as an unending process. Each child is unique, and we want to give the freedom and opportunity for each to follow his or her own path of growth and progress. We also want to foster human values so that Auroville children become responsible individuals, dedicated to creating a better world. We hope that our students grow and feel that all of us are citizens of one world, aspiring to manifest a truer and higher life on earth.
Continuing Progress in the development of Independent Learning

A project of Transition School

Overview

Transition School’s program strives to initiate a life-long process of individual development towards a balance of body, mind, and spirit. For the past few years teachers at Transition School have been focusing on identifying skills that will help our children become more independent in their learning. This is a progressive work with students ranging in age from 6-14. We started the year with a review of the work we had done the year before, and identified some learning/study skills and strategies that are in line with our work on integral education. These were different for different age groups. Throughout the year teachers kept this in mind and met and shared their ideas and their findings.

Teachers worked together and with their students to explore developmentally appropriate strategies which help to sustain the attitudes, values and skills that will make it possible for the students to become independent and conscious life-long learners. We then included these skills purposefully in the school program, explaining the role of the strategies so the students could understand how they can help themselves by using the skills. We also helped the children become more aware about different learning styles and understand the particular learning strategies that support their preferred way of learning. Teachers spoke about the importance of ‘learning to learn’ with the parents of the children in conferences and meetings held throughout the school year.

The following are reports from various teachers that illustrate the outcome of this ongoing work.

Developing learning skills in Grade 3

To teach children how to learn is as important as teaching any subject. In third grade we worked with many tools and learning skills to support children in becoming more independent learners.

“How do you get organized to study or to do homework?” We brainstormed this together at the beginning of the school year. During the first few weeks of school, ‘homework’ was done in class together. Children modeled behaviors necessary to succeed in doing homework. They came up with a list that was posted in their homework books to help them remember at home. Parents received a follow-up letter so they were aware of the strategies for homework. They were encouraged to support their child during homework time.

Children were also taught how to choose a ‘good fit’ book (one which interests them, where they can read most of the words, comprehend, etc.). Each week during library time, children chose at least three English language ‘good fit’ books to read in class and at home. Children also took a book from our classroom library when they wanted another book to read in class. Easy access to books, time to read, and the practice of frequent reading to the class helped facilitate improvement in reading skills. Kids developed a love for reading.

Another skill helpful for independent learning is use of a dictionary and thesaurus. We had a guided discovery whereby each child had a dictionary and learned what was inside and ways to use it. Children were regularly taught and practiced skills to become more proficient looking up a word in the dictionary. Now all children independently consult the dictionary when they need to understand the meaning of a word or when they are unsure how to spell a word.
To support the learning of alphabetical order we played a game with the whole class. The game was timed and everyone had to focus to do well as a team. After five weeks of playing this fun game, all children had developed the skill to put words in alphabetical order independently.

In creative writing and research, we used a ‘4 square’ methodology. Children decided on a topic and 4 different aspects that supported that topic. This method helped children to focus on relevant information while doing research, and to write in paragraphs, and it made it easy to avoid plagiarism.

Posting a weekly list of activities was another approach that was helpful in creating an atmosphere of independent learning. Children were aware of the goals for the week. They were encouraged to work towards completion of the goals in class. This strategy was successful as many children left on Friday with no homework. They were delighted that they could just take pleasure in reading.

**Summary writing, research skills and paraphrasing (Grades 6-8)**

This year we learned about summary writing: how to retell something in our own words, keeping it short and yet including all the important information. We read texts which we summarized together in class, and others which we summarized on our own. We also applied what we learned when writing our book reports and summaries. Summarizing is an important skill to learn as it helps students to discern important information in a text and to identify and integrate main ideas. It also encourages critical thinking.

We also worked on paraphrasing. This is difficult for young students, but it is a very important skill to learn. As paraphrasing is ‘putting things in your own words’, we started with simple exercises of reading a paragraph or a story and then ‘putting it in our own words’. In middle school the students learn research skills and compose longer pieces of writing, so as the year went on we worked more and more on these aspects of writing. They did progress and were able to see their progress, but we have a lot more work to do!

**Different learning styles (Grades 7 and 8)**

For the older students, in seventh and eighth grade, the teachers thought it could be interesting for the students to become aware of different learning styles – to find their strengths and see how they could use these to improve in their studies.

The teachers met in the summer holiday to research materials that would be accessible to the students which address the different ways individuals learn. The material we found looks at three different learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic, and gives strategies for how students can incorporate this information into their ways of working.

We introduced this to the students with a questionnaire. There were 16 questions with multiple-choice answers. The students completed the questionnaire, and then calculated their learning strengths. It was thought-provoking for them to see that generally they were quite balanced: most students learnt in all three ways, with perhaps a slight leaning towards one style or another. We followed up with a group discussion on what the different learning styles mean.

For both students and teachers this was a rewarding exercise. Teachers could see that changing something in the classroom – the seating, the noise level, the location of a student’s desk – could enable a student to improve in her/his studies.

The students were very interested in the results of the questionnaire and wanted to learn more about the different learning styles. They immediately started to use some of the study strategies that were suggested that suited their learning style, and continued to use them throughout the school year. For example, visual learners can study more effectively by taking notes on post-it notes...
or index cards and reviewing them regularly; this became a favorite method for studying for tests in the eighth grade.

By becoming aware of their learning styles and helpful strategies for using them, the students were more involved in their education, and they took steps towards becoming independent learners.

Learning to use time productively (Grade 7)

In the seventh grade class I have been working to try to include more opportunities for the children to organize their own work, work more independently, and have more choice in the activities. A very important study skill is learning to use one’s time well. This year I again used “work plans” with the students.

Every two weeks the students were given a work plan that clearly stated the plans for the week and the expectations (assignments). It gave suggestions for alternative materials that they might want to use. The children learned that this work needs to be finished within the prescribed time, and that it can be done in class. Each week, two or three hours were set aside in class as “work time” in which they were free to do the work that they chose to do.

In the beginning, the students often needed to be reminded that these hours were “work time” and that they needed to work. As time went on there was a positive change in the atmosphere of the class as students learned to organize themselves, working in small groups or individually to do the diverse assignments. I noticed a greater concentration, and less disruption. They seemed to enjoy the freedom offered to decide what to do instead of having to do a particular activity at a given time. This independent work time also freed up a lot more time for me to work with individuals and with small groups of students.

For the past several years most of the students have profited a lot from this way of working: the combination of group work, project work and the freedom that the “work plan” gives. I think that with a balance of individual and collective work, it is possible to enhance the students’ sense of personal responsibility for their studies and help them develop a good sense of organization.

I also asked the students to assess the method. Through their comments, it is apparent that they not only like the freedom of organizing their day, but also that this way of working helps them become more aware of their needs and personal growth.

Conclusion

Choice, creativity and the development of skills are all important aspects of a classroom experience. When these are in balance it leads to a joyful atmosphere with enthusiastic learners who come to take ownership of their work and their progress. When children are given the tools and skills to help them progress, they generally become more motivated and enthusiastic about the day-to-day learning.
Creativity throughout the Program
A project of Transition School

Introduction

The program at Transition School is child and process oriented. Attention is given to our students’ academic progress, motivation, attitude, and the ability to work in a group. We value practices that heighten observation, concentration, self-awareness and creativity. With this project of ‘Creativity throughout the Program’, we aimed to identify key features that enable the development of students’ creativity. Our plan was to observe and be more aware of the role that creativity plays at school. Throughout the school year we tried to use and develop our ideas in class (in the projects and other work that we do), and to share our ideas and observations.

Description of project

At the beginning of the school year (July 2016), the teachers of Transition School had several discussions about the role of creativity in the classroom and in the school. One of our questions was, “What can we, as teachers, do to enhance the development of aspects of creativity in the children and ourselves?” Many ideas emerged and as a result of this, we decided that teachers would test their ideas and their plans in the classroom. We planned for a study day later in the school year. At the study day, a group of teachers would present some of the research that they had done on creativity in the classroom, and teachers could add to this by sharing their own experiences.

The teachers ended up having two sessions. In the first one, we watched documentary clips by two well-known authors and educators stressing the importance of giving the children the opportunity to develop creativity. This was appreciated by the teachers and led to a lot of discussion and general sharing of ideas. Some of the points that came out were:

- It is important to vary the way the classes and assignments are given. Choices in the way the students present their assignments add a sense of freedom and encourage creativity.
- Students can be encouraged to have fulfillment and pride in what they do.
- Using technology to enhance learning helps students enjoy developing creative research skills.
- Many types of learning materials can be used, including books, internet, DVDs and YouTube.
- Remember to encourage kids to take risks and make mistakes if necessary. Many children are afraid to make mistakes and they look for quick answers. The way others react (both children and teachers) may block children from being creative.
- Learning should be fun. We can help provide the tools to make learning enjoyable through activities, interaction and choice.
- We can encourage the development of discussion skills. Discussions get students thinking more critically about the material, and help them learn to better communicate their ideas and opinions. Discussions also challenge students to listen to others’ opinions and think critically about their contributions and ideas. They give the opportunity to challenge each other intelligently and build off of each other’s ideas.

Following are some examples of how teachers used creativity in the classroom this year.
Creativity in Grade 1

- **Songs and rhymes:** We used a number of songs and rhymes to learn and memorize things such as the sounds of the alphabet and ‘doubles’ in arithmetic. When we did our dinosaur project, I had the children recite dinosaur poems by Giles Andreae at the parents’ open house. When starting the rainforest project one of my students asked me if there wasn’t a song for this. I searched on YouTube and found a song teaching the layers of the rainforest.

- **Creative writing:** In the beginning of the first grade there is only so much independence and creativity that can be expected from the students. They have a lot of ideas but are not able to write them, since they don’t know how to write so many words yet. Therefore we tended to do brainstorms together that resulted in a text that they then copied off the blackboard. We have been writing stories with famous children’s books as models, for example *If the Dinosaurs Came Back* by Bernard Most, and *Clifford* by Norman Bridwell. Sometimes the teachers would write on a piece of paper that they the children then copied. (I am not sure if any of these methods were beneficial for their creativity.)

  Many of the first graders would get stuck on spelling rather than creating, and many wanted the teacher to do most of the work for them. At one point I started to ignore all spelling mistakes and encouraged them to just write freely and do their best with the spelling. (Some of the parents weren’t so crazy about this.) Once the class had knowledge about basic phonic sounds, everything got much easier and the children became more confident writers. In the third term we wrote acrostic poems and cinquain poems with very diverse results.

Creativity in Grade 3

In the third grade class we did many different things in order to stimulate the children’s creativity. We used music, singing, and art, and we decorated our working spaces to inspire creativity. We had things growing in the garden, and the children could see how the plants grew, bloomed and blossomed. We utilized the garden space to work on creative projects.

- **Poetry:** When we did our poetry project we went outside and closed our eyes. The children spent a moment concentrating on the things they could feel with their five senses. This helped put them in a creative space so as to begin to write a poem. During this time we often worked in small groups or in pairs. This aided focus and collaboration, and helped creativity to surface.

- **Vocabulary cards:** When the children would read a book, they would select a word they didn’t know. To help learn these words they made flashcards with the meanings of the words, used the words in sentences, and made drawings to illustrate the meanings. This helped all the children creatively improve their vocabulary.

- **Math:** In math they learned how to use a calendar. While anticipating a 2-week school holiday, the children planned pleasurable activities and appointments on a 2-month calendar. Planning became a creative and enjoyable endeavor. When they had a problem-solving exercise, they learned to use different colored pencils or highlighters. This helped them focus on the details and solve the problem creatively.

- **Grammar:** One grammar activity that children enjoyed was choosing a favorite word for all the different parts of speech. They wrote these words on flashcards. The cards were hung on a bulletin board. All the children then had access to these words and used them to help build super sentences, remember parts of speech, and just see what words the others preferred.
**Indus Valley Civilization project (Grade 6)**

This year in the sixth grade history class, we studied the Indus Valley Civilization. The students made beautiful posters to show what they had learned. They worked in pairs and had a topic to research. They had a lot of freedom in how they wanted to present their topic. They wrote about it, and some made beautiful drawings to illustrate it. One of the pairs decided to write a fictional story about a man living in Mohenjo-Daro, in which they incorporated details and facts that they had learned about how people lived at that time. The posters, which the children have put up in our classroom, are all colorful and different and display the children’s amazing creativity.

**Creative presentations in Grade 8**

This year, one way that the eighth grade (‘the Dragons’) explored creativity in the classroom was through making presentations. In the first term, as part of their science project, each student chose a theme relating to the human body. They researched their chosen topic in books and on the Internet. With the help of a visiting graphic designer, they created PowerPoint presentations for their theme. Their creativity was expressed through making the slides for the PowerPoint. They chose images from the Internet as well as creating their own. The students had some basic guidelines and instruction on research techniques and on techniques of making a PowerPoint, and then they had a lot of freedom to explore and design their own presentation. They learnt how to give an interesting presentation, to engage their audience, and to elaborate on the text on the slides to give more information. Their parents were invited to watch their presentations.

Later in the year, as part of a research project on plastics, the students had the opportunity to put their skills into practice again. In pairs or individually, students researched one of the seven plastic resin codes that had been assigned to them. As a way of integrating their learning, they made a presentation to the fourth graders. Each group decided how they would like to present their resin code. Some made oral presentations, while other groups chose to make PowerPoint presentations, using the skills they had developed earlier in the year.

The Dragons’ final project this year combined a presentation of their field trip to Mundanthurai with the work they had done in music class. The trip to Mundanthurai was a four-day outing to a tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu. The students used their photos from the trip, maps and other resources to make a visual presentation. Everybody shared their images from the trip, and each student chose the images they needed to go with their oral presentation. Each student chose a topic of interest from the trip, researched their topic, wrote up the research, and matched it with the images they had chosen. Music they had written was used to introduce the slideshow. Additionally, some students had practiced songs by known artistes that they admired, and these were interspersed throughout the presentation. This project gave students the opportunity for a lot of individual expression, while also culminating in a performance that involved the whole group.

**‘Moments of creativity’ in Grade 7**

In seventh grade we took opportunities to add ‘moments of creativity’ – ideas that spontaneously arise – to the school day. This year after studying the laws of the pendulum in science class, someone came up with the idea to try to build a bigger pendulum and hang it in the classroom. We had to think about how to do this with the materials that we had, and once accomplished the children proudly showed it to parents and friends.

Related to creativity was our class “Greece Day” held at the end of the second term. The students dressed in toga-type clothing and prepared to play a quiz game on ancient Greece. They got into two groups and helped each other review what we had been learning on ancient Greece. We then played the game in which they were asked questions about what we had been studying. Many of the students described this activity as the most fun day in second term.
Hula Hoops Drill in ATB (Grade 4)

This year in Awareness Through the Body (ATB) we proposed to the 4th grade children a project to help them develop their creative and cooperative skills: they needed to create their own drill of hula-hoops movements and set it to a short piece of music we gave them. During the previous years these children had already explored hula hoops and ribbons with a sequence of movements prepared by us. The focus at that time was on developing visual and auditory attention, coordination, fluidity of movement and precision. The amount of interventions, input and guidance from our side was very high. This time, the focus of the activity shifted to fostering creativity and self-motivation, becoming more aware of the interactions between oneself and the group, and learning how to find solutions and how to work harmoniously together.

The first few classes were devoted to learning the musical phrases of the piece of music we chose. Once the majority was at ease with the musical phrases, we divided the group into two. Each group had to choose a person that would act as “facilitator” and another as “assistant”. They started to explore and experiment, coming up with ideas, finding movements, trying them out, adding new ones, taking away or modifying previous ideas/movements, and eventually creating a full drill which would fit into the musical phrases we gave them.

During the process many stressful situations arose: some children did not want to participate anymore, some were unable to do a certain movement, some wanted absolutely to impose their own idea and yet others could not sustain focused attention. When they got stuck in any situation we briefly intervened by posing some questions for them to reflect on what was happening, and encouraged/coached them to find a solution.

At the end of each class we offered a time for sharing about their experience and the difficulties encountered in the work or in the group dynamics. During these conversations we helped them to speak in a respectful way, to listen to each other and to remain focused on finding solutions rather than on the difficulties. This sharing was really helpful for them to be able to observe themselves with more detachment and clarity.

As the work proceeded we noticed that the children focused progressively more on their strengths rather than weaknesses, and on appreciating each other rather than blaming, and that they were more able to learn from their mistakes and to maintain the will to persevere to conclude the project.

After a month both groups were ready to show the result of their work. They were very proud and enthusiastic about it, and they performed with a high level of quality and precision, which they had never reached previously. They ended up with a general sense of achievement and satisfaction.

What we could observe is that the level of motivation, eagerness, and willingness to work to collaborate and to overcome difficulties was much higher this time because the children were actively participating in the creative process. The drill became something dear to them because was their own achievement.

Conclusion

These are just a few of the many projects and activities that the classes worked on this year. One of our conclusions was that creativity is not only in the products of attractive bulletin boards and student-made projects and displays, but is also in the way that the children produce them. Creativity involves the freedom and encouragement to make choices, to take risks and to think imaginatively and in a way that tries to serve a purpose. The nurturing of creativity needs a supportive learning environment that encourages the participants (both students and teachers).

We would like to continue this observation next year, in conjunction with the further development of the Transition School Student Portfolio. We will explore how the portfolio can better report and evaluate the growth of students’ creativity.
Annexure:
Arts & Crafts at Transition School

Introduction

The approach in Arts & Craft this school year was to work from a curriculum that we have been developing over the last two years. We had created a base of projects, crafts and activities that 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 mediums. We have created many projects that teach the kids about the classic artists such as Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, Leonardo da Vinci, Mondrian, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Henry Matisse, Gustav Klimt, Andy Warhol and Keith Haring. We have also spent a lot of time creating projects and crafts for the younger grades that create a pyramid of learning and a foundation for their future art projects. The goal for us is always “to have fun”, aware that through humor, amusement and perseverance the learning process becomes more effective, and creativity and social life are improved.

Activities of the year

Each year we try and interact with the main class teachers and explore different project ideas that link main subjects to Arts & Crafts. For example, our fourth graders studied birds in their main class. So we created four different projects: folk art, mobiles, drawing, and collage, that would teach the kids using images of birds. Another project that we really enjoyed doing was with the fifth graders, to create puppets and scenery for the puppet theatre project they were working on with a main class teacher.

The Arts & Crafts team wanted to focus on creativity and finding projects to encourage the kids to work with their individual strengths. With the fifth and sixth graders we made a project that helped them connect with each other as a group and allowed them to use the skills that they felt were their strongest. We asked the kids to divide into pairs or groups to create a board game. They were requested to come up with a concept, a design, rules, and then build the game together. This allowed them to showcase their strength and creativity within a working group.

Along with these projects we also wanted to create more of an ‘alternative Arts & Crafts’ that allows the kids to explore different types of art and media. In collaboration with Aurovilian artists and professionals, we offered projects using airbrush painting, street art, woodwork, and carpentry.

Future direction

The Arts & Crafts team has been focused on teaching the students about visual arts and art history with a strong influence in crafts, painting and drawing. Our goal for next year is to expand the Arts & Crafts curriculum we have built to include more of the other major arts, and we want to work more with the music and classroom teachers to give the kids a wider selection of ‘what art is’.
SAIIER sub-units:

Outreach schools

1. Aikiyam School
2. Aranya Forest
3. Arulvazhi Education Centre
4. Aurohamsadhwani Arts Centre
5. Auroville Sports Research Centre
6. Ilaignarkal Education Centre
7. Isai Ambalam School
8. Kuilapalayam Cultural Centre
9. Life Education Centre
10. Oli School
Awareness program on biodiversity conservation and snakes
A project of Aranya Forest

Introduction

Aranya Forest is service unit aiming to spread awareness for teenagers, school kids, teachers, local groups and NGOs about natural and cultural perspectives, ecology and the environment. The land of Aranya was a soil reclamation project done on 100 acres, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), after which Aranya community came into existence. Aranya Forest has been taking up various activities to explore nature with school students, as the land slowly returns to forest.

Description of project

We have a regular program of school visits to Aranya, where children learn about trees, soil reclamation, wild animals, birds, snakes and human impacts on habitat. Most groups are from government schools.

Two years ago we started developing an Adventure Zone, which now has a rope bridge, flying fox, rope ladder and tree hut. We plan to continue developing green playground spaces where children can experience a connection and love for nature.

Outcomes

This year, 7,300 school children, teachers and members of the public visited Aranya and took part in its programmes.

More and more people come increasingly every year. We are happy that more and more people benefit from this project.

For the immediate future we are planning more camps specifically for Auroville children and Auroville Outreach children.
Green Playground Spaces
A project of Aranya Forest

Introduction
The project aims at creating innovative play areas in Aranya Forest for children. The first phase of the project was to do a study on the possibilities that have been created and what could be adapted in Aranya – this was completed last year. This year we built some of the constructions.

Description of project
The purpose of this project is to create a state-of-the-art green playground. Nature play is about kids falling in love with nature. Children’s nature play is a powerful conservation strategy intended to help create a larger, stronger future constituency for the environment.

Many children already visit Aranya to explore and take part in activities there specifically designed for children. Our space called the Biodiversity Conservation and Education Centre acts as a base for activities and overnight stay. The newly-created Adventure Zone with its rope bridge and zip line was made for children to experience the unique landscape and enjoy the outdoors.

This year the following learning facilities were created:
1) Place for small children to play in mud
2) Hut made of natural materials
3) Bamboo structure for climbing
4) ‘Caves’, underground spaces

The following are planned, still to be built:
5) Cycle and walking path
6) Habitat for animals

This project will enhance the possibilities for the children, providing opportunities for their experiential learning from nature.

Like everything else of value in Auroville, we hope to create a play space that is relevant to the Future and will set an example for like-minded others to emulate.

Reflections
This project adheres to the suggestion made by the Mother regarding conducive place for children to experience nature. This project is one of very few such projects that exist in the country.
Arulvazhi Education Centre

Introduction

In Tamil, ‘Arulvazhi’ means ‘Way of Grace’. This education centre, situated near the Promesse Community of Auroville, caters to the educational and cultural needs of the children aged 3 to 18 years of the neighbouring 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

Arulvazhi has seven areas of activities:

1. Crèche and kindergarten group where 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.
2. Primary school group with activities of daily physical exercises, stories, songs and drawing classes in the evenings.
3. Computer classes for beginners, held in the evenings.
4. Yoga asana practice in the mornings, facilitated by a qualified yoga teacher.
5. Adolescent girls’ classes held in evenings, focusing on health education and social awareness, particularly in relation to gender problems and cultural expressions.
6. ‘Good sportsman’ programmes, held in the evenings for a group of children.
7. Weekly study of Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri in Tamil, as well as cultural education through slokas and stories.

Highlights and events of this year:

• The school’s annual programme with a yoga demonstration, cultural activities and an exhibition was celebrated on 13 April 2016.
• In May 2016 our students went on an educational tour to Maharishi Vedathri yoga centre, Kodaikanal (for trekking), and the Murugan temple in Palani hills.
• Our students gave a yoga demonstration on 21 June 2016, as part of the International Day of Yoga programme at Bharat Nivas.
• On 7 August 2016 our students visited the Chengalpet Sri Aurobindo Centre and participated in the celebration with a yoga demo, cultural programme and a talk on Sri Aurobindo given to the audience.
• Sri Aurobindo’s birthday and India’s Independence Day were celebrated with flag hoisting and singing of patriotic songs on 15 August 2016.
• We held a Navarathri celebration from 3 October to 11 October, culminating in a visit to Ilaignarkal Education Centre. The inner and cultural significance of Navarathri was shared by all the participants.
• A seminar was organised on 26 October 2016 on the theme of “Auroville and Tamil Nadu” wherein about 25 delegates from different parts of Tamil Nadu participated.
• On The Mother’s Mahasamadhi day, 19 November 2016, the students and staff paid their homage in The Mother’s room in the Ashram, and on 24 November, Siddhi Day, they visited Sri Aurobindo’s room.

• Christmas was celebrated on 24 December 2016 and Pongal festival on 13 January 2017 with usual gaiety.

• Our students competed in the International Yoga Competitions in Puducherry on 2 January 2017, and got prizes in their respective age categories.

• Republic Day was celebrated on 26 January 2017 with flag hoisting and singing of patriotic songs.

• The Mother’s birthday on 21 February 2017 and Auroville’s birthday on 28 February 2017 were celebrated with elation.

• On 28 March 2017 our students concentrated in the inner chamber of Matrimandir and also went around the Matrimandir area.

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

The impact of these programmes becomes quite visible when relatives and friends of the students, from other rural areas, visit them and see the difference. We see a ripple effect of whatever they imbibe spreading among the children’s peer groups, in their homes, with friends and outside.
Aurohamsadhwani Arts Centre

Introduction

Aurohamsadhwani Arts Centre runs music activities for Auroville students and village students. We have been running for over ten years with a team of five members from Auroville. Professional teachers teach our students with five different music classes. The students are of ages 4 to 50 years, including boys, girls and women.

Activities of the year

We held our regular classes five days a week at the Last School heritage building. Keyboard and Guitar classes were held Monday, Thursday, and Friday evenings from 6.30pm to 9.30pm. Vocal music, Veena and Bharata Natyam classes were held Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 1.00pm to 5.00pm.

Participation in each class:

- Veena class: 14 children, 2 adults
- Bharat Natyam class: 20 children
- Vocal class: 7 children (vocal class took a break for 8 months)
- Keyboard class: 8 children, 1 adult
- Guitar class: 7 children
- Total students: 59

Programmes attended by our students this year:

- 6 Bharatha Natyam students danced at Irumbai temple for Salangai Pooja.
- 3 students participated in a dance programme at Puducherry temple for Sivarathiri Pooja.
- In Puducherry our veena students attended 9 programmes at the temple for Navarathiri Vizha.
- Two Veena programmes were performed at Maruvathur and Koothanoor temples for Saraswathy Pooja.
- Our students celebrated Thyagaraja Arathana at Oli School, and veena students gave a performance.

Goals for next year

1. The teachers will teach a higher level, along with the advancement of the students.
2. Through practice we hope to prepare five Bharatha Natyam students to perform at the next Salangai Pooja.
3. Some of our students plan to achieve their next levels in Keyboard in the coming year.
Auroville Sports Resource Center

Introduction

Auroville Sports Resource Center (AVSRC) has this year been active with varied activities relating to sports, women and culture, all of which lead toward human unity. AVSRC plays an active role in supporting and encouraging the village youths to improve their skills in sports and games, through friendly matches, state-level tournaments and annual tournaments. AVSRC is also currently supporting Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG) in its efforts to establish an overall organization for the development of sports and culture for youths of the Auroville bio-region, as well as the formation of youth clubs in the surrounding villages of Auroville. Through these activities, AVSRC hopes to demonstrate involvement and commitment to bringing people together in mutual interest through sports, and to strengthen a sports culture in the villages of the Auroville bio-region.

Activities of the year

First, we would like to introduce our new Weltwaerts volunteer: Miss Luise Garbretch (Lulu) from Germany. Coming out of high school in Germany, Lulu has been volunteering for a year with AVSRC. Lulu’s support and help is very well-received in the sports training of schoolchildren at Edayanchavadi Government middle school, and at the Auroville-managed higher secondary Kulapalayam Trust School. Her computer skills in secretarial, graphic and website update work have been very useful and she has been helping at the AVSRC office at New Creation Sports Ground. Lulu also helped with the AVSRC–AVAG–Dehashakthi co-coordinated bio-regional sports and cultural meets.

AVSRC supported the following events this year:

- Volleyball and cricket played in the villages and at New Creation sports ground
- Christmas day games, athletics and cultural activities at Certitude
- Table tennis matches
- Auroville’s birthday week basketball league at Certitude
- The participation of Auroville Kabaddi club and Auroville Tennis club in the state-level and state championship tournaments in Puducherry state

Furthermore, AVSRC also facilitated the following Auroville school children to participate as players representing the Puducherry State Basketball Association in the All India National Basketball Championship:

- The girls: Aswini, Nila, Varsha, Devasri and boys: Gopal, Bala, Logesh, Ganesh and Deepan were players in the 42nd sub-junior All India National Basketball Championship from 2nd - 8th February 2016 at the Rajeev Gandhi indoor stadium, Puducherry.
- The girls: Nila, Akhila, Priyamvada, Priyanka and boys: Navaneeth, Rahul, Dhushanth and Auroson participated as players and Mr. Jothi as coach in the 67th All India Junior National Basketball Championship from 1st to 8th May, 2016 held at Indira Gandhi stadium in Puducherry.
- The girls: Varsha, Devashri and Sadhana and boys: Auroson, Edwin, and Ashwin participated as players and Mr. Jothi as coach in the 33rd All India Youth National Basketball Champion-
ship held in Hassan, Karnataka from 19\textsuperscript{th} - 26\textsuperscript{th} November 2016 representing Puducherry state.

The Puducherry State Basketball Association held its annual state basketball championship for the year 2016-17 at the Indira Gandhi Stadium from 12\textsuperscript{th} to 16\textsuperscript{th} April 2017. Seven children from Deepanam School and Transition School (Shiva, Kishaan, Shanthan, Sajan, Praveen, Varun, and Auro Ram) participated in this championship for the first time, representing the Aspiration basketball club. The boys: Bala, Sudarshan, Suriyan, Maneesh, Vishal, Ajay, Rudra and Sudhir won the runner-up trophy in the sub-junior boys category. The boys: Guru, Navaneeth, Bhakthi, Dushanth and Gopal won the runner-up trophy in the junior boys category. And finally the Auroville junior girls: Akhila, Nila, Priyanka, Varsha, Devashri, Saundariya, and Panimalar won the winner’s trophy in their category.

The village volleyball training which began last year (initiated by AVSRC with training carried out by Mr. Senthil) is going on successfully. Engagement is with village youth in Nadukuppam, Bommayarpalayam, Kuilappalayam, Bharathipuram, Edayanchavadi, Kottakarai, Irumbai and Annainagar. Senthil’s training focuses not only on volleyball skills, but also on keeping the village clean of plastics and other non-biodegradable wastes discarded by villagers and visitors alike. Senthil visits two villages per day: one in the early morning from 6:00 to 7:30am and another in the evening from 5:00 to 6:30pm. On Sunday mornings, two teams from two different villages are invited to come over to New Creation sports ground to play friendly matches together with the Auroville volleyball team. These friendly matches pave the way for a cordial relationship between the villages and with Auroville.

AVSRC also supported the Women’s Day celebration at New Creation sportsground organized by the Kuilappalayam women’s groups. It was a one-day program of games, cultural activities, Kolam competitions and sharing lunch with one another in a very harmonious and joyful celebration.

Overall AVSRC provides an open platform for the youths in and around Auroville to interact, participate in events, upgrade skills and document their achievements.

Future activities

AVSRC along with YouthLink will be organizing an event in Auroville for the International Day of Yoga, which the United Nations has announced for the 21\textsuperscript{st} of June, 2017.

In preparation of the 50\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of Auroville, AVSRC has been in contact with architects, designers, contractors, and programmers to get ready for potential funding both in capital expenditures and activities. Various ministries in Central and State Government have indicated that there is a possibility for releasing substantial grants to AVSRC. No money has yet been released, but it might happen on short notice, especially in view of the fact that the Prime Minister has accepted an invitation to visit Auroville during the Anniversary celebration. The interaction between Auroville and its neighboring communities is an important feature of the program for the 50\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary celebration.

Reflections

Education and especially physical education is a suitable discipline for creating good-will, mutual interaction and joyful exchanges in sports and culture. While obviously material help in cash and kind is necessary, it is not the most important. AVSRC has seen how much can be done with how little. When faced with difficulties and even problems, the different communities inside and outside of Auroville often experience that there is a space transcending these conflicts in which we all can meet and enjoy each other’s participation.
Conclusion

While Auroville is growing 50 years old, the multifaceted international city-in-progress is realizing more and more that the next step in its growth lies in inter-connectedness with its neighbors of the five Panchayats, its home-state Tamil Nadu, its host-country India, its continent Asia and the world at large. Auroville through all its activities, like AVSRC, is developing partnerships with places and activities congenial to its aims and objectives (such as with the Weltwaerts organization funded by the German government). It also realizes that many of Auroville’s accomplishments over the last five decades have relevance to the world: in skills training, building technology, learning aids, discoveries in nutrition and health-practices, and in methods of self-awareness, self-discovery and yoga.
Auroville Rural Volleyball Tournament
A project of Auroville Sports Resource Center

Overview

Auroville Sports Resource Center (AVSRC) with the support of SAIIER and many Auroville units has been supporting an Auroville bioregional volleyball tournament every year at New Creation sports ground. This year’s tournament was from December 31st, 2016 to January 7th, 2017.

The bioregional annual tournament is extremely helpful to Auroville and the villages’ girls, boys and youth who take part in a joyful manner and develop their volleyball sports skills year by year.

Planning and organization

The volleyball team members met at the New Creation sports ground to plan the tournament.
The steps were:

1. Logistics: We decided to conduct three different tournaments category-wise: girls; boys under fourteen; and male open tournament. We decided to invite 28 teams from Auroville’s surrounding 22 villages. We fixed the dates for the tournament to be December 31st 2016 through January 7th 2017.

2. Communications: We announced the tournament dates and times to various sports clubs in Auroville and to villages’ teams. The villages’ teams were equally shuffled and scheduled with fixed times.

3. Site preparation and supplies: The volleyball court was cleaned up and a new net was fixed for the tournament. We purchased new balls and also rewards like sports materials and cotton t-shirts for the winners and runners-up. We planned for avoiding plastic bags and avoiding vehicle parking nearby the sports ground, to make sure we do not harm the environment while enjoying sports.

4. Fundraising: Auroville rural volleyball sports groups approached various Auroville units to collect additional funds to meet the expenses. We are grateful to the unit-holders for supporting and encouraging this sports activity every year in favor of Auroville’s and the bioregion’s youth. We received donations (cash or kind) from: AVSRC, Maroma, Flame Pottery, Miniature, Auromode Trust, Svaram, Auromics, Palmyra, Coffee Ideas, Pour Tous Purchasing Service, and Naturellement.

5. Provisions: Thanks to the donations, we arranged for snacks, breakfast, water, buttermilk, lemon juice, simple lunch and tea for all the players and guests during the three days of the tournament.

6. Special guest: We invited chief guest Ms. Savitri, physical education coordinator at Aikiyam School, to meet the players and distribute all gift prizes for the girls’ winners and runners-up.

Tournament outcomes

A total of 28 teams from 22 villages participated in the competition: a total of 420 players. This includes 5 girls’ teams (48 players).

AVSRC had undertaken training of 9 village teams (about 280 boys) with a sports trainer, and supported their participation in this tournament.

The Auroville rural volleyball tournament is bringing a growing sports awareness for girls. It encourages the villages' junior teams to come together regularly at the sports ground to demonstrate their team spirit and skills. At the tournament Ms. Savitri advised the youth girls' teams that sports activities are very important for human life. Sports give us personality development, a well-functioning body, and an active life. She advised that wherever you go, do not forget to include sports activity in your life.

Conclusion

This tournament brought all volleyball players from surrounding villages together in a gathering of team spirit, friendly competition and unity.
Ilaignarkal Education Centre

Introduction

The programmes offered at Ilaignarkal impart basic education to workers and their wards of Auroville hailing from the immediate neighbourhood of the Auroville region. We aim to help in bridging a healthy relationship and understanding between Auroville the international city and the ancient Tamil villages through social, cultural, economic and health programmes.

Programmes of the year

- **Regular classes:** These impart basic knowledge in various skills to suit the needs of students of all age groups, guided by trained staff and resource persons. Classes this year included Tamil, English, computer languages, arts and crafts, cookery, body awareness, health and healing through Siddha medicine, hatha yoga and breathing exercises. We conduct classes from 9:30am to 6:30pm, allowing the students to choose their own schedule.

- **Teacher training programme:** A value-oriented education and joyful learning programme was offered to the teachers of panchayat union schools of the Auroville region, i.e. Irumbai, Edayanchavadi, Kottakarai and Kulaipayalam. About 8 teachers with 70 children under the collaborative education scheme supported by the Department of Education, Vanur region, attended our classes twice a week for the past one year. We are happy to share our space, facilities and expertise to help them to move forward and co-evolve with Auroville people.

- **Summer camp:** This year we conducted our summer camp with 30 children from Auroville workers' families from neighbouring villages. The main theme was ‘water’: how to protect and save water. The children performed theatre on water, and had a field trip to Irumbai lake. Parents enjoyed the open house evening.

- **Regular Viazhavattam:** This year we focused on Tamil Bhakti literature. Prof. Arunan along with Prof. Meenakshi carried the lecture cum discussion sessions. Around 30 participants attended these sessions.

- **Bharati Educare:** Girl children from Auroville workers' families getting foster care through our school met every fortnight with their guardians, to evaluate their progress in health education and creative expressions. We have a lot of interactive sessions with the nearly 20 children along with their parents or guardians.

- **“Auroville Seythimadal”:** We published 12 issues of our monthly Tamil language newsletter “Auroville Seythimadal”. Beneficiaries included schools, libraries, communities in and around Auroville, and many institutions in South India. Through the newsletter we reach out and share knowledge with nearly 5,000 readers (500 printed copies).

Special activities of the year

- **Tamil New Year celebration:** The aim was to introduce the Tamil lunar calendar and celebrate the summer season. We shared our local experience of how to protect ourselves with right food, clothing, protected herbal water, and the right type of cosmetics, and shared other artistic expressions and utility items suitable for hot sunny days. We had a mini exhibition which highlighted Tamil literature. References from Sri Aurobindo, poet Bharati and other great personalities were also on display.
• **Children’s literature:** In collaboration with Sahitya Akademi of India, Tamil Heritage Centre, and Aikiyam School, we conducted a one-day seminar in children’s literature. We interacted with great writers, local teachers, members of NGOs serving the cause of child welfare, and friends in Auroville.

• **Kolu celebration:** The Festival of Evolution was celebrated as usual for 10 days in October 2016. We displayed colorful dolls in the library hall which attracted hundreds of school children and their parents. Every day group singing and sacred cooking classes were conducted. It was a special happy Dasara where we could appreciate the evolution of our human divine life described by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

• **Pongal festival:** The flavours and colours of Pongal were celebrated to educate the Auroville community and neighbouring villages. Sweet rice pongal and vegetable curry made from 28 seasonal vegetables were cooked and served for all the attendees. A kolam drawing competition was conducted, and traditional sports and games attracted both adults and children. Our school campus was filled with the joy of music and dance from local to global.

**Future direction**

We plan to continue our Siddha healing way in day-to-day life, to be expressed in our daily food practices, bathing and care of body, cosmetics, improved safe drinking water and natural beverages.

We are ready to publish a collection of Tamil songs for children, “Marakkilai oonjal” (“A swing from the bough of a tree”), with illustrations. It will benefit kids aspiring to learn Tamil, teachers who teach Tamil language, and parents sharing their time with children.

Our eco-friendly school building with rooftop solar panel system is visited by many students of architecture and sustainable learning centers. We may need more support in improving the structure with a few more facilities. We are concerned about the drying up of our donated seed money in Unity Fund, and feel we need more economic support.
Isai Ambalam School

Overview

Isai Ambalam is an outreach school located near Alankuppam that caters to around 95 students from different villages in the west of Auroville. The mission of the school is, “Creation of a learning environment in which the students and the teachers reach the highest mental and spiritual consciousness possible for one’s level, so as to live, learn, teach and function from there.”

The school is run by 6 Aurovilian and 4 non-Aurovilian teachers. In addition, every day 5 volunteers from Aura Auro Design engage with the children for one-and-a-half hours. We have school from 8:30am to 4:30pm. We also increase our engagement with the children with sleepovers and special programs on Saturdays.

This year we engaged the students through several new approaches:

1. Values and critical skills program
2. Education by Design
3. STEM Land at Isai Ambalam, opened this year

These were in addition to our approach of using Individual Learning Programmes for each child.

Values and critical skills program: (See following report: ‘Values and Education by Design’)

Education by Design

We had worked with Education by Design quite successfully when the school worked with high school dropouts. Perhaps this success had made us assume that this way of learning requires the level of maturity exhibited by older children. So we had not used this technique with the primary school children before – but this year decided to try it.

There are two major parts in Education by Design (EBD):

1. How a problem can be solved through a collaborative learning community.
2. How ‘critical skills’ and ‘disposition qualities’ are used to solve a given problem. Critical skills include problem-solving, decision-making, leadership skills, ability to organize work, management, and critical and creative thinking. Disposition qualities include ethical character, self-direction, and communication skills.

We did four EBD projects with the students this year:

1. (Real life challenge:) Cleanliness and order as organized by the children in the school.
2. (Real life challenge:) Understanding the ground water situation that hit the school.
3. (Academic challenge:) How to estimate and measure the specific volumes of a pond that the 3rd and 4th graders created over a few months.
4. (Academic challenge:) Understanding ancient Indian administration and is implications today.

The pond created by the 3rd and 4th graders came about in response to looking at the water situation at our school. What started with a water problem and a feeling of scarcity was transformed by the children into a sense of abundance. The children worked with sincerity and learned mathematics, life skills, and values while doing it. We inaugurated the pond before the end of the year; the children put fishes in the pond and they now use this as a quiet space to watch the fish and to draw sitting around it. Even parents who had expressed unhappiness that their children were
working with their hands during their breaks and sleepovers, and coming home with dirty clothes, were thrilled to see what their children had created.

Perhaps more so than the children, as teachers our own understanding of EBD was further refined through our experiences. In the past we used this method to convey information that we knew to the children, through activities done in an interesting way. But this year we reflected deeper into what we were trying to achieve in critical skills and values, and focused on the creation of a collaborative learning community among children and teachers. This was a turning point for us as we noticed how the environment we created along with the children helped even those children who were generally not engaged in the classroom or activities.

**STEM Land opening at the school**

Some of the 7th graders had been visiting STEM Land at Udavi School on Saturdays when they had no school at Isai Ambalam. They were excited about the prospect of starting a small STEM Land at their own school. They created a space by cleaning out a store room and organizing learning materials in that space.

This smaller STEM Land has become an interesting space with a lot of focus on hands-on work and through which students actively engage with what is happening at the school.

**Individual Learning Programmes**

We continued with the first five steps of our eight-step plan (described in earlier reports):

1. **Designing an Individual Learning Programme for each learner.**

   Individual Learning Programmes were written for all the primary school (1st to 5th grade) students in the first term. With these we focused on individual learning difficulties and learning strengths.

   In the second and third terms, the tools of ‘teaching path’ and ‘learning path’ were introduced for the teachers and students. With these we write where the student is in regard to a specific goal, what are steps he is going to take to achieve the goal, and what is the final outcome after completing the steps.

   The upper primary (6th and 7th grade) students were also happy and comfortable with this individual learning plan process. From the second term onward they wrote their own visual learning paths. At the beginning they found it difficult to grasp the process, but gradually it developed. Whenever they needed help they could go to the teachers for clarification. They were able to become aware of their growth and progress toward achieving specific goals.

2. **Creating awareness of the Learning Programmes for the learners so that they assume ownership of their learning and take active interest in carrying it out.**

   5th, 6th and 7th grade students were fully aware of their Learning Programmes. With the support of the teachers and volunteers of STEM Land, they took ownership of their learning. They created learning materials and helped each other. They were able to track their own learning progress.

3. **Use of effective educational approaches for the implementation of the Learning Programme of each learner.**

   This year we had 4 new teachers. We could not implement all the approaches effectively; but will continue working to improve.

4. **Using Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation for evaluating the learning outcomes of each learner.**

   At the end of each week the teacher assessed the students’ learning competencies with oral and written tests.
5. Designing a special curriculum for the use of Computer and Internet to facilitate and accelerate the process of implementation.

We organized computer classes for students of 1st to 7th grades. According to the level of the students, Mr. Siva the computer teacher planned and reorganized their learning. Most of the students were eager to learn through the use of the computer. They learned basic programs and made presentations with PowerPoint, and some learnt to program on Scratch.

Volunteers at the school

1. Srinithi and Angela from Ajim Premji foundation, Bangalore came to Isai Ambalam for their internship program. They helped the students with English and reading.
2. Rakesh from Bombay came to school and helped the children with science. He also taught Hindi to the teachers.
3. Elton from Dubai helped 5th and 6th graders to write English sentences on given concepts.
4. Deoyani from Auroville taught the students about groundwater and to how to store rainwater in the land.
5. Ananadaswamy from Chennai helped 5th and 6th grade students with social science lessons through mini projects.
6. Naveen, Arun, Bala, Pratap and Vaidegi from STEM Land (Aura Auro Design) helped 3rd to 7th graders in maths, science and social science. They did many fun activities and made the students curious to learn new things.

Special events

1. This year 3rd and 7th grade students went on an educational trip to Pitchavaram and Chithambaram temple.
2. We held 5 sleepovers at school for 3rd to 7th graders. They watched English movies and played fun maths games, and had a bonfire.
3. 40 students from 3rd to 7th grade visited Aranya Forest. There they have learned the names of many varieties of trees, birds and animals.
4. We started offering Saturday school where we engaged with children in hands-on carpentry work, electronics, and garden work, and used English as a language of communication.
5. 17 students participated in a Judo competition in Pondicherry conducted by the Judo Association. The students performed exceptionally well, and 16 students were awarded medals (6 gold medals, 5 silver medals and 5 bronze medals).
6. 5th and 6th grade students chose 4 lessons on their own and created 4 plays on the chosen topics. They also chose a story told by The Mother and performed it as a play.

Reflections

The most meaningful exercise this year was finding the threads of values and experiential learning that could bind the many actions of teachers and volunteers together. The focus on values and experiential learning also helped children realize that the difficulties they face and transcend can help them grow.

Isai Ambalam School is unregistered and many parents take their children out of the school as they get to older grades. However, this year the parents asked us to start an 8th grade so they can continue sending their children to the school.

The transformations that happened this year capture what can be achieved through education both for Auroville and the bio-region.
Values and Education by Design
A project of Isai Ambalam School

Introduction

This year we applied two special methodologies at Isai Ambalam School: the learning of ‘values’ by both students and teachers, and the application of the Education by Design (EBD) approach. We aimed to create a collaborative learning community where all the learners supported and helped each other in their learning.

What is meant by values?

Values are the base of a human. Sri Aurobindo in the book “The Mother” has vividly explained values, by means of Mahasaraswathi, Mahakali, Maheshwari and Mahalakshmi which represent The Mother’s manifestations of Knowledge, Strength, Harmony and Perfection respectively. Mr. Subash conducted a 3 hours’ workshop for selected teachers to facilitate their understanding of these aspects (see Annexure).

Later, teachers Ms. Nirmala and Ms. Kavitha conducted a one-day workshop for other teachers about values. This workshop raised questions like: What is a good value? Who according to you is a person of good values? Who do you like the most? Why do you like that person? By the end of the workshop, it was understood that all teachers had the thought that they would like to become a person with good values. Even then, we were not able to understand the values completely.

Hence it was decided to further our understanding through the 120 video lessons provided in the “Thalir Thiran Thittam”. (Thalir Thiran Thittam uses audiovisual technology to deliver life skills training to school students.) From the list of videos, students and teachers chose the values they wanted to learn about and develop. The teachers together chose 10 values and the students chose 9 values. We related these these 19 values to the 4 aspects of The Mother. For example, ‘goal setting’ we related to Maheshwari, ‘win with assertion’ to Mahakali, ‘win with teamwork’ to Mahalakshmi, and ‘win by handling criticism’ to Mahasaraswati.

And the values don’t act alone. For example, for intelligence to act, emotion should support. To complete a work perfectly, values related to emotion like patience, perseverance, and time management are required.

So, we learnt the values, not just as individual lessons but linking with the four aspects of The Mother, and by practicing them through life experiences.

How do these values work in our life?

In school life, many values are manifested in the day-to-day activities of students. However, more often than not, students are not aware of the values they are embodying. We are able to see the following amongst the students: the completion of a task without any lapse, desire to do a work perfectly, perseverance in completing an assignment, working with self-motivation, completion of multiple tasks by goal setting.

To understand how the values work in family life and what changes they can bring about, we watched the movie English Vinglish. The movie is about the stress faced by Sasi, a family-oriented woman, due to lack of English knowledge. She utilizes the opportunities to learn English, and towards the end she surprises everyone by speaking in English at her niece’s wedding. From what she says at the wedding, we were able to understand the family values like love, harmony, sacrifice, perseverance, self-confidence, helping each other.
What is Thalir Thiran Thittam? How are values learnt through it?

Thalir Thiran Thittam (TTT) was created by the organization ‘Aparajita’ in Madurai. They had listed out the values to be acquired by students of 1st to 12th standard. These values were converted into 120 video lessons. The teachers and students at Isai Ambalam chose the values that they wished to possess from this list.

All the teachers first watched the DVD on ‘Win by speaking well’. Role-play was demonstrated during every pause of the video. For example, one had to pick a lot, and perform role-play on what was written in it. A teacher picked a lot and it was to perform the scene of a principal questioning a daily late-comer. Two teachers acted out the scene. After the act, when feedback was asked, others said that the student did not face the principal, instead was looking elsewhere. Through the DVD they learnt that while talking, we should maintain eye contact with the other person, speak in correct tone, speak clearly and speak according to the situation.

Each teacher watched and understood their selected values through the respective DVDs.

Experiences of teachers acquiring values

Nirmala - “An Experience while I was using the Harmony Value in my work”

I am unable to convey my opinions to others, because if I share my opinions, I feel that our friendship will break or they may feel uncomfortable or the work will be stopped.

So, for this problem I planned to find a solution by watching the DVD about handling criticism without hurting anyone. I started watching the DVD. While I was watching the DVD, I understood how opinions can spoil the harmony between two people.

While I was watching the DVD my husband teased me, “before you brought writing works; now you are bringing DVDs. I am not able to watch the news channel”, and he went away. Then I continued watching the DVD. When he was listening to the DVD, he came and watched for 5 minutes. He appreciated our school, “You are doing very good job”. He was recalling that most of the Auroville meetings do not take any decision, because of not being able to handle criticism. I was really happy because he likes to watch the News channel, but he allowed me to watch the DVD and he understood my situation.

After watching the DVD I started thinking about myself: what are the mistakes that I have made?

- I am new to teaching 5th and 6th standard.
- I couldn't give clear ideas or opinions to those who seek for it.
- Before discussing a theme, I fixed the way of approach in my mind.
- I felt that my opinion was not worthy enough.
- I thought they would stop talking to me, if I give the wrong opinions.

These were the problems that I had in giving opinions to others.

So, I started working on this. I talked with Naveen and Bala who were working with me for 5th and 6th standard. There were some points which I had not been able to work out with them but which I wished to convey in a harmonious way. I discussed with them the points smoothly, and we continued talking about our students who are slow learners. We were very happy in this conversation. We talked deeply about each student. Then Bala, Naveen and I talked about the students’ present situation, and what they need to know according to their level to be completed. After a long discussion Naveen told me that he has to do a lot. This discussion gave him a clear idea about the students. I asked them whether I conveyed my opinion clearly or I confused you both. They told me, “Akka, You shared your opinion correctly with us. We need to concentrate on these 5 students through the new activities and new approaches”. I was very happy that I could convey my opinion to them clearly.

Through this activity I learnt to work in the group with harmony. I felt very happy when I was
working in the group. Now we get and share many ideas and opinions for a topic.

Pavithra – “My experience on Win with Assertion”

When people would come and ask me for suggestions for any work, I wouldn’t respond to them with full involvement. I would say, “Whatever you feel, you do that”. I felt that if I say my suggestion and they follow it, and if anything goes bad, they will blame me. So I would not express my suggestions to them.

But after watching the DVD about ‘Win with assertion’, I thought, why don’t we express our thoughts and suggestions to others' needs? Then I thought, if anyone asks me any suggestions on their needs, hereafter I will say my thoughts.

After two days, my husband’s niece came to me and asked, “What shall I study now?” She has completed her 12th grade, now she has to do her higher studies. So first I asked her, what is she thinking of studying? She said she wants to study D.T.Ed. Then I told her about my salary details, and she kept quiet for some time. Afterwards I told her, “If you would like to study for a teacher profession, first get a degree in your favourite subject, then you can do B.Ed in teacher education for two years”. Then she said ok, she felt happy about it.

Then I had a trust that I can say some good and suitable suggestions; if it is acquirable and good for them they will accept my suggestion. So I came to a mind that people will accept my suggestion if it is attainable and acquirable.

Then only I realized that this is the action of performing with Assertion. From that day I had some changes in my inner mind. I realized that when I say a suggestion to someone with full involvement and based upon their needs, and if it feels a good suggestion for me and the other person, absolutely it will be a good suggestion for them.

Hence, with full involvement if we do any work, it will give a good end. We also will feel happy for that work. This is the value I learned from this situation.

How the values were introduced to students

A total of 26 students (3rd to 7th standard) took part in this plan. First we bought three sets of value stories by Prof. Jothi (25 books about 25 values). Students chose and read their favorite story. Later they answered questions on what they learnt from each story, why they chose a particular story, and which was their favorite character and why. Every student shared the value story understood by him/her with other students. Other students, after listening to the sharing, read those value stories as well.

A list of 120 values from TTT was given to the students, to understand the values through their daily life experience. They understood there are many other values apart from what they learnt from the stories.

Experiences of students acquiring values

Ayushjana, 6th standard – “My experience on the Value of Work Perfection”

I could not complete the work fully, because of forgetfulness. I am not able to buy all the vegetables which my mother said. Now I have a chance to solve it.

I thought that I should not forget to buy anything. My father told me, to write a list whatever my mother had told. As my father’s suggestion, I wrote down the list and read. Then I forgot to ask about the quantity of the vegetables. (Ex. Tomato – ½ kg, Onion - 1 kg, Small Jeera – ¼ kg.)

I wrote down the quantity. As I was walking towards the shop I saw the boys playing and watched them. So I couldn’t buy on time.

Then I checked, whether I have bought all the things. I found that ½ kg tomato is missing. I
bought the tomato. I gave the groceries to my mother. My mother was very happy and appreciated me.

I was really happy that, I could buy all the things without forgetting. I wished to do all the work to be done perfectly. And I did as my wish. Then my mother gave one rupee. I went and bought a candy and ate.

Suresh, 6th standard – “My experience on the Value of Perseverance”

If I do a work and somebody tease at me I feel that I am not good enough to do the work and stop doing it.

For this problem I have chosen an activity to overcome it. I like to write as my teacher Nirmala. I decided to learn to write with good handwriting using this value.

I thought how Nirmala Akka’s handwriting looks good. She writes clearly and straight. She gives space in between each word and each sentence. She writes in a correct structure. Hence she has a good handwriting.

I started thinking why I am not able to write the words and sentences correct. The reason is I did not give space in between each word and sentence. I did not write the words in correct structure. By having this in my mind I started to write a story.

I observed that the writing was not in straight line, there was no space in between each words and it looked really bad. So I threw away the paper. I took a ruled paper and kept under the white paper and started writing. Now my hand writing looked good. I tried the same process for 5 times.

I showed to my teacher. She said it is really good and to continue to it. I continued the process for 1 week. My hand writing looks good. I got confident.

Through this activity I learnt to avoid negative thinking and I got confident.

Vasanthakumar, 6th standard – “My experience on the Value of Handling the nervousness”

Whenever I share the information in the prayer hall, my hand will get shivered, my heart beat will increase, and my hand will get chilled because of the fear.

I am not able to tell the news in front of the students in the prayer hall without nervousness. I wanted to overcome these difficulties by telling the News in the prayer hall.

So, I started finding the reason why I cannot tell the information without fear and found the reasons which are, the students will laugh at me, If the information is not correct the teachers will scold me, If I did not say the information with in the time the students will tease me.

So, I decided to solve this problem. At that time my class teacher brought ‘Pattam’ magazine, issued by Daily Malar. I read the information. Then I found some interesting news about Zebra, Ant, Sugarcane, and Birds. I read all the information and decided to tell in the prayer-hall.

It was lot to convey in one day. So, I split the information for a week. I planned to tell the news about the Zebra on Monday, Ant on Tuesday, Sugarcane on Wednesday, Eyes on Thursday, and Bird on Friday.

I wanted to share the information first with my friend and get feedback. I told him about the plan. He gave me his feedback that I have to talk without nervousness, with louder, not to tell the information fast, use simple words so that the audience can understand.

As my friend’s feedback, I practised. Then without any nervousness, I delivered the information fluently in front of all the students and teachers without shivering and nervousness, I was happy.

Now I could share any news in the prayer and in the class without any fear and shiver. Even I get shivered, I know how to overcome it and say the news fluently.
What is Education by Design (EBD)?

The learning capacity of a student is less, when he/she learns anything alone. The students are not able to remember the information. Whereas when learnt as a group, they learn with an open mind and are supportive of one another, by sharing the learnt concepts. Education by Design offers such an environment. It helps the students to not only learn about a particular subject but to think and learn all inter-related subjects. They not only achieve the learning competency but also skills.

There are two main parts in Education by Design: ‘critical skills’ and ‘fundamental dispositions’. The critical skills include problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, organization, management, and leadership. The fundamental dispositions include ownership of life-long learning, self-direction, quality work, ethical character, curiosity and wonder, collaboration, and community membership.

Example: ‘Where is the water?’

Priyan: “Miss, may I go to the toilet?”
Teacher: “Yes, you may.”
Priyan runs to the toilet. On the way Banuamma tells him that there is no water in the toilet and asks him to go to the lake.
He asks her why there is no water. While he is talking with her he sees a lot of water flowing in the nearby garden.
He wonders how they have so much water. Why is there no water in our school?

Our school faced water problem last month. We have never faced such an issue before. Hence we chose this as a challenge to learn.

The students were grouped into four groups to learn about groundwater formation, the rainwater cycle, rainwater harvesting, and how to take groundwater. They learnt through various resources like the internet, volunteers and books. They gathered all the information and found the solution to why there was no water in our school. They showcased their learning in an exhibition.

Through solving the challenge, the students acquired the following skills:

- **Decision-making**: Sabari is a student who always shared information only in Tamil. At the time of the exhibition, we had a foreign volunteer. He wanted to communicate the details to the volunteer. He decided to explain the information in English and spoke to the volunteer in English without hesitation, explaining the concept in small sentences.
- **Creative thinking**: Ayush’s team explained the concept of how a bore-well pumps ground water, by creating a simple mechanism of ‘refill and pen’.
- **Organizing skills**: Yuvasri took the initiative to guide everyone in her group about who has to disseminate which information and executed it in an organized way.
- **Quality of work**: Vasanthakumar’s team themselves identified the mistakes in their chart and re-drew them perfectly.
- **Ethical characteristic**: During the entire project all students communicated truthfully in all situations, like reasons for not being able to do something.
- **Team work**: The students were asked to demonstrate their project outcome. Each team had a different way of demonstration like role-play, booklet, etc. Finally the teams discussed among themselves to choose the best option for demonstration in the exhibition. This unified decision was the reflection of team work.
Annexure:
Qualities and values associated with the Mother's four Aspects

Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati:

“Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play.”

Sri Aurobindo

The Mother with Letters on the Mother (The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 32), see p.17-23

Qualities & Values that manifest Wisdom (Maheshwari)

1. Tranquil, wonderful, great and calm. Vast intangible wisdom.
2. Equal, patient, unalterable in her will.
3. She comprehends all things and all beings and their nature and what moves them and the law of the world and its times and how was all and is and must be.
4. A strength is in her that meets everything and masters and none can prevail in the end against her vast intangible power.
5. She deals with men according to their nature and with things and happenings according to their force and the truth that is in them.
6. To the wise she gives a greater and luminous wisdom.
7. Those that have vision she admits to her counsels.
8. The Truth of things is her one concern.
9. Knowledge is her centre of power.
10. To build our soul and our nature into the divine Truth is her mission and her labour.

Qualities & Values that manifest Strength and Swiftness (Mahakali)

1. There is in her an overwhelming intensity, a mighty passion of force to achieve, a divine violence rushing to shatter every limit and obstacle.
2. The impulses that are swift and straight and frank, the movements that are unreserved and absolute, the aspiration that mounts in flame are the motion of Mahakali.
3. Her spirit is tameless, her vision and will are high and far-reaching like the flight of an eagle, her feet are rapid on the upward way and her hands are outstretched to strike and to succour.
4. When she is allowed to intervene in her strength, then in one moment are broken like things without consistence the obstacles that immobilise or the enemies that assail the seeker.
5. If her anger is dreadful to the hostile and the vehemence of her pressure painful to the weak and timid, she is loved and worshipped by the great, the strong and the noble; for they feel that her blows beat what is rebellious in their material into strength and perfect truth, hammer straight what is wry and perverse and expel what is impure or defective.
6. But for her what is done in a day might have taken centuries; without her Ananda might be wide and grave or soft and sweet and beautiful but would lose the flaming joy of its most absolute intensities.
7. To knowledge she gives a conquering might, brings to beauty and harmony a high and mounting movement and imparts to the slow and difficult labour after perfection an impetus that multiplies the power and shortens the long way.
Qualities & Values that manifest Harmony and Love (Mahalakshmi)

1. Harmony and beauty of the mind and soul.
2. Harmony and beauty of the thoughts and feelings.
3. Harmony and beauty in every outward act and movement.
4. Harmony and beauty of the life and surroundings, this is the demand of Mahalakshmi.

Qualities & Values that manifest Perfection (Mahasarawati)

1. The science and craft and technique of things are Mahasaraswati’s province.
2. Always she holds in her nature and can give to those whom she has chosen the intimate and precise knowledge, the subtlety and patience, the accuracy of intuitive mind and conscious hand and discerning eye of the perfect worker.
3. This Power is the strong, the tireless, the careful and efficient builder, organiser, administrator, technician, artisan and classifier of the worlds.
4. When she takes up the transformation and new-building of the nature, her action is laborious and minute and often seems to our impatience slow and interminable, but it is persistent, integral and flawless.
5. The will in her works is scrupulous, unsleeping, indefatigable; leaning over us she notes and touches every little detail, finds out every minute defect, gap, twist or incompleteness, considers and weighs accurately all that has been done and all that remains still to be done hereafter.
6. Nothing is too small or apparently trivial for her attention; nothing however impalpable or disguised or latent can escape her.
7. Moulding and remoulding she labours each part till it has attained its true form, is put in its exact place in the whole and fulfils its precise purpose.
8. In her constant and diligent arrangement and rearrangement of things her eye is on all needs at once and the way to meet them and her intuition knows what is to be chosen and what rejected and successfully determines the right instrument, the right time, the right conditions and the right process.
9. Carelessness and negligence and indolence she abhors; all scamped and hasty and shuffling work, all clumsiness and à peu près and misfire, all false adaptation and misuse of instruments and faculties and leaving of things undone or half done is offensive and foreign to her temper.
10. When her work is finished, nothing has been forgotten, no part has been misplaced or omitted or left in a faulty condition; all is solid, accurate, complete, admirable.
11. Nothing short of a perfect perfection satisfies her and she is ready to face an eternity of toil if that is needed for the fullness of her creation. Therefore of all the Mother’s powers she is themost long-suffering with man and his thousand imperfections.
12. Kind, smiling, close and helpful, not easily turned away or discouraged, insistent even after repeated failure, her hand sustains our every step on condition that we are single in our will and straightforward and sincere; for a double mind she will not tolerate and her revealing irony is merciless to drama and histrionics and self-deceit and pretence.
13. A mother to our wants, a friend in our difficulties, a persistent and tranquil counsellor and mentor, chasing away with her radiant smile the clouds of gloom and fretfulness and depression, reminding always of the ever-present help, pointing to the eternal sunshine, she is firm, quiet and persevering in the deep and continuous urge that drives us towards the integrality of the higher nature.
Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre

Introduction

Our programme at Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre (KCC) makes an effort to develop the four aspects of our being which Sri Aurobindo describes for the integral yoga: physical, vital, mental and spiritual.

Activities of our KCC

- Physical
- Vital
- Mental
- Spiritual

We wish to concentrate on and follow Sri Aurobindo’s path of integral education. On weekdays Monday through Friday, our tuition programme takes place at our Centre from 5pm to 8pm. On weekends we have Silambam classes (Sundays from 10am to 12pm) and Bharatha Naattiyam classes (Saturdays and Sundays at various hours). Our main goal is to provide valid programmes to help children with their homework from their schools, involve them with weekend activities and then help them relax through meditation.

Description of project

The activities of our programme are in two categories:

1. **Educational support**: KCC benefits children through offering Tuition after school from 5pm to 8pm every Monday through Friday. Every day we have been receiving 20-30 children from Kuilappalayam and from nearby villages (Lakshmipuram and Bharathi Nagar). Our teachers assist them in their tuition activities, support them to clear their doubts, help them read, and help them to improve their study skills and writing skills.

2. **Extracurricular activities**: KCC offers extracurricular activities including Bharatha Naattiyam classes, Silambam (traditional martial art) classes, indoor and outdoor games, meditation, art activities, eating together, etc. All of these were regular activities which took place at various hours on Saturdays and Sundays. Altogether 40 regular students and some irregular students have been participating in the weekend activities, and they shared that they would be delighted to continue in the future too.

Apart from these activities, we conduct events for the children during their special holidays. On Children’s Day (November 14th, 2016), we had a ‘Games Day’ for the students, and Hari of SAIIER
Transport Service was invited and honored to distribute some rewards for the participants. On Ganesh Chaturthi, we made a big event for performing Bharatha Naattiyam and Silambam for the villagers. Later in the year we had a small cultural event night to share with the villagers about our KCC. And we welcomed Suryagandhi to the Centre to come and conduct her awareness programme on “Child Protection”.

**Outcomes**

Since 2014, the constant and continuous support of SAIIER has been helping sustain the activities of our programme. Our activities are very welcome by our communities, friends and people in the villages. Children, students, youths and women's groups wish to spend their time meaningfully in our KCC.

Up till January 2017, we were running all our regular activities in a Panchayat (government municipality) building which belonged to the village women's group. Recently we were gifted with the inauguration of our own new shelter, close to Auroville Bakery. Gen. Ashoke Chatterjee of SAIIER came directly to our place and honoured us with his presence. Members of the Working Committee, Auroville Council and FAMC also came and showed their meaningful support. We wish to share our heartfelt gratitude to SAIIER and its members who have been showing their kind support since 2014 for our constant growth.

With our new space, in March 2017 we started our daytime programmes such as “Goodbye Plastic Bags” and herbal plantations, taking place on weekdays in the mornings and afternoons. We will write more about their outcomes in next year’s report, since these activities have started only recently.

**Reflections**

Since our programmes are very much welcomed and appreciated by our communities and the villages, we wish to extend and provide our entire programme on a sustainable basis every year continuously. We strongly feel that this continuity is the most meaningful thing about this project, especially now that we have our own shelter. The students, youths, women and others involved are indeed feeling pleased to have their own space very close to their village, which they are able to reach sooner and return back from safely.

The students were very much interested in KCC's developments this year and wished to be involved in the project. Starting in June 2017 we will start collecting minimum charges from the students on a term basis every 3 months, so that we will be able to cover our needed running costs and material costs. This is necessary as long as we do not have regular and continuous funding for our programme. We are also looking for talented employees in various fields who have maintenance allowances and are willing to offer and share their knowledge and skills in our neighbourhoods.
Life Education Centre

Introduction

Life Education Centre (LEC) provides opportunities for young women from villages around Auroville to receive skills that can broaden their horizons. They receive vocational training in tailoring and handwork such as embroidery and crochet which can help them earn a livelihood, and skills that help them develop capacities to lead more conscious lives.

Activities of the year

LEC’s activities were restructured in 2016-17, as we learned from the previous year about the need for restructuring programs based on the profiles of the young women. Activities were divided into:

1. Regular programs for students enrolled full-time in LEC.
2. College and career guidance for adolescent girls enrolled in Auroville Outreach schools and other government schools in the Auroville bioregion. This program is called “YEN KALVI – My Education”.

Regular activities, tour, training and new building

- As part of program restructuring, focus was brought to the quality of vocational training and organization of time and materials. Students went through rigorous training to do quality work. We inculcated a sense of time by emphasizing a strict discipline for scheduled activities and completing the work at hand in a timely manner. Training the women in these aspects was challenging, but there was good success in time. LEC wishes to remain a space of education, and care was taken to impart learning through the challenges.
- Regular daily activities include opening with a prayer, group discussions, and time to share issues (personal and societal). Throughout the year the women have this space of listening to others and receiving support.
- We had weekly classes in chanting, and weekly psycho-somatic body work.
- Students participated in vision and goal setting meetings conducted across three sessions.
- Students received training in basics of computers and internet. One staff member received training in Excel.
- Three students attended the Stewardship for New Emergence training in two phases.
- The new office building and the caretaker apartment were completed and inaugurated in September 2016. The new building includes the much-needed space for workshops and YEN KALVI sessions downstairs. The caretaker space upstairs is a simple one-bedroom apartment and is now being occupied by one of the LEC staff and her family. The construction was possible through GOI grant for which we are grateful.
- Two cooking workshops were conducted for 24 students from the American University of Paris. Effort was made to encourage LEC students to lead the workshops, as a way to train in planning and also as an opportunity to interact with students from abroad.
- For our annual one-day tour we decided to go to Tirukovilur (2 hours away from Auroville) to visit Lord Ganesha’s shrine inside an old Shiva temple called Veerateswarar. For more than a year now, the students have been learning and chanting a famous Tamil free-verse poem on Ganesha, composed by poetess Avvaiyar. Called the “Vinayagar Agaval”, it was her last song.
chanting in front of this Lord Ganesha, before her death. Our students were happy to sing the Vinayagar Agaval in front of Lord Ganesha’s shrine.

• We also spent a fair amount of time visiting the other shrines inside this temple (Shiva, Muruga, Parvati) and also a famous Vishnu temple: Ulagalanda Perumal (‘the Lord who measured the universe’). In each of these places, we narrated the mythology as well as the spiritual significance, to not only our students from the local villages, but also to our volunteer teachers from Brazil and Belgium. The students could chant other verses and hymns they had learnt, in front of the various shrines and during the entire journey.

• LEC participated in the “Litter-Free Auroville” week, organized by WasteLess, and cleared litter, garbage and debris from around the campus.

• With the guidance of LEC staff, three student volunteers from the American University of Paris helped to revamp the LEC website, shooting photographs and videos to include on the gallery page, and also making instructional videos.

Experiments

• Two women from LEC had become Newcomers and are in the process of becoming Aurovilians. It became clear through interactions with these women, and also from the different happenings within Auroville in the last year regarding acceptance of Newcomers, that the aspirants are sincere; however a program to help them integrate in Auroville would be helpful. Hence a kind of an ‘integration program’ has been started in LEC on a very small scale, in an attempt to bring more awareness about Auroville and what it is to be Aurovillian. The different components of the program will have to be worked out to expand the program to include various aspects. The current participants are the two Newcomers who work in LEC and also other full-time students.

• Securing funds for regular programs and for trying new programs has always been challenging. The overheads of maintaining the school include stipend/salaries for staff and students. We made an effort at fundraising through participation in the Auroville Marathon market, having a stall to sell items that the students made. Although small, the collection was well received by visitors.

YEN KALVI (College and career guidance)

The program was expanded in 2016-17 to include motivational training. Two sessions were conducted with the aim of providing motivation and inspiration to the students, all first-generation college-goers. The training included lectures, videos, and experiential goal setting. Participants were from NESS, Udavi School, and Koot Road Govt. Higher Secondary School. A second part of the program – an information session offered by the placement coordinator of Pondicherry University – had to be postponed to June/July 2017 due to conflict in examination schedules of different schools. It will be conducted in June/July as planned.

Outcomes

Students realize the benefits of the new structure with focus on quality and time management. Receiving appreciation for quality work has motivated them to work harder to learn and produce quality items. They have learned through different activities to express themselves, become more capable of making decisions, become more aware of their bodies, and be conscious about the environment. They have had the opportunity to travel together and learn the mythology and tradition associated with the chants that they are learning. This year there were five full-time students, two students who were part-time for a few months and then dropped out, and one student just for the summer.
YEN KALVI (college and career guidance program) participants greatly appreciated the sessions they attended and realized the value of the training they received, which the general school curriculum does not provide. They felt more confident to make their own choices regarding college courses and careers instead of being influenced by parents (who are themselves uneducated and often provide uninformed advice) and neighbors. Forty-five students benefited from the YEN KALVI sessions.

Reflections

It was a challenging year in terms of bringing structure and discipline to activities, setting a vision based on the current needs of young women in the villages, and conceiving programs accordingly. Things have stabilized to a great extent after understanding some personal and team obstacles to progress, and these will continue to be worked on.
Oli School

Introduction

In Auroville, the local Indian community cohabits together with the international community. However, the social and cultural gap persists, especially between Indian villagers and Aurovilians. Constant efforts are made to bridge this gap that goes against the values advocated by Auroville. At Oli School we believe that the way to make a change is through education, and that to start in the earliest years of life is best.

Around the world, and more among the poor, the so-called alternative schools such as Montessori or Steiner-Waldorf schools for example, are reserved for social elite that can meet the high costs of education of their children. Today it is still very rare that schools for the children of poor villages, such as those surrounding Auroville, adopt such pedagogies, although their efficiency has been proven in all social and cultural contexts.

At Oli School we try to combine the experience and vision of two major currents: ‘Free progress’ and the Montessori pedagogy. Oli School has completed 6 years of continued work.

Activities of the year

6 Aurovilians are an active part of the support group of the school. We have 13 teachers working (and/or still under training) at the school, as well as 2 ammas, 1 gardener and 1 art teacher.

Regular activities of the school include Montessori activities, Holoenergetic visualizations with the children, Awareness Through the Body (ATB) and psychomotricity to help consciousness in the body, arts and crafts and Play of Painting to develop creativity and joy, blocks, swimming, storytelling, etc.

Workshops are regularly or punctually set up for the teachers, to provide additional educational tools and to improve the quality of their presence with the children. The teachers have English classes three times a week.

This year Oli School settled into a renewed structure and educational view. We had 108 kids, ages 2 to 6, attending school all in the same space; despite the number, we still managed to have a rather quiet and peaceful atmosphere.

Since January 2016, a French volunteer (Lison) who is a Psychomotrician has been working with the kids and teachers, and will stay with us for one year. Sangeetha has taken the team lead since Ana left, and Marie-Claire is there for psychological or pedagogical support in case of need. Marianne is helping in the administrative field when needed.

We set up a new outdoor platform thanks to one of our French main donors: a quiet separate space to work on psychomotor skills, English and Tamil language.

Support of the school

With the help of Marie-Claire, we are slowly building autonomy with small donors from France but it is taking time, we are still dependant on one big donor for half the budget which is not a healthy situation.

Palani is transforming two rooms in his house in a guest house to raise funds.

This year we started to ask for basic non-compulsory donations from the parents (100 Rs./month). It was accepted with success, and only a few parents didn’t give. We plan to continue this as we believe it is in a way a symbolic and energetical participation from the parents.
SAIIER sub-units:
Facilities and programs

1. Arka
2. Aurofilm
3. Auroville Archives
4. Auroville Botanical Gardens
5. Auroville Budokan
6. Auroville Campus Initiative
7. Auroville Library
8. Auroville Nature Camp
9. Auroville Theatre Group
10. CRIPA (Ctr. for Research in the Performing Arts)
11. Eluciole Circus School
12. Evergreen Horses
13. Gratitude Animal Farm
14. Hindustani Vocal Music
15. House of Mother’s Agenda
16. Kailash Youth Residency
17. Kalabhumi Music Studio
18. Kalabhumi Open Art Studio
19. Laboratory of Evolution
20. Mitra Youth Hostel
21. One Asia
22. Pitanga Cultural Centre
23. Savitri Bhavan
24. Savitri Hostel
25. SAIIER Transport
26. Sanskrit Institute
27. Scholarship and Educational Fund
28. Telos
29. Unity Pavilion
30. Youth Camp
Aurofilm

Introduction

The aim of Aurofilm is to use Cinema as a tool for education and for artistic and creative research. By producing short films (both documentary and fiction) and organizing regular screenings of quality films 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 is a goal of Auroville.

Activities of the year

For the last three and a half decades, Aurofilm has been doing research into Cinema and offering regular film-screenings for Aurovilians and their guests. We organize at least one thematic film festival in Auroville each year, and also undertake other film-related activities such as inviting film personalities to give conferences and workshops. From time to time we also produce documentaries and short fictional films. Our activities are done as a cultural and educational service and are wholly non-commercial.

Gérard C. is the founder (ca. 1981) of Aurofilm, Surya is a long time collaborator (ca. 1987) and Susana joined four years ago. For about 6 months, we had a young volunteer, Jinu Thomas (hailing from Kerala) who helped and studied with us at Aurofilm. Two other Indian volunteers have been working with Jinu on a documentary about Auroville. Eva, a young Argentinean woman, also joined us for three weeks to help with our 9th Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema.

Film screenings

This past financial year, we screened 57 films (compared to 43 last year). For this significant part of our work, we define 8-9 film categories which we evenly distribute in screenings through the year. This year we screened:

Classics
1/ LES 400 COUPS / THE 400 BLOWS, 1959, FRANCOIS TRUFFAUT, France
2/ HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY, 1941, JOHN FORD, England
3/ CASQUE D’OR / GOLDEN MARIE, 1952, JACQUES BECKER, France
4/ ASHES AND DIAMONDS (homage to A. Wajda), 1958, ANDRZEJ WAJDA, Poland
5/ MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON, 1939, FRANK CAPRA, USA
6/ LE SOUPIRANT / THE SUITOR, PIERRE ETAIX, France
7/ YOYO, 1965 by PIERRE ETAIX, France
8/ SUNRISE / L’AURORE, 1927, F.W. MURNAU, (silent) – The film was introduced by Lionel Tardif.

Becoming Classics
9/ MANHATTAN, 1979, WOODY ALLEN, USA
11/ DEATH ON THE NILE, 1978, JOHN GUILLERMIN, England – A finely scripted fiction through which many of ancient Egypt’s astounding monuments are shown (as Agatha Christie’s mystery story uses them), with a wide participation of great actors.
12/ OUT OF AFRICA, 1985, SYDNEY POLLACK, USA – Based on a novel by Karen Blixen and shot on location in Africa.

Contemporary Indian Cinema

13/ NATOKER MOTO / LIKE A PLAY, 2015, DEBESH CHATTERJEE, West Bengal
14/ BHUMIKA / THE ROLE, 1977, SHYAM BENEGAL, Hindi
15/ RADIOPETTI / RADIO SET, 2015, HARI VISHWANATH, Tamil Nadu
16/ KILLA / THE FORT, 2015, AVINASH ARUN, Maharashtra
17/ TINTORETTO JISHU, 2008, SANDIP RAY, West Bengal
18/ LUNCH BOX, 2013, RITESH BATRA, Hindi
19/ TAARE ZAMEEN PAR / LIKE STARS ON EARTH, AAMIR KHAN, Hindi

Presented at Aurofilm’s 9th Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema (PCIC):

20/ AGORA, 2015, JINU THOMAS (music only)
21/ ASMAD / ME presented by Abhishek GARG (Associated Director), 2016, PRABHJIT DHAMIIJA, Himachal Pradesh
22/ ISHTI / SEARCH FOR SELF, 2016, PR. G.PRABHA, Kerala (in Sanskrit language)
23/ KAADU POOKKUNNA NERAM / WHEN THE FOREST BLOOMS, 2016, DR. BIJU, Kerala
24/ CHITROKAR / THE LAST MURAL, 2016, SAIBAL MITRA, West Bengal
25/ HARIKATHA PRASANGA / CHRONICLES OF HARI, 2016, ANANYA KASARAVALLI, Karnataka – In presence of the film director.
26/ ONE, 2014, P. JAYENDRA, Tamil Nadu (music only) – Featuring Carnatic singer TM Krishna.
27/ LOKTAK LAIREMBEE / LADY OF THE LAKE, 2016, HAOBAM PABAN KUMAR, Manipur
28/ BASTU SHAAP / CURSED HOUSE, 2015, KAUSHIK GANGULI, West Bengal

Cinema of the World

29/ THE PLAYER, 1992, ROBERT ALTMAN, USA
30/ ROBIN AND MARIAN, 1976, RICHARD LESTER, UK/USA
31/ ALL IS LOST, 2013, JC CHANDOR, USA/Canada
32/ TAXI TEHRAN, 2015, JAFAR PANAHI, Iran
33/ RAISE THE RED LANTERN, 1991, ZHANG IMOU, China
35/ OUR LITTLE SISTER / UMIMACHI DIARY, 2015, HIROKAZU KOREEDA, Japan
37/ PAWO / MARTYR (with Pavilion of Tibetan Culture), 2016, M. LITWAK, Sonam TSETEN, Germany/ India (in Tibetan language) – In presence of co-director S. Tseten.
38/ HUGO (The Invention of Hugo Cabret), 2011, MARTIN SCORCESE, UK/USA/France
39/ DAYS OF HEAVEN, 1978, TERRENCE MALICK, USA

Films from around the world are really a window open to different spaces and times. They feature a lot of variety in film expression and allow the viewer to approach history, geography, literature, arts, society, cultures, and environmental and social issues of (and from) different periods of time. Entering these realms allows us to connect with the people of the Earth… helping to open our minds and hearts towards this Human Unity we are aiming at here in Auroville!

We also choose films for the cinematic way they are produced, which can be difficult. Many films are for instance stunningly made, some could be said to be ‘perfect’… but their content might be
ambiguous, or distorted such that we cannot even consider presenting them. This is not taken as a moralistic approach, but with the intention that in Auroville we use the great medium that is Cinema to somehow uplift the audience, not to put or keep it down!

**French Cinema**

40/ GIRAFFADA, 2014, RANI MASSALHA, France
41/ CONTES D’AUTOMNES / TALES OF AUTUMN, 1998, ERIC ROHMER, France
42/ QUELQUES JOURS DE PRINTEMPS / A FEW DAYS IN SPRING, STEPHANE BRIZE, France
43/ PLAYTIME, 1967, JACQUES TATI, France
44/ LE PERE DE MES ENFANTS / THE FATHER OF MY CHILDREN, 2009, MIA HANSEN-LOVE, France
45/ LA REVOLUTION FRANCAISE- Les Années Lumières, 1989, ROBERT ENRICO, France

Many other French films were presented in the different sections including Classics (4 films), Animated/Children’s Films (1), Documentaries (3), Performing Arts (1).

**Documentaries**

46/ NOSTALGIA DE LA LUZ, 2010, PATRICIO GUZMAN, Chile/France
47/ NELSON FREIRE, 2002, J.MOREIRA SALLES, Brazil
48/ DEMAIN / TOMORROW, 2014, CYRIL DION & MELANIE LAURENT, France – A look at environment and society, the problems and initiatives already taken as remedies.
49/ LA MAISON DE LA RADIO, 2012, NICOLAS PHILIBERT, France – A close look at the French national broadcast institution taken from early morning to late night.
50/ LE FANTOME D’HENRI LANGLOIS, 2004, JACQUES RICHARD, France – About the energetic founder of the French Cinematheque (the French National Film Archive).
51/ PK NAIR - AN INTERVIEW, 2007, GERARD CARABIN, AUROFILM, (15’) – On the great founder of National Film Archive of India (NFAI).

**Performing Arts**

52/ LA DANSE DE SHIVA / THE DANCE OF SHIVA, 1984, LIONEL TARDIF – An exceptional documentary film on the Bharata Natyam tradition. Screened at the MMC in collaboration with Pavillon de France (French Pavilion), in presence of both the director and the featured dancer Manochaya (who was 17 years old at the time the film was made), as well as famous Bharat Natyam dancer Swarnamukhi.
54/ UNQUIET TRAVELLER, 2008, BRUNO MONSAINGEON, Poland/Hungary – A documentary film following young Polish pianist Piotr Anderszewski on tour between from Budapest to Warsaw.
55/ LIVE AT MONTREUX, 1994 – A jazz concert filmed at the prestigious Montreux festival with Jean-Luc Ponty (violin) Al Di Meola (guitar) and Stanley Clarke (double bass)

In the Performing Arts category we aim to choose films which are truly exceptional, either in their making or with respect to the talent of the featured artist(s).

**Animated and/or Children’s films**

56/ PINOCCHIO, 1940, WALT DISNEY, USA
57/ LES CONTES DE LA NUIT / TALES OF THE NIGHT, 2011, MICHEL OCELOT, France

**Other programs and activities**

In the beginning of February, in collaboration with Aurovilles “Pavillon de France”, we organized the invitation of French film expert Lionel Tardif and we did several programs with him. Lionel Tardif is a film director, writer and the person in charge for many years of the “Cinématheque de Tours”
an annex of the French National Film Archive, located in Paris). Today, Lionel Tardif still runs a cultural center in the south of France (Perpignan) with a meaningful film program. His interest in film is like ours. The film screenings we presented with him are mentioned in the list above (#8 and #52), and we also had a 2-hour “Mini festival for old film lovers”. It was a presentation with a question & answer session on the early days of Cinema, with many film clips to illustrate the subject. The program took place at MMC, Town Hall, on February 1st.

Apart from the film screenings proper and the associated research, we do technical work, especially with regard to providing good English subtitles for films that do not have them, and adapting film formats to the screen for best projection at the auditorium.

We help volunteers with their film projects. This year Jinu has been working with two friends (who are volunteering in Auroville after having attended the 6-month “Swadharma” program) on a documentary film about Auroville. They have done extensive research on the context and history of Auroville and its many aspects, and taken interviews of long timers and other interesting Aurovilians. One of their last shootings was during the dawnfire at the amphitheatr on the occasion of Auroville’s 49th birthday. Editing of all the film elements is going on at the moment.

In terms of film production/realization, we made a short documentary on the 9th Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema that we organised this year (two versions will be issued). A copy of it will be available at SAIIER.

We organised this year again our annual film festival called “Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema”, a three-day event funded through SAIIER. We screened nine films in total and produced a festival brochure for the event.

Reflections

We believe that in sharing our research work and presenting it in a regular manner to the public, a weekly quality film show from a planned program is very important for the experience of the Auroville audience. People who come regularly can train their discerning capacities, can learn about different cultures, customs, history, arts... and can reflect and work on many different levels and aspects of their own being – which is a must for our Yoga if we want to ‘change our whole human nature’ as Sri Aurobindo advances as a necessary step for the evolution of mankind.

On another level, our screenings are held in a comfortable Auroville public space (the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Bharat Nivas), and while several other venues with film programs are offered in Auroville, the audience that comes to our screenings trusts our selection, our commitment as organisers and the average quality of the video support and projections we provide.

In conclusion, we are grateful to be able to provide this service for so many years and wish to continue in the same spirit.
Attending the 47th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa

A project of Aurofilm

Introduction

Aurofilm aims at fostering education, research and personal progress through the medium of cinema. Cinema in its completeness as an art form is a valuable tool to work on human nature. Our endeavour is to offer regular film screenings and special events at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Auroville – sometimes in our Kalabhumini studio – for the benefit of all.

In order to do this work, research into meaningful and artistic cinema requires the Aurofilm team to contact and be exposed to the world of film production and distribution. The well-organized international film festivals of India provide the perfect milieu for this, and such is our primary objective in attending one of these events every year.

Detailed description of activity

The International Film Festival of India (IFFI) is an annual event organized by the Directorate of Film Festivals of India (a Government of India organization from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting) and the state of Goa through the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG, Panaji). The festival promotes the best in terms of Cinema, fosters the meeting of the huge film production family and organizes a film market for film distribution. It is a ten-day event that is now permanently set up in Panaji, the capital of Goa, and takes place just before the tourist season starts over there.

This year was the 47th edition of the IFFI and it was held from November 20-30, 2016. The Aurofilm team could attend six days only of the event (the 20th to 26th) because of budget limitations; however, that was helpful and we could attend many film screenings in the different festival sections which included:

- Opening, Mid-Fest and Closing films (respectively Afterimage by the great Polish film director Andrzej Wajda, who passed away last November at the age of 90; Tamara, a Venezuelan film, and The Age of Shadows from Korea by Kim Jee-woon)
- International competition: Cinema of the World with different awards
- “Festival Kaleidoscope” (a selection of the best films from other important world international festivals)
- “Masterstrokes” (a selection of the latest work of contemporary film directors from all over the world)
- Documentary section: “The Legends” (about great directors, actors and other artists)
- Indian Panorama, with 26 films from the different states of the country
- BRICS Film Festival winners
- Special tributes: (1) to Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami with 6 of his films, (2) to Polish film director Andrzej Wajda with 5 of his films
- Country in Focus: Republic of Korea with 6 films
- Centenary Award for the Best Debut film with 7 films from the world
- Open-air screenings with 7 films
- Workshops and Master Classes conducted on script writing and direction, documentary
making, costume and set design, special effects, cinematography, editing, etc.

- Daily Forum, press conferences, interactive workshops (“Digital Films: New Technologies and Film Making” and “Co-production & Marketing Films for Festivals”), and a seminar (“Film and Cultural Diversity”)
- The National Film Archive of India (NFAI) presented inside and outside the festival grounds their annual quality exhibition of film posters and other film material
- The practice of screening documentaries and short films before every long feature film in the Indian Panorama section still goes on, and is a very good initiative that gives festival delegates the opportunity to discover these otherwise forgotten items

With our accreditation as Delegates, we went every day early morning to the festival premises, after having carefully studied the program and made decisions beforehand on a maximum of three films to be booked per day at the counters, with the possibility to attend one or two more (schedule and seat availability permitting). Our program was very tight and again this year, none of us could attend any press conference or Forum this year. We took the time to meet the festival organizers/DFF directors and the NFAI in-charge to maintain these contacts, as well as some producers, technicians, screen-writers, journalists, film students and so on. Organising this hectic schedule to include snacks and proper lunch or dinner and also find a little gap to rest in the hotel room or in a nearby park is always a bit of a challenge!

Outcomes and products

For the Aurofilm team, to go and attend this film festival is the best opportunity to follow what happens in the realm of film production from India and the world. On a practical level, to make and keep contacts with the DFF, NFAI and other organizations and individuals during the festival are important for Aurofilm’s and Auroville’s relationships in the field of cinema. Here we request the film prints or permissions for our own 3-day Indian Panorama (please see our report on that activity) and other weekly film screenings for the community. The Auroville community ultimately benefits by being exposed to quality Indian and world cinema through the screenings we organize all along the year, whenever these new films become available. The various films we choose to watch during the festival are also for reference for our film making and research. This research work is available to the visitors, students and volunteers who contact us at Kalabhumi or even at the film screenings in Bharat Nivas.

We can also say that through our presence and outreach effort at these Indian festivals, Auroville becomes known as a place where culture and art is a major component and research and promotion of quality cinema is valued.

Reflections

Over the years of attending these festivals, we have learned to better use the time, the venues and the programs. We also are becoming more discerning and can see better the quality and impact that the Indian selection (in particular) will have in Auroville. We have also become more confident in addressing the people we need to be acquainted in order to bring their films or their knowledge to Auroville.

Next year we would like to repeat this activity as we can see the results that are reached in terms of programming and communicating about Cinema, as well as exchanges with film directors and technicians. These exchanges enrich our film making and film promoting work here.
9th Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema
A project of Aurofilm

Introduction

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, organizing a thematic film festival at least annually, and producing short films during the year, we wish to offer to the Auroville community a way to develop taste, discernment and openness towards a change in consciousness. This year we held our ninth “Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema” in Auroville.

Context

The films that are released in commercial halls mainly aim at the Indian market and Indian diaspora. The central theme usually runs between a traditional love story and episodes of action with some thriller elements. These films typically avoid possible controversies in matters of religion and politics, and avoid sex. Arguments from heroes and heroines normally move towards happy endings. For a few years now some films have been coming out that take up actual social issues, though they are still quite commercially made. Even with these films we find a lack of sincerity in approach, both thematically and cinematically.

We at Aurofilm look at presenting films that are genuinely produced (mostly regional, although they might originate from Mumbai, or Kolkata) and films that make a difference in terms of subject, treatment, expression, etc. Since the 1980s a great Indian film movement called the “New Indian Cinema” has shown the way to producing good films that are independent of typical commercial parameters. These are without the ostensible catchy and fashionable elements, and are aimed at viewers in India and other countries of the world. These often travel through different festivals and garner awards and mentions.

Preparing the festival

It is in this context that Aurofilm organizes a 3-day Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema in Auroville. This year we presented our 9th issue. It was held on February 10, 11 and 12 of 2017. The Aurofilm team started preparing for the Panorama while at the International Film Festival of India in Goa in November 2016. Surya, Gerard and Susanna went to watch many movies, to select the ones to be screened in Auroville, and to make and keep contacts in the film industry.

After the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium was booked for mid-February and the films were selected, we got in contact with the DFF, gathered texts and pictures for the brochures, and designed posters for this event in Auroville. As the festival time came closer, the last preparations were done such as buying flowers, preparing snacks for the audience and decorating the Auditorium.

The announced theme was that of “search for the self” and “oneness”. What predominated among the various productions were those of a social nature and with a more intimate tone, with themes like gender identity, integrity in artistic pursuit, and resolution of conflicts (in family, in society and culturally in general). Our Argentinean volunteer says here that it does not seem to matter which side of the globe one is on when it comes to social problems. This is because despite cultural differences in religion, customs, entertainment, food etc., India and Argentina are post-colonial peripheral countries that still live with their cultural, political and economic contradictions.
The festival event

At the festival a total of nine films were screened: six selected from the IFFI in Goa, two short films made in 2015, and a long feature film made in 2014. We also invited a film director and her music director.

The first film projected was from Jinu Thomas, our young Volunteer from Idukki, Kerala: “Agora”, a 4-minute energetic and colorful musical film (or music video). Then came a highly esthetic and meaningful long feature in Sanskrit language, “Ishti” (“Search for Self”) by Prof. Prabha from Kerala; and “Kaadu Pookkunna Neram” (“When the Forest Blooms”) by Dr. Biju, also from Kerala. The second day began with “Chitrokar” (“The Last Mural”) by Saibal Mitra, inspired by the life and work of Bengali painter Binode Bihari Mukherjee; and closed with “Harikatha Prasanga” (“Chronicles of Hari”), with a Yakshgana artist as the protagonist of the story, by Ananya Kasaravalli. Ms. Kasaravalli (daughter of internationally known film director, Girish Kasaravalli from Karnataka) was invited and presented her film – which is her debut film. There was an interesting question & answer session after the screening. Her music director, Ms. Bindumalini was also present.

The last day brought together three feature films and a short film. “One” by Jayendra Panchapakesan was the film that opened the last block, followed by the short “Asmad” (“Me”) by Prabhjit Dhamija from Chandigar, “Loktak Lairembee” (“Lady of the Lake”) by Haobam Paban Kumar from Manipur, and finally the family drama “Bastu Shaap” (“Cursed House”) by award winning Bengali director Kaushik Ganguly.

Over the nine film shows, many people came to enjoy these 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 time between two films were times to exchange on Indian cinema and to get informed about the next film.

As in previous years, we organized introduction to the screenings. This year Surya was accompanied by Eva (our 20-year-young Argentinean volunteer) for the afternoon and late-afternoon films, and Aishwarya (our volunteer from Hyderabad) for the evening films. Our speakers had prepared short introduction speeches to prepare the audience to better enjoy and comprehend each film and their context.

A short film about the event has been recorded and is in the process of being edited. As often, we will prepare 2 versions: one of 7 and one of 10 minutes long.

Reflections

Here is what Eva wrote as a testimony after the event:

“The conclusion of the festival also concluded my visit to India; the last stop. Everything was a surprise, everything was magic, new. However, I never felt that these contradictions separated the realities of this country and Argentina. On the contrary, it was enriching to know from the cinematography the different visions of the world that come together and also build the culture. In this sense, visualizing, analyzing, reflecting on these productions allows us to bridge the gap between peoples where the only thing that really separates us is distance. Globalization should be synonymous with encounter and coexistence of cultures. Film is a weapon in our favor to create spaces of confluence that, far from losing cultural diversity, helps us to be more tolerant and inclusive.”

We feel Eva’s testimony illustrates well our endeavour with the presentation of such an event in Auroville.
Digital Literacy – Enabling Tools for Communication and Teamwork
A project of Auroville Campus Initiative

Introduction

For many, 'learning to think digitally' has long ceased to be a choice, both in private life and professionally. Understanding and mastering effective practices of digital media demands does far more than add to our arsenal of tools for efficiency. Digital literacy, rather, has become synonymous with digital citizenship, and is as much communication-enabling, creativity-releasing and overall a key to independence and intellectual freedom as is traditional literacy.

Yet, the times when “you have got mail” left us brimming with excitement and anticipation are long gone. Instead we often find ourselves overwhelmed by the sheer number of emails and the tasks associated with management and response. Moreover, emails are not the only digital means of communication or knowledge synchronization. Particularly within teams and working groups, the use of web-based applications that allow the creation, editing and storage of documents, spreadsheets and presentations online (e.g. Google Drive) as well as shared calendars and tools for task management, notification and conferencing is becoming indispensable for many, yet remains a ‘digital dilemma’ for others.

These tools can only be adopted in teamwork to the extent to which the least-trained members can use them.

Description of project

The Digital Literacy project aimed at bridging the divide between those who easily master digital modes of communication and those who wish to hone their skills in this area but require guidance. Through this intervention we hope to have added positively to the ability of teams and groups in Auroville to use digital means to their advantage.

In order to raise the digital literacy level in the community, interactive and hands-on learning sessions were organized that were geared toward the usage of online tools and media for efficient communication and teamwork.

Basic computer knowledge being a prerequisite for using these tools, the sessions were originally planned to cover effective email usage (e.g. email management, filtering, usage of aliases, ‘cc’, ‘bcc’, digital signatures, effective use of subject lines, handling of attachments, spam...) as well as the web-based applications that allow for collaboration (e.g. Google Drive and further shared calendars and notification tools).

The idea was to offer workshops to Aurovilians aged 14 and above at regular intervals once or twice a month. Each participant would be asked to bring her/his own device. Since the participants would be online simultaneously through the same internet access point, the number of participants would be limited to 10 at a time. Each session was to be 3 hours in duration.

We also planned to provide consultation after each session, and to jointly create an online, interactive ‘living’ Q&A document. This document was thought to become a reference for current participants but also potentially for future participants.

Outcomes

The first session set out to cover the basics of Google Drive, which is readily usable by all Aurovilians having an '@auroville.org.in' email account and offers a wide range of tools for personal and professional tasks. The immediate response from the community was quite enthusiastic, and
sign-ups exceeded the maximum number of possible participants (10), so a follow up session was scheduled to accommodate incoming requests.

During the session, participants were given an introduction to the difference between a physical drive and ‘cloud space’ and the risks and opportunities of each (i.e. data protection and privacy concerns). They also learned how to access Google Drive via their computer/laptop or smartphone (Android or iPhone device). We introduced tools such as Google Docs, Sheets, Presentations, Forms, and Calendar and covered important concepts such as syncing, ‘ownership’, file management (including sharing), activity monitoring and history, starring/sorting/searching of files, export functions, and others. Participants created shared documents and spreadsheets together and jointly tested the viewing, editing and commenting functions. In the second part of the session, more specific topics such as creating personal and team calendars, as well as other available task management tools, were discussed.

Computer proficiency varied greatly among participants, and it also became apparent that many were interested in implementing these tools within their work environment (e.g. teams or working groups). Although we offered consultation to all participants as a follow-up, very few took up this offer. As a consequence, the original idea of creating a Q&A document with participants was not further pursued.

We also found that rather than training individuals, it is often more effective to work directly with teams and working groups by addressing their specific needs and setting up systems to enhance productivity, communication and teamwork.

Over the past months, workshops were held with the Auroville Council, the FAMC, the Working Committee, and the staff of the Auroville Foundation Office. The most common demands were tools for task management and effective file-sharing/archiving, as well as creating common calendars. Sessions with some of these group will continue with the goal to impact intra-group and inter-group communication and collaboration, and to address legacy (turnover) challenges. We plan to offer future workshops for units, services and schools.

**Reflections**

Considering the demands and opportunities in today’s communication and digital technology era, we find it valuable to ensure that all members of a team have a working understanding of commonly used IT solutions. We have seen that teams often resort to the most basic (and thus time-consuming and inefficient) digital means because some members struggle to keep up, or hesitate to implement new methods and approaches. Particularly in the Auroville context with many interrelated and complex issues at hand, digital tools that support interactivity, access to information and informed decision-making deserve due consideration.

**Conclusion**

Though this exploration in community learning has a well-defined topic and scope, we hope that these workshops will inspire and potentially lead the way for other skills and personal development activities that can benefit individuals, teams and working groups alike.
Auroville Library

The Auroville Library, located on the crown road near the Solar Kitchen, has been in operation since the mid-eighties. It makes ten thousands of books available for lending to Aurovilians and Auroville's children, its guests and its workers.

Aim and approach

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. For clarifying users' questions we seek direct conversation rather than referring to signboards. This creates a more welcoming atmosphere and physically leaves room for regular exhibitions of Aurovilian art.

As we believe that money or social status should not become obstacles to using the Library, registration and lending are free of charge. Guests make a refundable deposit in order that the Library can purchase replacements when items have not been returned. And though we don't charge residents for losing or damaging volumes, some users voluntarily replace items they have lost, at their own expense.

Such displays of responsible behaviour provide us with the confidence that we can invest some trust in people and still have a successful service running. There are no guards near the children’s room, no magnetic detectors, no bags control. We don't ask for verification of addresses. Cataloging and registering of lending activities are merely instruments of making and keeping books freely accessible for everyone. This creates a much more relaxed feeling than exists in similar institutions elsewhere.

Collection

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; these exist in most cities and many villages in the world. However, unlike most of them we do not focus on easy reading and popular books alone. The collection, apart from approx. 200 volumes per year purchased with the SAIIER budget, has been built up almost entirely through many generous book donations, big and small, within the last three decades. It continues to grow by 3000 volumes a year – so it mirrors the actual tastes and interests of Aurovilians and guests, including those who enjoyed a higher education.

The collection encompasses volumes from eight languages, fiction and non-fiction, from all fields of knowledge and for all age groups. The library also maintains a small number of subscriptions to weekly and monthly journals, Indian and international, which are laid out for reading.

Recently, we introduced a collection of high quality movies, mainly art and educative feature films from all over the world. These films – several hundred already – are all presented in high definition transfer (HD), a much better quality than the usual DVD we all know, and which allow people to experience the picture in a format close to the original silver print. The collection has been created for educative purpose for all those who love cinema in its art form. It features famous classic filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa, John Ford, Satyajit Ray, and Jean Renoir, but also contemporary directors like Francis Ford Coppola, Werner Herzog, Majid Majidi, Pedro Almodóvar and many others. It also includes a series of extremely interesting documentaries on various subjects (both in HD and DivX).
We have also developed a collection of e-books which is already quite massive (more than 30,000 titles). This collection needs to be organized and developed further, but it will take some time due to lack of human resources to do the job.

We have also enjoyed gathering and bringing together whatever is available from The Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s works in soft copy format, with in addition all the works available from Satprem and Kireet Joshi. This collection includes video, audio and photo files plus some research work of high value on Auroville and the Matrimandir history done by Gilles Guigan. This collection is an enormous source of knowledge and a reference for researchers.

**Space and functioning**

Materials for juveniles are displayed in a separate room where playful noise and commotion do not disturb those who seek the quietness of a library for relaxed browsing, reading, or research. Adults have volunteered to introduce books to groups of children and have given lectures and public readings there.

Quiet corners in the main building, with and without tables, accommodate for those studying the material in-house.

A special library software for cataloguing, lending, and research activities, designed especially for our needs, has been programmed by an Aurovillian who is also continuing to improve its functionalities. A trained librarian is feeding the catalogue – accessible to staff, and through our website – and also provides help to other libraries in Auroville, such as Transition School, Centre for Indian Culture, and Aikiyam School, with installing and using the program and solving problems.

A building extension is under construction and will be completed within a few months. This extension was urgently needed to house more shelves, as we were running out of space to enlarge the books collections.

Running the library is not without challenges: a permanent intrusion of dust, especially during the dry seasons, as well as wildlife looking for housing requires us to conduct expansive cleaning activities. Humid air and sometimes incoming rainwater damages the books, causing them to mold or get out of shape. Our team works through the year to maintain the collection and keep the Library a serene and welcoming place.

**Collection:** Almost 40,000 printed volumes, 600 films, around 30,000 e-books

**Users:** The Library meets the needs of some 500 regular and 250 irregular book borrowers within Auroville, plus a significant number of guests and some Auroville workers. On average, at present around 1,900 books are loaned each month.

**Website:** http://library.auroville.org.in

**Opening times:** Monday through Saturday morning from 9 to 12:30, and afternoons from 2:00 to 4:30 pm.
Auroville Nature Camp

Overview

Auroville Nature Camp aspires to be one of the manifestations of “a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.” This educational activity brings together the children of Auroville and those of its surrounding villages for a collective experience of nature in the forest of Kavunji near Kodaikanal. Each camp offers a range of experiences designed to introduce the children to the flora and fauna of the area, to increase their environmental awareness, to awaken the spirit of adventure through treks and climbs, and to deepen their relation to and appreciation of nature. In the simple rustic camp setting children learn to live together in a group and to care for each other and the environment. Everyone, including students, teachers and other adults, works together to create the camp and to maintain a harmonious atmosphere. In short, Auroville Nature Camp aims to foster increased communication, cooperation, and connection amongst a diverse group of students and adults while simultaneously connecting with and learning about the environment.

Activities of the year

In May 2016, three Nature Camps were attended by 125 students and teachers from a diverse range of schools, including: Aikiyam, Udavi, Transition, TLC, Future School, NESS, Last School, Deepanam, Pondicherry, Home-schooling, and Child Development.

Outcomes

Auroville Nature Camp exposed 125 students and 10 teachers to the wonders of nature and helped them develop skills for living and working outdoors. While these students were the direct beneficiaries, indirectly, their experience in and appreciation for nature will hopefully manifest itself in the Auroville bioregion in the future through nature conservation efforts.

Conclusion

We again executed another successful summer with three full camps. Completing camp infrastructure continues to be our biggest challenge, and next year we will work to fundraise towards this goal.
Auroville Theatre Group

The Auroville Theatre Group aims:

• To develop Theatre in Auroville.
• To enrich Auroville’s cultural life through theatre, in collaboration with music, dance and the visual arts.
• To enhance the consciousness of our audience through Theatre.
• To increase inter-cultural understanding through Theatre.
• To connect Auroville to India and the world through theatre exchanges with Indian and foreign theatre groups.
• To offer classes, theatre workshops and productions facilitated by theatre artists from India and abroad.

Activities of the year

This year we staged the play *Once Upon A River*, is a new play, a modern, cautionary fairy tale written by actor/playwright Vinu Karthick of The Auroville Theatre Group with the help of Jill Navarre. The play brought together actors and designers from Auroville as well as from Germany, Delhi and Chennai. It was performed at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Bharat Nivas on November 24, 25 and 26, 2016.

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<td><strong>Once Upon a River</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Written by:</strong></td>
<td>Vinu Karthick</td>
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<td><strong>Directed by:</strong></td>
<td>Jill Navarre</td>
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<td><strong>Music by:</strong></td>
<td>Hartmut von Lieres</td>
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<td><strong>Costumes by:</strong></td>
<td>Tanya</td>
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<td><strong>Choreography by:</strong></td>
<td>Grace and Vaibhav</td>
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<td><strong>Sound and Video Operator:</strong></td>
<td>Myrta</td>
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<td><strong>Stage Manager:</strong></td>
<td>Mahesh</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistant Stage Managers:</strong></td>
<td>Sanjeevi, Gospell</td>
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<td><strong>Assistant Director:</strong></td>
<td>Franzi</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Set Design:</strong></td>
<td>Swar, Christophe, Mukesh Kumar, Ok</td>
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<td><strong>Lights:</strong></td>
<td>Jean Legrand</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Actors:</strong></td>
<td>Swar, Shilpi, Natasha, Deep, Franz, Sethupathy, Christophe, Renana, Hema, Satish, Sophie, Kalou, Chetan Kumar, Siddharth, Shrey, Prithvi, Yashoda, Kineret Lali, Mukesh Kumar</td>
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</table>
Outcomes

Our performance of *Once Upon a River* reached an Auroville audience of 1,500 people. Our production presented the premiere of a new play and offered an exciting theatre experience to Auroville which enriched our cultural life and connected us with other artists from India and abroad. Such a large, diverse group working together for a common goal proved it can be done! To me (Jill) this is always very inspiring.

We would like to thank:

- Shakthi for voice coaching
- Emmi and Michael, Jay Emmanuel for the dance and movement work
- Ok (Upcycling Studio), for the sparkling river and lake
- Jo and makeup team; Santosh for face painting
- Thanajayan, production manager
- Shanti for the props
- The Visitor’s Centre and Dosa Corner for the tea
- Clemens and Coco (Auroarchana), for the props and furniture
- V. Umapathy (teacher at KVGH School of Fine Arts, Pondy) for the set design and waves
- Mohanam sound troupe for the festival music
- Madhu
- Anand
- Yatra Srinivassan for the video
- Actor friends from Rajasthan

Reflections

What was most meaningful about this experience was putting together a large team from Auroville, around India and abroad and creating something beautiful together. The challenge was to keep our Auroville values and share them with those who are not from here. Artists who came from outside didn’t understand our way of working, even our reason for working, sometimes. We learned to let go and let Mother do it!

Future plans

More and more, better and better. We have already started working on our next play, *All My Sons* by Arthur Miller. Because the world needs to come to Auroville, and Auroville must open its arms to the world.
CRIPA (Centre for Research in the Performing Arts)

Introduction

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

Performances

- 11 April Classical Kathak dance performance
- 23 April “Commemorating Shakespeare’s 400th Anniversary”
- 23 September Equinox music performance by Aurelio and Holger
- 30 September Live music with Nuria, Matt, Holger, Shanks, Sreenath
- 17 December Debussy piano recital by Heinrich
- 23 December Concert of Western music, Khachaturian Violin Concerto
- 3 January Jazz Night with Sid Jacob & Matt Littlewood Trio
- 13 January Bharatnatyam performance by Tanjore Quartet
- 14/15 Jan “My Burning Heart” theatre performance by Francesca
- 7 February Concerto and other pieces performed by Ladislav and Pushkar
- 17/18/19 Feb “My Autopsy” theatre performance by Hamish & Fif
- 23 February “Encounters and Reflections” piano concert by Hartmut V. Lieres
- 5 March “Musical Evening Around the Piano” with Alain, Dominique, Yaroslava

Classes every week during the season

- Dance with Terra
- Belly-dance with Galit or Priscilla
- Flamenco with Viviane
- Russian Bells with Vera
- Modern dance with Nikita
- Bharatanatyam with Neela
- Theatre with Fif
- Theatre with Francesca
- Theatre with Kaeridwyn
- Music with Matt and Holger
- Dance with Ram Suresh
- Salsa with Vijay
- and more...

Rehearsals

- Auroville Choir and Youth Choir rehearsals (performances at Bharat Nivas)
- Auroville Theater Group: Once Upon a River rehearsals (performances at Bharat Nivas)
- “Footprint: An Indo-Danish Dance” rehearsals (performance at Bharat Nivas)
- Auroville Theater Group: All My Sons rehearsals
- Matt and Holger rehearsals
- Ram and Suresh dance rehearsals (performance at CRIPA)
Piano

- Alain, Pushkar, Shakti, Nuria, Christopher, Rosa, Hartmut, Slava, Matt...

Workshops

- Dance workshop with Poumi
- Theater workshop with Kaeridwyn
- Workshop with The Unicorn Collective
- Bharatanatyam workshop with Ram and Suresh
- Mask workshop with Auroville Theatre Group

Special Event

- Holi Tango Festival (March 8 to 12, 2017)

Outcomes

Rehearsals at CRIPA led to performances attended by hundreds of Aurovilians, adults and children, volunteers, guests and guest artists. Classes here attract hundreds of students in theatre, dance and music. Workshops are offered regularly and often provide a platform for interaction between students and guest artists from Auroville, India and abroad.

Reflections

For me (Jean-Christophe), CRIPA is becoming an incubator for creativity in all the Performing Arts. Regrettably, however, the new visa legislation we have no longer allows us to welcome and share the knowledge of artists from abroad for workshops; even to give a performance is no longer possible without a business visa. This is really a pity for Auroville.

Future

We hope to be able to expand our facility next year to accommodate the growing need for time and space at CRIPA. Looking forward to what the New Year brings and how we can best offer Auroville a supportive venue for the Performing Arts.
Eluciole Circus School

Introduction

This year Eluciole Circus changed the roof of the school. It took more time than was planned, partly because of the difficulties incurred by demonetizations, partly because along the way slight modifications were needed. From the original 5 weeks planned, the work lasted from September to December 2016.

During this time the larger classes at Eluciole ground to a halt, though I (Kalou) continued to work with smaller groups in my house. The full programs restarted in January 2017.

Activities of the year

Weekly activities included:

- Mornings 9am-12pm: circus class for children of Kindergarten (Wednesdays) and Nandanam Kindergarten (Fridays). Sixteen to seventeen children attended from each school and were always accompanied by two to three teachers.

- The Learning Community (TLC) sent two groups to Eluciole Circus (ages 6-8 and 9-12) twice a week in the afternoons. Working with this age group I do not accept more than 10-12 students at once, so when more students are interested another day of the week is added.

- Advanced older students, i.e. teenagers and adults learning aerials, had sessions 3 times per week.

We had one performance with seventeen 6-year-old angels from Kindergarten, on the 27th of April, after only 3 months' practice with me. They managed to perform for their parents and their school. They were beautiful in their work of attention, concentration, coordination.

Reflections

The new roof is our new big creation this year. It is 10 metres high and offers the possibility of having seven aerialists working at the same time! With this new possibility, the students will be able to expand their level and progress a lot in many different ways. Up in the air, they develop the beautiful qualities of confidence, trust, and self love, essential for the development of the human being.

Patience was our work this year, and trust. Now with the new high roof, we are working on some new fears! A very interesting development. This high roof is a new challenge in our life!

Conclusion

It is magical to see the children month by month progress, able to do what they could not do few months ago. I always tell them everything is possible if we really believe it. Another quality that I share with them is to believe in themselves.

Auroville is a place where children and adults have the possibility to learn and explore all sorts of forms, in the search of expressing the divine through the arts. This is why we are here, to live our Yoga and to help the children to go deeper inside themselves and to discover their divine part. They embark on this journey of energy, transformation, art, creativity, joy, balance, harmony, love, magic, happiness, divine light, and through it may vibrate their inner potential.

The culmination is for the physical to express the divine spirit.
Introduction

Auroville’s Natural Horsemanship school wants to create a professional environment where particular activities can be offered to the community. We facilitate activities in Equine-assisted Learning, equine-assisted therapy, and horse development, from beginnings to foundation training and professional training. We use the Parelli horsemanship methods and materials as the basis for our work. The activities we facilitate benefit our students mentally, emotionally and physically.

Activities of the year

This year we especially worked towards creating an environment where we can offer more professionally Equine-assisted learning (EAL) activities and therapy. EAL is an experiential learning approach that promotes the development of life skills for educational, professional and personal goals through interacting with horses. Our students gain in self-confidence while learning how to work with such a large and powerful creature. Horses provide us with a way to see our internal landscape and our own modes of operation. They offer us the opportunity to experience humility, compassion and ‘challenge’ — all critical elements in supporting self-growth and self-awareness.

Classes are scheduled to take care of the needed development of the horses and see how the children can benefit in helping and teaching them. We work on the ground with lead ropes (“Online”), in clear open areas (“Liberty”), riding with our seat and focus only (“Freestyle”) and riding with contact and precision (“Finesse”). We have weekly theory classes where we focus on horse psychology and behavior, as well as human psychology and how horsemanship can affect our life. We look at what aspects need our attention in order that we can help our horses better, become better horsemen and in turn become the better ‘us’ that we can be.

All these activities were open for children and young adults from 8 to 20 years old. More than thirty students participated with us this year.

Outcomes

An outcome of this work is a team of children who share and understand the same idea of what natural horsemanship really means: understanding the horses’ point of view and working towards creating a relationship with them using Love, Language and Leadership.

The children learned that in order to succeed they have to put energy into some key aspects of their life like Attitude, Knowledge, Tools, Technique, Time and Imagination.

We built the foundation for the small ones to become confident around horses and to perceive their own inner movements and how they affect the horse and others. For the older ones we started working on solid horsemanship skills to build on if they want to pursue work as horsemen.

Reflections

It was interesting for us to see how far some students went into their education and skills to the point that they could take over some classes and help the smaller children through the same activities, solving the same difficulties they encountered years before. This work has created a group of people who understand how to work in a group, communicate with others in a non-violent way, and most importantly are able to stay calm in emotional situations and find solutions constructively without having to fail or brace under pressure.
In Auroville generally, our work has not been perceived for what it really is, as people still have the idea that horses are for riding purpose only and for individuals who can economically afford them. With our school we are striving to prove the exact opposite: that horses can be accessible to everyone and that riding is just a small aspect of what horsemanship is. Our work does not pursue the advancement of the horse for competition purposes. Our purpose is in fact entirely different: relating with the horse as a mirror can help us in aspects of our life that we might not be even aware need our attention. And at a later stage of the process, having gained a new perspective, we can go back to horsemanship as an Art form and really work together, as partners with the horse, towards perfection.

Conclusion

Like many other projects in Auroville this school survives because of the passion of the teachers and instructors involved with the project. Seeing the children who attend the classes, how they develop, grow and get further in life is the reason we keep doing what we do.

All the instructors of the school also believe in getting better and up to date with the discoveries and updates of the horsemanship world; we bring this back to Auroville and India and offer it in the most professional way possible.

We plan for the next year to keep progressing ourselves as teachers and to help our students go further into their inner development as well as acquiring new skills in horsemanship.

Looking back we had only positive experiences with students and parents and we are looking forward to affect positively even more lives in the year to come!
Like many environmental projects, the challenge we face is to balance progress and restraint. Gratitude Animal Farm is a sanctuary but also a learning place, and we try to be welcoming to visitors while not exposing the animals to too much disturbance or endangering the peaceful and serene atmosphere of the place.

As we all know Auroville belongs to nobody in particular; it belongs at the same time to everybody not in particular. We have to deal with this paradox graciously; we try to carry on instructing, informing, educating, directing the flow of tourists, pointing out things that are not in the first place obvious, visible, photographable by selfie. A sanctuary is not in the first place something that you take home in your Samsung.

Nevertheless we also have our ‘regulars’ coming: a must for the Kindergartens of Auroville, visits from the Lysée Français, and ashramites as well as organized village groups.

This year we had to invest a lot into repair of aviaries and acquiring new pigeons. The peacocks remain naturally the star attraction, being the national bird of India, apart from our personal attachment to them.
Kailash Youth Residency

Overview

Kailash is an educational residency. The general idea of Kailash is to have a shared living experience where the youth manage their community life, the duties that come along with it and the social outcome of it. This means that they have to organize their own lives to keep the harmony of the residence. They learn from the consequences of their acts and learn to be responsible.

A few rules have been set up from the start, which give form to our collective life:

- Kailash is open to youth between 16 and 21 years old.
- Residents must have a daily activity such as school, work, apprenticeship, etc.
- Residents actively participate in the community life (e.g. weekly meetings, gardening, cooking shifts, maintenance of the building, and so on).
- Residents respect each other and the neighbourhood (no loud noise after 9 pm).
- No illegal drugs in the residency.

Highlights of the year

In November 2016 we held a fundraising dinner and karaoke night in Kailash. This was to raise funds for refurbishing the 15-year-old building. We do not receive any financial support or a maintenance budget from Auroville, but generate income from within only. This year it was very much necessary to undergo full clean-up and repairs of the bathrooms, and a full repainting of the inside of the building by a professional crew. We also had electrical problems with our bore well pump, and had quite some substantial expenses to fix that. The fundraising event had a very positive impact not only within Kailash itself but also within the larger Auroville community. It felt like a family event. The refurbishing that we could do with the funds contributed to a general feeling of well-being and put positive energy into the place.

In November 2017 a beautiful first-page article was published in our local Auroville Today newspaper celebrating Kailash’s 15 years of existence.

We continued with our regular internal collective clean up, gardening and other community works.

Outcomes

Kailash benefits the Auroville youth, with 12 rooms are available for them. Two rooms are also available for non-Auroville youth who wish to come and live a different life experience within Auroville. These youth from outside also choose to fit into the original frame and criteria of Kailash, participating in the full Kailash experience.

Reflections

This year we had fewer Auroville youth, and more available rooms, so we decided to extend our hospitality to young volunteers. This was not a very successful experience as volunteers who come to Auroville may change their plans in between and often don’t have a very bonding engagement to their volunteering place. This situation can be disturbing to the community life of Kailash, as the residents are to relate to the place and take up responsibility for the smooth functioning of the
collective life. When people leave before the end of a projected term, it disturbs the flow of the group dynamics.

We have found it more successful to welcome interns who are in Auroville specifically for an internship and who are committed for a longer term. So now in Kailash we have both interns and non-Auroville youth who study in an Auroville school. Our experience with interns has been very positive; most of them come from different parts of India and this allows a nice positive interaction between youth from different parts of the country. They also come for a given length of time from 4 to 6 months, which is enough time for them to integrate and for a mutual meaningful exchange to take place.
Kalabhum Music Studio

Kalabhum Music Studio has been active for the last 17 years, and has functioned as the most important space for the practice of music in Auroville. A focal point for rehearsals, teaching, and performing, the space used all year round by bands, students and teachers to further both collective and individual skills.

The studio is open 7 days a week, and is used by large numbers of groups and individuals. The building supports mainly amplified music, but is also used by other groups such as choirs, vocal workshops, plays and other similar artistic activities. This year as in previous years, there were several big events in which the music studio operated as the centre for activities. These included:

• Auroville Singing Festival – This annual event included more than 50 participants.
• “Citizen One” – Led by Jesse, Johnny and the TLC (The Learning Community) team, a large-scale Auroville play with more than 60 adults and children involved.
• Kalabhum Festival – The now yearly event showcases both Auroville and International artists.
• Jazz Vocal Concert with Vera and international visiting artists – A performance in Bharat Nivas in February.
• The Solitude Farm Eco-Music Festival – Several of the bands that performed in Solitude this year worked exclusively in Kalabhum.
• Jazz Cafés – Performances at the Visitors’ Center. Included a concert for the International Potters Market in January.
• AV Sisters - Led by Shakti, Vera and Swaha, they performed numerous concerts throughout the year.

Many Auroville music teachers use the space on a regular basis for their classes with children. A large variety of instruments are taught at the studio including piano, guitar, drums, tabla, saxophone, and singing. This year classes were also held in sound engineering and recording.

The studio is also been a space to support young musicians and up-and-coming artists. Several bands organised and led by Auroville youth regularly use the studio to practice and perform. Weekly jam sessions are also being held to encourage new performers to step forward.

The Kalabhum studio team is fully involved with other music projects elsewhere (including showcases outside of Auroville), through performances, organisation, coordination of visiting artists, and the setup of concerts at other venues.
Kalabhumi Open Art Studio

Introduction

The Kalabhumi open studio wants to create a space for interested students of all ages to experiment with and to explore art in a professional equipped studio with guidance and advice from an experienced artist (Nele).

Activities of the year

The studio offers different art media for painting (acrylic, oil, watercolor), drawing, spray-painting, sculpture with clay and metal. All of these were explored by different students in the last year.

For the 8th grade in Transition School, up to 6 students at a time can choose to come to the studio to work on a project. The class happens at the same time as their weekly arts and crafts class at school, and the studio is easy to reach, at walking distance.

For Future School students, the open studio is offered as an elective class. This year 4 students came for a weekly afternoon class lasting 2 to 3 hours. They worked on creating textured surfaces on paper with cloth and texture paste, creating a feeling of canvas, which they painted with acrylic paint. We also worked with watercolors and drawing.

For adults, there are two afternoon classes of around 3 hours: one class with guided teaching of technique, the other with emphasis on free expression. We worked on composition, creating the feeling of space in the painting through proportion, light and dark shades, color, and perspective. We also did an extensive study of watercolors, with the theme of leaves.

At request, two new classes were created for interested 5th grade students (each lasting 1 hour), with Stephanie as co-teacher. One group created a mural and the other worked with stencil and spray paint. (Stencil work requires a study of illustration, reducing the image to two or three shades. We used the help of Photoshop to find and determine the light and dark shades.)

Reflections

The emphasis in these classes is on free expression, and I try to create an atmosphere of free creation. To be creative one has to be free from the pressure of ‘perfection’ and be ready to experiment, sometimes risking to have less perfection in order to find a new idea and create some strength in the artwork. This freedom of expression is always encouraged at the same time with exercises of technique and precision.

The open studio has been running for many years now, and there is quite a demand for art classes, for both younger and adult students. So I welcome the fact that other artists offer to take part in the teaching aspect. I feel this points in the right direction to be able to make the project more flexible.

It is the part of finding the right mixture of studying technique in a framed, guided class with giving enough freedom to find one’s own way of expression which makes the classes interesting, and in some way a sort of self-research. Doing this consciously ideally changes the way one sees things. This is something often mentioned by students when I ask them about what is most important for them.

The learning process is reciprocal; to see the work from the angle of the student gives me new ideas for my own work. So I would not call this ‘teaching’ but ‘working together’.
It has been interesting to have classes with younger students. The classes are very much liked by the students and will be continuing next year.

**Conclusion**

The classes have been a success in the sense that there has been a visible progress in both the technical skills and the general understanding of art. Most students have been coming for many years, and the groups have formed a dynamic which helps the student to feel comfortable, free, but also trying to do the best work possible.

There is a plan to enlarge the project with a pottery workshop, run by Sabrina, who would also be offering classes. This would be a fantastic development and we hope to manage to realize this in the coming year.

I am looking forward to have a class for ceramic and sculpture offered, so as to cover a wider spectrum of the arts. Three-dimensional study also helps in understanding forms, and will eventually help for the drawing and painting skills as well.
Laboratory of Evolution

Introduction

Focused on both the two main aims of Auroville – Evolution and Unity – the research done at the Laboratory of Evolution, Centre of Human Unity (LOE-CHU) encompasses the vast array of topics that those two overarching aims must cover, in the light of Sri Aurobido and the Mother's overall vision. We have a rich, ever expanding and specialized library cum mediatheque. But this place being called a 'Laboratory' means that the research done must be experiential as well as theoretical: we try to foster and document as much as possible the conscious evolution happening in Auroville, and keep an eye on any conscious evolution happening in other places or individuals elsewhere on the planet.

LOE Library

Our research library, as well as a being a service of book lending, has a major aspect of being a source of information about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision of evolution, as well as Auroville's ideals and history.

We help our visitors find books related to their research: school teachers, members of the Farewell team, Guests or Newcomers who need advice on the choice of books which will help them start their approach to Integral Yoga, youngsters who want to start a more conscious life and want to learn more about spirituality, nutrition, Nature Cure, etc.

This year there were many requests for books related to group study activities and cultural events, and we had to photocopy our main books on Evolution to be able to meet the demand.

We acquired a second set of the Ashram's Bulletin of Physical Education (1949 to 1974) in order to lend them, as they are a rich source of inspiration and contain unpublished texts.

We are getting more and more scientific books (on quantum physics, biology, Near Death Experiences, Quantum Healing) which confirm the discoveries of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on evolution and the Unity Field of Consciousness. This helps us to convey a clear understanding of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's work through scientific explanations.

Bhaga's work

Bhaga’s research work this year has consisted mostly in giving courses and workshops to various individuals and groups, both Aurovilians and Guests. Five Aurovilians who last year attended her 'Cellular Consciousness' workshop came regularly to meet with Bhaga on the same topic. She now receives people in the small space that serves as her office on the ground floor of Luminosity. She has also continued to document the day-to-day progress in her own process of conscious evolution, particularly at the cellular level of her body.

For the first time, Bhaga had the opportunity to give her workshop on 'Cellular Consciousness' to two children: the two daughters, aged six and twelve, of a couple from Brittany visiting Auroville. It was quite challenging to address the specific educational needs of both the adults and the children at the same time, but no one's interest flagged and it all worked out quite to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

Bhaga also helped prepare (individually) two young men from the local Tamil villages in going through their Newcomer process. They had worked and lived in Auroville for a few years already, but lacked the more spiritual background needed to better understand one's future full participation in Auroville's life, this time as an Aurovilian.

For Bhaga, thanks to the direct experience she finally had with both children and differently educated young adults from the Tamil village local culture, this year has been a great verification of
how to adapt for each person and age the contents of what she has to offer, so that it becomes for each one, not artificial and theoretical added knowledge, but a new, truly useful part of their life.

Namah’s work

Namah’s work this year has included:

- Welcoming groups (3 to 10 people) coming to Auroville and giving presentations on Auroville and Integral Yoga.
- Researching the practical aspects of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga and integral psychology. This year the focus was how to integrate Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga for yoga teachers.
- Work on a project of a CD/DVD on Relaxation.
- Work on a book on “Yoga and the three planes of the Being”.
- As a representative of the LOE, participating in the research group CIRHU/Lila, participating in discussions pertaining to Auroville's 50th birthday, and meeting and sharing with AVI Belgium.
- With Bhaga, researching on the actual evolution of humanity through documents, films, and analysis of particularly meaningful aspects of our own inner development.
Mitra Youth Hostel

About us

Mitra Youth Hostel was created in 2004 to fulfill the need of providing accommodation and other facilities for students and volunteers who come for educational purposes and to explore and serve Auroville. The hostel is a two-storey building located centrally in Auroville, behind Town Hall, at a walking distance from Matrimandir. It offers 7 single and 17 double rooms, common spaces, and a kitchen to provide breakfast and dinner. It is an ideal accommodation for students or volunteers visiting Auroville for the first time, as it helps them get acquainted to the town of Auroville with a mixed crowd of students from around the world residing here.

Guests

Guests included those participating as interns, trainees and volunteers in Auroville. This year Mitra hosted people from: India (122 guests), USA (21), Italy (2), Germany (2), France (1), Netherlands (1), Finland (1), Spain (1), Lebanon (1), Tunisia (1), Mexico (1), and Palestine (1).

They participated at the following units and services:

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<td>Jaap</td>
<td>White Ant Studio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Developments and activities of the year

- This year we converted 4 double rooms into single rooms used as SAIIER staff quarters for Aurovilians.
- Our ladies were trained to improve the variety of food, and we were able to add some North Indian foods to our menu.
- An Upcycling and Art Mela workshop was conducted in Mitra’s conference hall, in which the resident students took active part.
- The Auroville Theatre Group used our conference space to create a stage background.
Pitanga Cultural Centre

Introduction

Pitanga Cultural Centre dedicates its service to the development and enhancement of physical education and cultural activities in the light of Mother and Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

Pitanga offers a support for community members and registered guests of Auroville to explore and work with their bodies through physical education, offering an extensive program of regular yoga, dance, body work, and martial arts classes, as well as health treatments. Pitanga also hosts cultural programs including exhibitions, films, and concerts, which help to develop other aspects of the being.

Pitanga offers its free service to adults and children, 6 days a week. Beauty, harmony and attention to detail are values that are fostered in the atmosphere of the centre.

Activities of the year

Regular classes and health treatments offered over the past year included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yoga classes</th>
<th>Health treatments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Iyengar Yoga</td>
<td>1 Acupuncture treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hatha Vinyasa Yoga</td>
<td>2 Craniosacral and osteopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hatha yoga</td>
<td>3 Psychotherapy and hypnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Yoga Therapy</td>
<td>4 “Journey through the memory of the body”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Pranayama Yoga</td>
<td>5 “Releasing through Awareness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Svastha Yoga</td>
<td>6 Naturopathy and Cupping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hormonal Yoga</td>
<td>7 Spiritual healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Yoga Nidra</td>
<td>8 Thai Yoga massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Vinyasa flow Yoga</td>
<td>9 Fire cupping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 Reflexology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Ballet for adults</td>
<td>11 Craniosacral therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Belly Dancing</td>
<td>12 Oil massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Odissi Dance</td>
<td>13 Biodecodage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exercise</strong></td>
<td>14 Holistic healing (NLP, health coaching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Pilates</td>
<td>15 Naturopathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kickboxing</td>
<td>16 Trisoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Aviva exercise for women</td>
<td>17 Medical massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 “Discover energy body”</td>
<td>18 Yoga therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Awareness Through the Body (ATB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Occasional activities held this year included:

### Concerts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1st</td>
<td>Hindustani Vocal concert</td>
<td>Kim Cunio and Charulatha Mani</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 10th</td>
<td>Auroville Theatre Group</td>
<td>Franziska Detrez, Myrta Konietzka, Nele Schute</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 14th</td>
<td>Piano concert</td>
<td>Hartmut</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Films

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 20th</td>
<td>“Leap of Faith” (BKS Iyengar)</td>
<td>Tatiana</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exhibitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 19th</td>
<td>Lisbeth and Amara photography</td>
<td>Lisbeth</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 26th</td>
<td>“A World of Wonder and Delight”</td>
<td>Paulette</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 27th</td>
<td>“Abstract: Up-Close”</td>
<td>Juergen Puetz</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 17th</td>
<td>“The World I Choose to Live In”</td>
<td>Dariya</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 8th</td>
<td>Performer Series</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Chennai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 19th</td>
<td>“DÉ(s)-MATERIALITÉS: matter of materiality”</td>
<td>Julie Maman</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 10th</td>
<td>Painting exhibition</td>
<td>Louis</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 31st</td>
<td>“Vases of Souls”</td>
<td>Helgard</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 21st</td>
<td>Painting exhibition</td>
<td>Hasi</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 9th</td>
<td>“Matrimandir: As above so below”</td>
<td>Paulette</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 25th</td>
<td>Painting Exhibition</td>
<td>Carla Sello</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Organizer</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 20th</td>
<td>Iyengar Yoga workshop all levels with emphasis for beginners</td>
<td>Tatiana Tolochkova</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1st</td>
<td>Paida-Lajin (clapping and stretching)</td>
<td>Anandi</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 12th &amp; 13th</td>
<td>Thai Yoga Massage training</td>
<td>Bebe Merino</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 8th &amp; 9th</td>
<td>Kaya Bodha (body awareness) workshop</td>
<td>Hans</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 15th &amp; 16th</td>
<td>Kaya Bodha workshop</td>
<td>Hans</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 22nd &amp; 23rd</td>
<td>Kaya Bodha workshop</td>
<td>Hans</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 29th to 8th April 2017</td>
<td>Thai Yoga Massage workshop</td>
<td>Itzhak Helman</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 30th to 2nd Apr 2017</td>
<td>Pranayama course</td>
<td>Namrita &amp; Francois</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highlights of the year:

1. **Pranayama training at Iyengar Institute**: Thanks to kind sponsorship through the Foundation for World Education, our Iyengar teachers, Angela and Tatiana, were able to attend in-depth training at the Iyengar Institute in Pune with specific emphasis on Pranayama. They both greatly benefited from this exposure and were then able to integrate the teachings into their classes. Tatiana offered a number of themed workshops afterwards where students could deepen their practice, and an enlarged pranayama class.

2. **New classes and treatments**: To our schedule we added Svastha Yoga, a children's yoga class, “Discover energy body” children's class, holistic healing therapy, fire cupping, Biodecodage, Medical massage, and Trisoma.

3. **Dance**: We were able to expand the range of dance classes in our regular schedule.
4. **Cultural activities:** This year saw an increase in cultural programs from 2016 figures by 10 extra classes and 2 extra workshops.

*Note:* The new visa legislation in India has greatly affected Pitanga’s service, as it is no long possible for someone on a tourist visa to legally volunteer in India. For over 25 years the Auroville community has, each year, enjoyed a range of activities that were enriched by visiting teachers and therapists who volunteered their skills as a contribution towards unending education. This provided a rich repository of shared teachings and skills that helped renew the community. Unfortunately the new restriction has reduced the number and diversity of programs we are able to offer, especially in the season time.

**Outcomes and reflections**

We estimate at peak times we have 900 visits per week of people attending activities.

We are very happy with the increase in the numbers of regular Aurovilian and Newcomer teachers and therapists who have joined our team. Pitanga is a natural base for newcomers to Auroville to integrate, share their skills and work in an environment that is very community-orientated.

The edible garden is beginning to provide fruit and vegetables, which will be offered to students after classes in an effort to promote well-being and increase awareness about the nutritional content of what one can easily grow. The garden’s compost area is being shared with the Samasti community.

As Pitanga stands for growth of consciousness and potential, we placed special emphasis this year on creating an enabling environment for capacity development in our team:

- Two of our team members took part in the Stewardship for New Emergence training which helps develop skill sets for systems design while developing cohesion and alignment among us. We are arranging for our workers to have a one-day session in June in Unity Pavilion, where Stewardship practitioner coaches will take our team through some of the main principles including the values we stand for and tools for systems design and interpersonal relations. We have found this training to be of huge benefit to us and thank SAIIER for this opportunity.

- Tatiana and Angela enhanced their yoga training with an Iyengar training course with Geeta Iyengar in Pune, which was kindly part funded by Stichting De Zaaier. This workshop was quite poignant as it happened shortly after the passing of BKS Iyengar, and thousands of other teachers were in attendance from all corners of the world, creating rich field of learning.

- Our workers used the quieter summer months to enrich their personal development, helping increase the confidence levels of our team and fostering creativity and accountability. We will continue to keep their development as on of our priorities.

**Conclusion**

We are grateful to be part of the wider SAIIER body and to offer our service as a thread in the web of Auroville’s unending education. We will endeavor to give the best service possible for the coming year with joy and dedication as an offering to help community members to grow in awareness and development in all aspects of their being.
SAIIE Transport Service

Introduction

The SAIIE Transport Service endeavors to create and maintain common transport facilities in Auroville. The main purpose is to provide services to the schools, i.e. to bring Auroville school children from their home to schools and drop them back home. SAIIE Transport delivers Solar Kitchen lunch to schools every day. It also helps bring children to their sports programmes and back home, and services field trips related to schools.

Activities of the year

There are 15 people working in SAIIE Transport Service, including 6 Aurovilians.

Like every year, this year also SAIIE Transport helped bring children to school, the swimming pool, field trips, and dropped them back home. Transport was also provided to drop children at the French School in Pondicherry and bring them back.

We also helped the schools who conducted educational tours. We provided buses for the groups going to Kavunji, Kodaikanal for Auroville Nature Camp. This involved several trips, for the different batches.

Every year during summer more trips are conducted. This summer buses were provided for excursion tours, field trips and for Auroville-related programs such as a dance program and music shows. We also work on Sundays.

Presently the service has 12 vehicles: 7 buses, 2 vans, 1 Jeep, 1 food-carrying van and a Honda Unicorn bike.

Future direction

SAIIE Transport wants to be of more service to the community, and is planning to get more vehicles according to the growth of Auroville.
Savitri Bhavan

Introduction

Savitri Bhavan was founded in November 1995 as a place where all kinds of materials and activities could be gathered that would enhance understanding and appreciation of Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem *Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol*, which the Mother has called ‘the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision’. Since Sri Aurobindo’s vision underlies the aims and ideals of Auroville it was felt to be important to create a place where his vision could be shared and spread not only amongst Aurovilians and Newcomers but also the general public. All the activities of Savitri Bhavan aim to serve this purpose.

Activities of the year

The regular research activities of Savitri Bhavan continued throughout the year, grouped under the headings of Outreach, Learning Materials and Research Projects. During this year a significant increase in Outreach activities occurred with the addition of several new regular classes and courses, now totalling 18 in all *(see following report on Savitri Bhavan Research Activities)*. Some highlights of the year were:

- A mime performance was given in April of Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Silence is All” by Drupad with eight of his young students from Deepanam School.
- August was marked by an outstanding exhibition, *Images of the Invisible*, paintings by Paolo Tommasi, a distinguished Italian artist and devotee of the Mother now living in the Ashram.
- In November a group of devotees from Ahmedabad and Baroda centres visited Savitri Bhavan to celebrate the release of the publication *Savitri Sabdamrut* no. 6, the sixth volume of the Gujarati series of translations by Shri Kirit Thakkar from Shraddhavan’s books *The English of Savitri*. This volume covers Cantos 1, 2 and 3 of Book Seven of *Savitri*: “The Book of Yoga”.
- On December 27th 2016 Shri Manoj Das Gupta, Managing Trustee of the Ashram presented to Shraddhavan the 2016 Sri Aurobindo Puraskar (Award) for work in English at a ceremony in the Hall of Harmony at the Ashram school, “in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the study of Sri Aurobindo”. These awards are bestowed annually by the Sri Aurobindo Samiti of Sri Aurobindo Bhavan Kolkata for work in English and an Indian language.
- In January 2017 the Savitri Study Circle met for the first time in the newly completed Sangam Hall, under construction since December 2015. The Hall was officially inaugurated on February 19th by Dr. Ananda Reddy when he gave the 7th annual Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture on the topic of “The Vision and the Boon: Savitri and Katha Upanishad”. About 300 people were in attendance.
- A few days later, on the Mother’s birthday, a ‘First Brick’ ceremony was held to initiate construction of the long-planned extension of the Picture Gallery. This project is funded by GOI grant and aims for completion in February 2018. When fully equipped, the new enlarged Gallery will house a permanent display of the entire series of *Meditations on Savitri* paintings made by Huta with the Mother’s inspiration and guidance from 1961-66. This will make it possible to ‘walk through’ these illustrations of selected passages of the poem from the first lines of Canto One of Book One to the last lines of the poem at the close of Book Twelve. Completion of this construction in Auroville’s 50th anniversary year will also mark the completion of the Savitri Bhavan complex according to its Master Plan, first presented in November 1996.
Outcomes

In addition to the major landmarks in the physical manifestation of the Bhavan, two more outstanding events were the completion of reading cycles of Sri Aurobindo’s epic. In the English of Savitri class the systematic reading and study begun in August 2009 came to an end when the group reached the end of the poem on December 29th, 2016. A new cycle of classes started from January 19th, 2017. Video recordings of these sessions are published on the website www.savitribhavan.org and transcripts made of them have formed the basis of the English of Savitri volumes published by the Bhavan in recent years. Meanwhile, in the Sunday-morning Savitri Study Circle, the reading of Sri Aurobindo’s epic which was begun in May 2012 was completed on February 26th, 2017, and a new cycle of reading and study was launched the following Sunday. Regular participation in this Study Circle has steadily increased over the years and reached one hundred participants in January 2017.

An increase in attendance has also been experienced in the group reading Sri Aurobindo’s major philosophical work The Life Divine, launched in December 2008. In February 2017 thirty-five regular members embarked on the final chapter of the book, and expect to complete the reading in December 2017. An article on this study-pilgrimage was published in the Sri Aurobindo Pathmandir Annual of 2016.

During the last year, Savitri Bhavan experienced a record number of visits by student groups as well as increasing numbers of visitors who appreciate its ambience and the three semi-permanent exhibitions (Sri Aurobindo – A Life Sketch in Photographs, Glimpses of the Mother, and the Meditations on Savitri paintings), as well as the information materials provided in the entry area. In response to these growing numbers of visitors, the team has been enlarged by the inclusion of three young Newcomers who offer attendance at the Digital Library, the Picture Gallery and the Information Desk.

Another newcomer to the team, from the USA, is a highly-experienced teacher of English as a second language. She is providing regular classes in spoken and written English to employed staff and some team-members. We are very grateful to her for this opportunity to enhance the language skills of people working at the Bhavan.

Reflections

The large number of visitors received throughout the year, many of whom express their appreciation of the atmosphere, activities and architecture of the Bhavan, is felt to be an indication that Savitri Bhavan is fulfilling its purpose of spreading awareness of the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo which underlie the aims and ideals of Auroville. This is both encouraging and challenging to the team-members.

Since Savitri Bhavan is visited by so many student-groups as well as members of the general public, it is planned to create more audio-visual presentations for their information and understanding of the purpose of the Centre, including films created specifically for architecture students.

One challenge which remains unsolved is the shortage of suitable part-time staff or volunteers to guide and answer the questions of the many groups and individual members of the public who visit the Bhavan.

Conclusion

In February, Savitri Bhavan was asked to participate in a major initiative launched by members of Auroville International as part of the celebrations of Auroville’s 50th anniversary in 2018. This project, called “Savitri around the World”, aims at a continuous complete reading of Savitri by readers in as many countries as possible, broadcast on the internet. The organisers have requested Savitri Bhavan to host the final event to be held over two days during the birthday week and to assist in all the necessary arrangements to make the project successful. This will be one of the Bhavan’s major projects over the coming year.
Savitri Bhavan Research Activities

Introduction

The Research Activities undertaken at Savitri Bhavan aim to support the Bhavan’s central objective, which is to foster the values on which a true and lasting human unity can be founded by making available materials, facilities and assistance to aid a deeper and more widespread understanding of the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which underlie the aims and ideals of Auroville.

The Research Activities of Savitri Bhavan cover three main aspects: Research Projects, Learning Materials, and Outreach Activities.

Research Projects

1. **Savitri Study Circle:** This is the central on-going research project around which all the other activities of Savitri Bhavan have developed over the last 20 years, since its inception in November 1994. Increasing numbers of Aurovilians are participating regularly in this study, along with members of the Ashram and visitors from all over India and abroad, some of whom come once or twice, as long as they are in the area, while others attend regularly, or join the group for several months at a time during annual visits to Auroville and Pondicherry. During the winter of 2016-17 attendance rose to about 100 participants and in January 2017 the Savitri Study Circle met for the first time in the newly completed Sangam Hall, under construction since December 2015. The reading of *Savitri* begun in May 2012 was completed on February 26th, 2017, and a new cycle of reading and study was launched the following Sunday, March 5th, 2017.

2. **The Life Divine:** An increase in regular attendance has also been experienced in the group studying Sri Aurobindo’s major philosophical work *The Life Divine*, which was launched in December 2008. In February 2017 thirty-five regular members embarked on the final chapter of the book, and expect to complete the reading in December 2017. An article on this study-pilgrimage was published in the *Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir Annual* of 2016. The participants are experiencing an inspiring intensification of their understanding of Sri Aurobindo’s unique world-view through this regular shared study.

3. **Towards a Bibliography of Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri***: This too is an on-going project, aiming to provide a comprehensive bibliography of a wide range of *Savitri*-related materials for the assistance of readers, students and researchers, by maintaining up-to-date listings of all editions, translations and recordings of Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*, as well as *Savitri* studies, published and un-published, in book and non-book form, and other *Savitri*-related materials. The list of all known *Savitri*-related materials available has been maintained up to March 31st 2017, and in December 2016 an introductory reading list entitled “Exploring Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* – A Legend and a Symbol: An Introductory Reading List” was produced for free distribution to students and researchers and also posted on the Savitri Bhavan website.

4. **The English of *Savitri*, Volume 3:** From May 2016 work was taken up on editing transcripts of the *English of Savitri* sessions covering Book Seven: “The Book of Yoga”. In March 2017 the full text for this third volume of the *English of Savitri* series of publications was sent for final copy-editing. It is expected that the book will be published in July 2017.

5. **“The Mother’s work on *Savitri with some of her children***: This short research project extended over 3 months from July to September 2016 and culminated in a presentation at the Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research on October 8th, 2016.
6. **The Spiritual Significances of Flowers:** This on-going research project focuses on the spiritual names and significances given by the Mother to flowers presented to her by disciples. Many such flowers are growing in the gardens around Savitri Bhavan, and during 2016-17 for the third year running a photograph of one such flower was published as the ‘Flower of the Month’ on the Savitri Bhavan website (www.savitribhavan.org), along with the Mother’s comments and details about the plant. The photographs were taken by a young Aurovilian member of our team, Suresh Nagamani; the texts were researched by Dhanalakshmi and edited for publication by Shraddhavan.

7. **La Science de Vivre – advice from the Mother:** In the course of 2016-17 researcher Beatrice Baldacchino continued her study of the Mother’s *Entretiens* (talks in French to young people of the Ashram) by perusing the Mother’s *Entretiens* of 1954, noting the passages which contain the Mother’s advice on various aspects of ‘How to Live’. She has found that these fall into two main categories: practical matters, such as eating, sleeping, dreaming, studying and so on; and more psychological indications about the planes and parts of the being, and how to harmonise them and become more aware of the inner being. The passages identified have been referenced for future compilation under topic-headings in French as well as English, with a view to eventual publication. Beatrice intends to continue her study with further volumes of the *Entretiens*.

**Learning Materials**

This work involves the preparation, collection, and conservation of study aids to support the Outreach Activities and Research Projects of the Bhavan, and to assist students and researchers elsewhere on request.

1. **The Reading Room Collection:** This is a reference collection of book and non-book materials to support study and understanding of the life and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, their vision and teachings, and the knowledge underlying the aims and ideals of Auroville. It is open to the general interested public from 9am to 5pm daily Monday to Saturday throughout the year. During 2016-17, 43 new volumes were added to the collection, while 71 journal issues were received and perused for *Savitri*-related articles to be added to the bibliographical list being maintained and prepared for sharing with researchers.

2. **The Digital Library:** This is a collection of audio and video recordings relating to *Savitri*, the lives, work and vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and to Auroville, for individual computer access. The collection was steadily enlarged throughout the year, and was utilised by interested visitors and Aurovilians.

3. **The Huta D. Hindocha Collection:** The core of this unique collection is the series of 472 oil paintings created by the young disciple Huta under the Mother’s direct guidance from 1961 to 1967, illustrating selected passages from Sri Aurobindo’s epic and named by the Mother *Meditations on Savitri*. The collection was entrusted to Savitri Bhavan by the artist in 2001 along with a mass of related materials. During the year of 2016-17 two exhibitions of paintings from this series were held, and conservation work was continued on the many documents and additional paintings which make up the collection. Assistance was also given to the Havayavahana Trust – established by Huta to publish the treasures which she received from the Mother – in preparing three books by Huta for publication.

4. **Savitri Bhavan Archive:** This is the centralised collection where digital records of all the activities of Savitri Bhavan are gathered in the form of documents, Excel files, photo files and audio and video recordings. It is administered by Dhanalakshmi, who supplies relevant materials for use in our publications or as otherwise required.

5. **Audio-visual Archive:** This is an extensive collection of music and film recordings for use by individuals and groups, managed by Margrit Mala.
6. **House of Mother’s Agenda:** This is another collection of Learning Materials and Outreach Activities which has been housed at Savitri Bhavan since 2006, run by GangaLakshmi.

**Outreach**

The Outreach Activities of Savitri Bhavan expanded significantly during 2016-17. Regular classes and courses increased to 18, and increased attendance was experience for most of these. Also the numbers of student groups and visitors from the general public increased noticeably. Details of regular activities, special events, workshops and seminars held or hosted and visiting student groups are provided in the Annexure to this report.

**Reflections**

The most satisfying as well as most challenging aspect of the work of Savitri Bhavan for all the team-members is responding to the questions put to us about the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo which underlie not only the work of Savitri Bhavan but the very existence of Auroville itself. The appreciation of those we interact with, whether face to face, through our publications and website, or by e-mail, makes us feel that we are on the right track while at the same time challenges us to fulfil the purpose of the Bhavan with increasing purity and perfection.
Annexure:
Savitri Bhavan Outreach Activities

A: Regular weekly activities (16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Led by</th>
<th>Number of classes 2016-17</th>
<th>Average no. participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Savitri Study Circle</td>
<td>Group study of <em>Savitri</em></td>
<td>Shraddhavan</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga and the Evolution of Man</td>
<td>Group study of Sri Aurobindo’s view of evolution</td>
<td>Dr. Jai Singh</td>
<td>3 per week till 16.09, 2 per week from 16.10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isha Upanishad</td>
<td>Lecture series</td>
<td>Dr. Ananda Reddy</td>
<td>11 to Sept.16, 2016</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OM Choir</td>
<td>Group exploration of the sounds of Om</td>
<td>Narad</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to Mother’s Agenda recordings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gangalakshmi</td>
<td>Weekly 3 classes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading <em>The Life Divine</em></td>
<td>Group study of Sri Aurobindo’s major philosophical work</td>
<td>Shraddhavan</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanting of Sanskrit Hymns</td>
<td>Metrical study of the original Sanskrit and Sri Aurobindo’s translations of hymns from the Rig Veda</td>
<td>Manoj P.</td>
<td>Weekly 3 sessions, 156 in all</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns to the Mystic Fire</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nishtha</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satsang</td>
<td>Group sharing on spiritual experience</td>
<td>Ashesh Joshi</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Circle on Sri Aurobindo’s <em>Ilion</em></td>
<td>Study of Sri Aurobindo’s epic in hexameters on the Trojan war</td>
<td>Claude de Warren</td>
<td>9 classes from Oct.16 onwards</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Mythology in the light of Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>Exploration of the psychological symbolism of ancient Greek myths</td>
<td>Claude de Warren</td>
<td>12 classes from Jan.9 onwards</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savitri Study in Tamil</td>
<td>Guided study of <em>Savitri</em> in Tamil translation</td>
<td>Buvana</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Integral Yoga</td>
<td>Introduction to Sri Aurobindo’s teachings for guests and newcomers</td>
<td>Ashesh Joshi</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploration of the Bhagavad Gita</td>
<td>Group study of the Gita, based on Sri Aurobindo’s comments</td>
<td>Dr. Jai Singh</td>
<td>19 sessions from Oct. 16 onwards</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film shows</td>
<td>Selected films relating to the lives and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, <em>Savitri</em>, and the Aims and Ideals of Auroville</td>
<td>Margrit Mala</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The English of Savitri</td>
<td>Guided study of the language of Sri Aurobindo’s epic.</td>
<td>Shraddhavan</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B: Regular monthly activities (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Led by</th>
<th>Number of classes 2016-17</th>
<th>Average no. participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Moon Gathering</td>
<td>Reading <em>Savitri</em> and meditating with the Mother’s music in front of Sri Aurobindo’s statue on each Full Moon night</td>
<td>Murugan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudra-Chi</td>
<td>An invocation and body-prayer</td>
<td>Anandi Fernandes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meditations on Savitri, Books Two and Three</em></td>
<td>110 paintings made by Huta under the Mother’s Guidance</td>
<td>April &amp; May 2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Meditations on Savitri, Books Four to Seven</em></td>
<td>125 paintings made by Huta under the Mother’s Guidance</td>
<td>August 2016 to March 2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sri Aurobindo – A Life Sketch in Photographs</em></td>
<td>An exhibition prepared by the Sri Aurobindo Archives</td>
<td>1.4.2016 to date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Glimpses of The Mother</em></td>
<td>Photographs and texts compiled at Savitri Bhavan</td>
<td>May to July 2016 &amp; October 2016 to date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Images of the Invisible</em></td>
<td>Recent paintings by distinguished Italian artist Paolo Tommasi</td>
<td>10-31.08.2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Silence is All”</td>
<td>Mime performance of Sri Aurobindo’s poem by Drupad and Deepanam School students</td>
<td>04.04.2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Savitri Sabdamrut no.6</em></td>
<td>Bhagavadarpan of a new volume in the series of Gujarati translations of the <em>English of Savitri</em> books</td>
<td>22.11.2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Protection Core Group</td>
<td>Meetings of this group were hosted on</td>
<td>13.12.16 and 20.12.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Aurobindo Puraskar</td>
<td>Shraddhavan was honoured with this annual award for services to Sri Aurobindo Studies in English</td>
<td>27.12.2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Year Meditation</td>
<td>Friends from Tamil Centres joined in welcoming 2017</td>
<td>31.12.2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seon Meditation</td>
<td>Two workshops on Korean Zen under the guidance of Master Deok Jo Sunim, organised by the Korean Pavilion Group</td>
<td>04 to 07.02 2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>My Burning Heart</em></td>
<td>Dramatization of a text of Satprem by Italian actress Francesca Pappale</td>
<td>11.02.2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To see a world in a grain of sand: poems of small things”</td>
<td>Poetry reading and music offered by Jeanne and Gordon Korstange</td>
<td>16.02.2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Vision and the Boon: Savitri and Katha Upanishad”</td>
<td>Inauguration of the new Sangam Hall on the occasion of the 7th annual Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Lecture given by Dr. Ananda Reddy</td>
<td>19.02.2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Brick Ceremony</td>
<td>Celebrating the start of construction of the Picture Gallery extension</td>
<td>21.02.2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mother as a Painter</td>
<td>Illustrated talk in Russian by Roza Tuh</td>
<td>28.02.2017</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## D: Orientation sessions, seminars and workshops (35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Led by</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students of Sustainable Livelihood Institute</td>
<td>Ramanarayana</td>
<td>05.04.2016</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Sustainable Livelihood Institute</td>
<td>Ramanarayana</td>
<td>18.04.2016</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiration Programme for Newcomers</td>
<td>Entry Service</td>
<td>20.04.2016</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savi volunteers</td>
<td>Rakhal and team</td>
<td>20.04.2016</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Sustainable Livelihood Institute</td>
<td>Ramanarayana</td>
<td>22.04.2016</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Sustainable Livelihood Institute</td>
<td>Ramanarayana</td>
<td>27.04.2016</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students of Sustainable Livelihood Institute</td>
<td>Ramanarayana</td>
<td>12.05.2016</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat for Savitri Bhavan team</td>
<td>Manoj Pavitran</td>
<td>11.06.2016</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Philosophy for Chinese Group</td>
<td>Ramanarayana</td>
<td>27.06.2016</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiration Programme for Newcomers</td>
<td>Entry Service</td>
<td>03.08.2016</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop on <em>The Eternity Game</em></td>
<td>Anandi Fernandes</td>
<td>28.08.2016</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savi volunteers</td>
<td>Rakhal and team</td>
<td>26.09.2016</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savi volunteers</td>
<td>Rakhal and team</td>
<td>27.09.2016</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiration programme for Newcomers</td>
<td>Entry Service</td>
<td>12.10.2016</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Groves volunteers</td>
<td>Helmut</td>
<td>27.10.2016</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 1: Integral Philosophy”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>24.11.2016</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 2: Integral Psychology”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>01.12.2016</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 3: Integral Economy”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>08.12.2016</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savi volunteers</td>
<td>Rakhal and team</td>
<td>09.12.2016</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 4: Integral Poetry”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>15.12.2016</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 5: Integral Sociology”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>22.12.2016</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 6: Integral Daily Living”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>29.12.2016</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 7: Integral Vision of Human Unity”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>05.01.2017</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Groves volunteers</td>
<td>Helmut</td>
<td>0.01.2017</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 8: Integral Education”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>12.01.2017</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 9”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>19.01.2017</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation for group from Turkey</td>
<td>Ashesh Joshi</td>
<td>23.01.2017</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Integrity in All Spheres of Life – 10: Integral Health and Healing”</td>
<td>Divyanshi Chugh</td>
<td>26.01.2017</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swadharma students</td>
<td>Jai Singh</td>
<td>30.01.2017</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Auroville Charter for Deepanam School children</td>
<td>Shraddhavan</td>
<td>02.02.2017</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiration Programme for Newcomers</td>
<td>Entry Service</td>
<td>08.02.2017</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integral Yoga for Korean Liaison Group</td>
<td>Shraddhavan</td>
<td>22.02.2017</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savi volunteers</td>
<td>Rakhal and team</td>
<td>01.03.2017</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### E: Student group visits

**Architecture students (36 groups, 1,384 students)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of visit</th>
<th>Name of the institute</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27.05.2016</td>
<td>Sharda University, Noida</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.06.2016</td>
<td>Architect interns led by Lalit</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.06.2016</td>
<td>Architecture students from different places</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.07.2016</td>
<td>Architecture students from Ahmedabad</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.07.2016</td>
<td>NITTE, Mangalore</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.07.2016</td>
<td>Sathyabama University</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.07.2016</td>
<td>Park Institute of Architecture, Coimbatore</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.07.2016</td>
<td>BGS School of Architecture &amp; Planning, Bangalore</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.07.2016</td>
<td>School of Planning and Architecture</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>06.08.2016</td>
<td>St. Peters’ School of Architecture, Chennai</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.08.2016</td>
<td>Buddha College of Architecture, Rajasthan</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.08.2016</td>
<td>Indubhai Parekh School of Architecture, Rajkot, Gujarat</td>
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<tr>
<td>02.09.2016</td>
<td>R.P.J.A. Nagpur</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.09.2016</td>
<td>ARAN, K.R.Mansalam University, Gurgaon</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.10.2016</td>
<td>Gijubhai Patel Institute of Architecture, Surat</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.11.2016</td>
<td>Sir J.J.College of Architecture, Mumbai</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.11.2016</td>
<td>Aayojan School of Architecture, Pune</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.11.2016</td>
<td>BNCA, Architecture, Pune</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.11.2016</td>
<td>Aayojan, Pune</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.11.2016</td>
<td>Aayojan, Pune</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.12.2016</td>
<td>Periyar Maniammai University, Thanjavur</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.12.2016</td>
<td>Arani College of Architecture, Kerala</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.12.2016</td>
<td>SNNAGAD Architecture, Pune</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.01.2017</td>
<td>Mysore School of Architecture, Pune</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.01.2017</td>
<td>Thakore Arch., Mumbai</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.01.2017</td>
<td>SBJ Arch. Bangalore</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.01.2017</td>
<td>K.C.A.D.Bareilly</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.01.2017</td>
<td>LAD College, Nagpur</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.01.2017</td>
<td>School of Architecture, Reva University, Bangalore</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>03.02.2017</td>
<td>French architect group</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.02.2017</td>
<td>Bricks School of Interior Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.02.2017</td>
<td>School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.02.2017</td>
<td>SCMS, Cochin</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.02.2017</td>
<td>Talent Institute of Architecture, Edappal, Malapuram, Kerala</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.02.2017</td>
<td>Rajalakshmi School of Architecture, Chennai</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.02.2017</td>
<td>SAP Chennai, M.Arch</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Other student groups (6 groups, 197 students)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of visit</th>
<th>Name of the institute</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08.06.2016</td>
<td>IIM Ahmedabad (coordinated by Upasana)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.10.2016</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo International School, Vidyanyagar, Hyderabad</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.10.2016</td>
<td>International School, Mumbai</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.10.2016</td>
<td>Maninder Pal Singh Inter-State Tour, Youth Services Dept., Govt. of Punjab</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.11.2016</td>
<td>Spiritual Group of Dr. Jacques Uigne of France</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.12.2016</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo Vidya Kendra, Tenali, Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>21 + 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In accord with Savitri Bhavan’s aim of fostering the values on which a true human unity can be manifested, through spiritual education based on the vision, work and writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, since 1998 a journal of Study Notes on Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri has been produced. In 2004, in response to popular demand, a companion journal in the Tamil language was started. Invocation, the English-language journal, appears in April and November each year while Prarthana, in Tamil, comes out in February and August. These journals respond to many requests for assistance in understanding Sri Aurobindo’s revelatory epic Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol, which the Mother has called ‘the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision’.

Description of project

Each issue is compiled, edited and prepared for publication by its scheduled time. Shraddhavan takes care of the preparation of Invocation, while Dhanalakshmi edits Prarthana.

Outcomes

During 2016-17 two issues of each journal were published and distributed: nos. 44 and 45 of Invocation (1,000 copies of each) and nos. 26 and 27 of Prarthana (800 copies of each). Invocation is distributed in hard copy (by post) and soft copy (by e-mail) to 925 regular readers all over India and in 45 different countries of the world. Prarthana is sent to 726 individuals and Sri Aurobindo Centres throughout Tamil Nadu.

Reflections

In the preparation of these publications, the most meaningful, challenging and educational part for the editors is the process of compiling the matter, which needs to fulfil the readers’ expectations of assistance in understanding the profound vision and powerful but unfamiliar poetic language of Sri Aurobindo’s mantric masterwork. In the process, our own understanding of its message is constantly deepening and, hopefully, as well our powers of sharing that understanding with other students and lovers of the poem.

Conclusion

It is intended to continue preparing and publishing these journals as long as possible. We hope that new contributors and editorial staff will be found to supplement the efforts of the present editors.
Scholarship and Education Fund

Introduction

The Scholarship and Education Fund (SEF) was established in 2008 to provide financial assistance to Aurovilians seeking educational opportunities outside of Auroville. Financial assistance is provided in the form of interest-free loans, repayable once the recipient begins to earn an income.

Activities of the year

During the financial year 2016-17 the SEF team met nine times to assess applications for loans and to interview applicants. The team also met with members of YouthLink to discuss help in fund-raising and in secretarial work.

Outcomes

In total 52 Aurovilians received financial assistance to pursue educational opportunities, with a few of them receiving more than one installment. Of these 52, 35 pursued college or university level studies, with 33 pursuing opportunities in India and two abroad. Ten students of Future School received assistance to complete Edexcel O and A level exams, and seven students to attend NESS, an Auroville school working as per CBSE standards. In addition to the 52 students supported by general funds of the SEF, a few students were helped through personally specified contributions.

The recipients of SEF support were mainly Bachelor’s degree students, while a few worked for a Master’s degree and one for a Ph.D. The subjects of studies were as follows:

Aeronautics, Architecture, Automobile Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Biotechnology, Business Administration, Civil Engineering, Commerce, Computer Application, Education, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering, English, English Literature, Fashion and Apparel Design, Fine Arts, Geology, Information Technology, Journalism (combined with Psychology and English), Law, Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics, Nursing, Physics, Political Science (combined with Economics and Sociology), and Zoology.

Reflections

Funding remains a major concern as there is no assured support from within or outside of Auroville. As the funds are always much below actual needs, obliging the families of applicants to finance the major parts of their needs with the help of private loans, and as applications from Future School students (for Ecexcel exams) and from NESS (for school fees) increasingly drain our limited income, in late 2016 we decided to exclude these applicants from access to SEF funds. In February 2017 this was implemented, and only few students of Future School were granted limited support.

Conclusion

As in the years before, the SEF helped many Auroville youth pursue educational opportunities. The team is actively looking for secretarial help – such as e.g. offered by YouthLink – so as to be able to invest time in publications on the Auroville website, in fund-raising, and in communication within Auroville and outside.
Telos

Introduction

The main purpose of Telos is to establish the idea of Integral Education in the field of higher education based on integral yoga and the vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Activities of the year

1. Manoj conducted the following training sessions:
   a) Half-day session for faculty members of Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM) on “Self-awareness and Higher Goals in Education”. (June 2nd, 2016)
   b) Sessions on Integral Education for freshmen at Auro University, Surat, Gujarat. (July 2016)
   c) Four-day faculty training on “Self Awareness & Integral Education”. at Translational Research and Professional Leadership Centre (TPLC) Government Engineering College, Bartonhill, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. (November 21-24, 2016)
   d) One-day self-awareness programme for students from IITM, in Auroville. (September 17th, 2016)
   e) One-day training for faculty of TKM College of Engineering, Teaching and Learning Centre, Kollam, Kerala. (December 20th, 2016)
   f) One-day session on “Integral Karma Yoga” for students from IITM, in Pondicherry. (March 11th, 2017)
   g) Two-day curriculum development workshop at Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) for ALC India, as part of the Transforming India Initiative (www.alcindia.org/tii/). (March 20th & 21st, 2017)

2. Work is progressing to create an online course on integral yoga.

Outcomes

There is a growing demand for training programmes for self-awareness and inner development for students and faculty members. Telos has reached out to around 350 students and 120 faculty members in India.

Reflections

The opening and receptivity in the institutions of higher learning is very promising. However, converting this into transformational practices, change in behaviour and eventually change in systems and processes is still a long way away. Long term engagements are necessary to make more effective impact.

Conclusion

Learning materials are to be designed and prepared like modules, including practices, that can be combined in multiple ways according to context. Now there is good understanding of the needs, and the Integral Education framework needs to be converted into application-driven modules.
Unity Pavilion

Introduction

The Unity Pavilion hosts a wide variety of activities and events, inviting and encouraging research, participation and interaction. Examples are cultural events, exhibitions, workshops, lectures and meetings as well as ongoing applied research and the producing of materials related to the research. Throughout the year there is a flow of activities and events, with the peak season being December to mid April. Our aim is to provide a space for activities, research and development in alignment with the ideals of Auroville.

Activities of the year

The Unity Pavilion team includes Jaya, Shivaya, and Kasthuri working full time, and Rema, Claudine, and Devasmita part time. Mario helps out with technical and construction matters on an as-needed basis, and Thamu lives in the caretaker room and helps out in his free time with electronic equipment and opening and closing of the office buildings. Our activities of the year included:

• **Supporting Auroville Community processes:** The Unity Pavilion hosts meetings and workshops for Auroville working groups in collaboration with the Auroville Council (AVC), Working Committee (WC), and Residents’ Assembly Service (RAS). One example for this year was the RAS program series “CAT – Create Auroville Together”. Many smaller or ad hoc community working groups and individuals also are hosted here for meeting space and presentations.

• **Exhibitions, events and workshops:** Exhibitions, events and workshops are a main interactive part of the Unity Pavilion work. Here we collaborate with and support the International Zone Pavilion groups, as well as a wide range of events and activities supporting human unity and unity in diversity. Unity Pavilion now has a long-standing collaboration with the “Stewardship for New Emergence” workshops, and is very happy to now also host the “Amma-Appa” workshops (the Stewardship for New Emergence course in Tamil for the employees of Auroville) and related events.

• **Research:** The Unity Pavilion has a focus on research on human unity and unity in diversity. A central point of this research, which is still unfolding, is work with the ‘Matrimandir Matrix’, including the Matrimandir gardens and the twelve qualities, as well as work with flowers and their messages. This research is bringing forth tools and processes which harmonize and bring peace, and show a way of unity in diversity for our collective life. This research has for the last 5 to 6 years been focused on Auroville’s organization, and for the last 6 months there has been a strong focus on the economy and how to create alignment between our ideals and our economic development. The ongoing research related to organization and economy has been intensified with the joining of two volunteers, Divyanshi and Pranit, full time.

• **Hall of Peace:** The Hall of Peace with the Peace Table for Asia is used for a weekly peace meditation. It is also used for events related to peace, and often at the close of a working session (with members gathering around the Peace Table). Aurovilians and visitors come by to simply sit for some time by the table. Unless there is a large workshop going on, we always welcome this.

• **Office:** The Unity Pavilion office building hosts Savi, the Africa House office, the Unity Pavilion research, Auroville International (AVI) and the International Zone office. The Unity
Pavilion offers the International Zone a platform for different purposes: office space and meeting space in the office building and in the Unity Pavilion Hall, and outdoor spaces for exhibitions and cultural events, workshops, fund-raising dinners, etc.

- **General interaction with guests and visitors:** The Unity Pavilion has almost daily visits of guest groups, and interacts with student groups and universities both through “Inside India” and very often directly with groups of architecture students that simply arrive at our doorstep. Our effort is to give time for interaction and information exchange. If there are no other events at the time of visits, this is done in the main hall; when there are events taking place the outdoor dining space and the Hall of Peace are used.

Together with all these activities there were also the regular uses of the Unity Pavilion office and meeting spaces:

- The International Zone Group and the Study Group had regular weekly meetings, and Iris and the AVC had recurring training meetings for Silent Listeners.
- The Savi office has a staff of about 6 people and receives visitors 5 days a week.
- The Africa House group has a number of architecture students working on the Africa House caretakers housing project.
- The office was also available to AVI members on an as-needed basis.

**Special events:**

- This February we highlighted the urgency of securing the Auroville land by organizing and hosting the “Art for Land Exhibition” where more than 70 artists from Auroville, the Ashram, Pondicherry and India at large, as well as artists connected to Auroville International participated with 300+ artworks of high quality. The whole month was dedicated towards fundraising for the land, with very diverse awareness-creating and fundraising events happening daily.
- The Auroville International meeting in February as usual highlighted a lot of the work and research that takes place in Auroville, making visible the diversity, ingenuity and richness of the overall Auroville work.
- Every year in October/November there is the 3-day selection process for WC and AVC; this year the new Funds and Assets Management Committee (FAMC) was also selected through this process.
- Keeping with our objective of promoting/supporting the participation of youth in the creation of Auroville, International Youth Day in August was celebrated in a big way with a 10-day long exhibition organized by YouthLink.
- International Peace Day celebrations in September saw enthusiastic participation from the community in general and youth in particular.
- In October there was a Peace gathering and meditation around the Peace Table with Mira Nakashima, her husband John and brother Kevin, who were visiting from the Nakashima Peace Foundation.
- In March there was a function in the Hall of Peace where the Working Committee and the Auroville Foundation Secretary Mr. Chunkath received the Sri Lanka Peace Award “SUNFO Global Village Award of Appreciation” on behalf of the Auroville Foundation.

**Reflections**

It has been a good year with a lot of growth. The intensive focus on the land with the exhibition and events stretched us practically beyond our capacity, yet somehow with grace we managed. For
next time we will definitely implement what we learned from this fundraising event, and spread responsibilities wider with a committed and dependable support team in place.

We have had the insight that there needs to be support and attention for our team members (such as with family and health issues), so that there is balance and progress for everybody. Sometimes the workload asks too much from the staff, who are very committed and hard-working, as the work goes on through the full week without break. We all need time for rest and well-being, social interaction, family, children, etc.

All the Unity Pavilion staff and employees have now participated in the Stewardship for New Emergence and Amma-Appa workshops. This has been very good for our team-building.

**Future direction**

We are looking for one more Aurovillian to work full time in sharing the daily management. Shivaya and Jaya will focus more on research and fundraising. For the coming year we are planning several projects and exhibitions in connection with the 50th anniversary celebrations of Auroville, and we look forward to the support and participation of the community.
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Aurovilian Women’s Health Survey

A research project by Paula M.

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to shed light on areas of women’s health that are not well understood. Women have specific needs related to puberty, sexual health, maternity and personal safety. Auroville is an international community so the data will be unique and help guide education and support services.

Description of project

I and women in the group “Birth Awake” developed the project. We are specifically interested in supporting, educating and providing services for women at crucial points in their lives. We developed a 28-question survey to assess the needs of Aurovillian women in four key areas: puberty, sexual health, maternity and personal safety. The survey was conducted for two weeks in the month of October 2016. A convenience sample of 218 Aurovillian women was surveyed. The group was representative of Auroville’s female population of women over the age of 15.

Outcomes

A PowerPoint presentation was created to present the data. To date, it has been shown in three venues. An interview has been given to Auroville Today. A sexual assault guideline is in development at Santé. A comprehensive sexual education course consisting of eight, 1 ½ hour sessions has been conducted at an Auroville school with plans for a repeat series next term.

Reflections

The most meaningful thing about this project was frank and direct discourse on the specific health concerns of women. It was challenging to discuss topics that are taboo. There were significant differences between the response of the Tamil women from the Auroville bioregion and the women from other parts of India and the world.

Conclusion

I would like to present the data at the schools in Auroville, to the youth, the teachers and administrators. I plan to continue providing services in the area of women’s health and promote comprehensive sex education in Auroville schools.
Auroville Rainbow Child

Introduction

The aim of the Auroville Rainbow Child program is to offer to Auroville children opportunities to discover themselves and acquire new skills additional to a formal school education. Gala facilitates the program, which offers classes of Yoga, Energetic games, and arts and crafts for children.

Description of project

Rainbow Child classes were held at Pitanga Cultural Centre regularly on Saturdays. Around 30 children aged 5 to 12 from different schools, and especially kids who are considered as ‘no school’ kids, participated regularly.

This year, as with last year, the Yoga classes were over-full and sometimes there were more kids than could fit into the yoga room at Pitanga.

With Energetic games we have slightly changed the focus of activities because the children who have been coming year after year have grown up and have requested something new. So we decided to implement new games and activities connected with the emotional being. For example we worked with different feelings such as sadness, happiness and anger, to be able to know ourselves better and understand and control our feelings. These activities were also interesting for the new children who joined our ‘family’ of the class.

Outcomes

The result we aim at with this program is that children of different ages, from different schools or home-schooled, and with different health specifics (such as asthmatic or hearing and speech difficulty) improve their ability to integrate in this life – better able to communicate and socialize with other people. Children develop new skills and develop the ability to understand their inner being and life.

Reflections

We have seen with our work with emotions that if children understand how to direct an emotion into the right path, then they are able to take it under control. When a child understands a specific situation consciously, we are able to help them analyze the situation. Then they manage to take the right direction in their behavior with the situation.

Future direction

Next year, at the wish of the children we will focus more on arts and crafts and will try various artistic techniques. We will work with different materials such as different paints, silicon loom bands, and 3D modeling with origami and a 3D pen (which is a new technology in arts and crafts). We will continue to play with different Energetic games from our collection, and through experience see what direction to take in the coming years.

We now have 6 children who want more classes throughout the week, and also parents who have requested that their kids have more than one class a week. So we have decided in collaboration with the parents to start two more classes. This will let us work on a much deeper level and help more children in a bigger space to develop their skills. We understand that this will be more for the ‘no school’ kids, as the other kids will have their regular Auroville school. But we will continue our Saturday classes for the regular school kids.
4th Auroville Singing Festival

Introduction

The Auroville Singing Festival (AVSF) aims to create community through participation and sharing together. It is also a platform for cultural exchange and encouraging people who have a potential and talent. The event is organized by Community Cultural Colors (Noeul). This year was the fourth annual singing festival, smaller than in the past so that we could compose our mind for the next step.

Description of project

The 4th Auroville Singing Festival was held on Saturday, October 8th, 2016 at Unity Pavilion. Around 50 Aurovillians participated, solo or in groups. We recommend that they sing songs that are meaningful to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singer</th>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Marlenka, Swaha, Ahilya</td>
<td>“Imagine”</td>
<td>piano (Jade, Matthew)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Paula Murphy</td>
<td>“Harriet Tubman”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Hamsini</td>
<td>“Bemti Chalabiya” (Arabic)</td>
<td>guitar (Rolf), piano (Shakti), percussion (Gino), djembe (Saga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Tatiana</td>
<td>“A Point of no-return” (Russian)</td>
<td>guitar (Rolf), piano (Shakti), percussion (Gino)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Marlenka</td>
<td>“Accentuate the Positive” (jazz)</td>
<td>guitar (Rolf), sax (Matthew)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Mirra Cultural Group</td>
<td>“Vanakkam to The Mother, Father, Guru” (Tamil)</td>
<td>percussion (Saga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Sindhuja &amp; Ananda</td>
<td>“Scarborough Fair”</td>
<td>guitar (Ananda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Jivatman</td>
<td>“Just a man”</td>
<td>guitar (Jivatman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Shakti &amp; Svetlana</td>
<td>“Solnyshko” (Russian Gypsy song)</td>
<td>guitar (Shakti), guitar (Slava), percussion (Gino)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Susana</td>
<td>“Soy pan, soy paz, soy mas” (South American)</td>
<td>guitar (Rolf), percussion (Saga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Vera</td>
<td>“Deh, pietoso, oh Addolorata” (Verdi)</td>
<td>playback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Carla</td>
<td>Habanera (Bizet)</td>
<td>playback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Devi</td>
<td>“Vellai Thamarai” (Tamil)</td>
<td>electronic tanpura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 closure</td>
<td>“Oxygen”</td>
<td>flute, guitar, percussion, djembe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflections

AVSF aims to develop a certain standard of quality, and to share the idea that the event is made meaningful through the process of preparing. The process of developing and perfecting the program is the core activity, and we try to ‘level up’ all participants through working with experienced coordinators and singers. It is through this experience that community is created. It was difficult to communicate this to participants and coordinators. We take it as a challenge to build up the value of the event further.
Awareness Through the Body (ATB)

A project by Aloka

Introduction

Awareness Through the Body (ATB) is a comprehensive curriculum of activities and exercises that aims to raise awareness and enable both children and adults to become conscious of their own perceptions and abilities, so that they may become more self-aware, self-directed individuals.

By discovering and exploring the body, Awareness Through the Body offers individuals tools to expand their consciousness, explore the different parts of their being (mind, emotions, physical body, energetic body), and discover their inner selves, and eventually enter in contact with their psychic being (soul). By refining and internalising the senses, we can become more aware of our own perceptions. By using the senses in a more complete way, free from judgement and preconceived ideas, we are more able to better manage our mind and emotions, and thus determine how to steer our own life.

From August 2016 to January 2017, I held two regular weekly ATB sessions for adults: Yoga Nidra on Wednesdays, and ATB explorations on Thursdays. These classes ran until the end of January, after which time I put all my energy into preparing for the ATB intensive that happens yearly in Auroville in February and preparing for the ATB workshops that took place in Europe from April until the end of June.

Yoga Nidra

The Yoga Nidra sessions are open session to anyone interested: Aurovilians, Newcomers and visitors. The attendance at these sessions fluctuates. There is a core of about 12 to 14 people who have been following these sessions for several years. Now and then the hall which holds 24 people gets filled up.

The sessions this year have been geared towards making the physical body receptive and open. The aim has been to create a conscious bridge between the inner being (a state of being where we can sense and experience an expansion of consciousness, revealing the inner Presence), and the outer being or surface consciousness (the state of being with which we habitually function).

My idea is that if such a bridge can be made permanent and stable, our inner Presence, our psychic being, would be able to become more frontal in all our outer actions and outer life. Our day-to-day life would change, becoming much more harmonious, compassionate and, above all, conscious. With this in mind, I have been guiding the visualisation at the end of each Yoga Nidra session in a way that the participants can experience and integrate in their body inner qualities such as gratitude, aspiration and compassion. On occasion I have used mantras given by the Mother so that the participants can experience them in and through the body.

The Yoga Nidra sessions offer participants the opportunity to take a sensory stroll with their consciousness inside their body, sensing and experiencing the body from within. Once the participant reaches an intimate connection with his/her body, s/he is guided through breath and visualisation towards an expansion of consciousness and an awareness of her/his whole being, which brings about a change in level of consciousness.

ATB explorations

The main focus of the ATB explorations of this year has been to become more aware of and to consciously explore the subtle physical body. Sri Aurobindo gives several names to this part of the being: ‘subtle physical body’, ‘nervous envelope’, ‘environmental consciousness’ – depending to which part of the being he is linking it with. The following quotes are from Letters on Yoga:
• “If we develop the inward physical consciousness, we become aware of a subtle environmental physical atmosphere and can feel the forces of illness coming towards us through it…”

• “We sense too around us a vital physical or nervous envelope which radiates from the body and protects it, and we can feel the adverse forces trying to break through it and can interfere, stop them or reinforce the nervous envelope. Or we can feel the symptoms of illness, fever or cold for instance, in the subtle physical sheath before they are manifest in the gross body and destroy them there, preventing them from manifesting in the body.”

• “There is a subtle physical also with a subtler consciousness in it…”

• “There is what is called the nervous envelope surrounding the body…”

• “[A]s the subtle body penetrates and is interfused with the gross body, there is a certain correspondence between these chakras and certain centres in the physical proper.”

We dedicated several sessions to this exploration of the subtle body. We first began working on the chakras: the wheels of energy (‘centres’) found in the subtle body. We located each one of them through touch, using the spine as reference. Then through directing the breath, we highlighted each centre and balanced its energy. This also gave the possibility of becoming aware of the connection the different chakras have with different organs and glands, and their correspondence with the planes of the being.

In a later session, we became visually acquainted with the paths of the three main Nadis. Just to refresh the mental knowledge of it here follows minimal information on the Nadi:

‘Nadi’ means ‘stream’. According to the treatise Shiva Samhita, there are fourteen principal nadi. Of these, Ida, Pingala and Sushumna are considered the most important.

Ida flows in the left channel. Ida is white, feminine, cold, expanded and passive: yin. Originating in the left side of Muladhara, Ida climbs up crossing the four following ascending chakras and ends up in the left nostril.

Pingala flows in the right channel. Pingala is red, masculine, hot, concentrated and active: yang. Originating in the right side of Muladhara, Pingala climbs up crossing the four following ascending chakras and ends up in the right nostril.

Sushumna flows in the central energy channel or Nadi that travels the full length of the middle of the spinal cord. It is the channel through which pranic energy flows. This central channel originates at the base of the spine, just below Muladhara chakra and travels to Sahasrara chakra at the crown of the head uniting all the seven chakras and connecting them all through this common shaft of energy.

After the introduction to Nadis, working two by two we highlighted the path of each Nadi, tracing it with one finger on the back of our partner. Next we made use of the breath and attention to follow each path internally and establish a clear inner sensation for it. When this was established,
oftentimes we would begin a session by practicing ‘Nadi sadhana’. Next we would begin to work with each Nadi using the breath, aware of the inner sensations we experienced and observing the effect this work had in the being. At other times we would begin simply by placing the attention on the breath and sensing which of the nostrils was more open. We would notice if there was any correspondence between the type of energy we were feeling at the moment and the particular qualities of the predominant Nadi.

We ended the exploration with a session in which we contacted and explored Sushumna Nadi, breathing and concentrating in it to feel the prana flowing in this central Nadi. Working on this Nadi brings about a very subtle feeling that elicits feelings of peace and deep connection with the inner Presence.

**Mini-workshops for Newcomers and volunteers**

At regular intervals and also as part of the “Aspiration” program (“A week of introduction to Auroville”), I offered mini-workshops to the Newcomers. I also offered mini-workshops for volunteers as requested by Savi, as part of the introduction to Auroville.

These mini-workshops are hour-and-a-half sessions divided in two parts. In the first part I explain briefly how ATB originated in Auroville and introduce what ATB is about, giving special emphasis to one of the bases of ATB: the different parts of the being (as seen by Sri Aurobindo), and the attitude of the inner witness. The second part is experiential: in the body and through the body we explore how ‘attention’ feels, so that the participants can experience that attention is more than a name; it entails a sensation. They can experience also that different ways of using the attention bring different sensations.

Through very simple exercises the participants enter in contact with the different parts that form their being, noticing how each one of these feels and how they interact with each other. They become ‘sensorially’ aware about how working on one of these parts has an effect on all the others. Through the exploration they can observe what is particular, in terms of sensations and perceptions, when the consciousness dwells in each one of these parts.

When they bring their attention to observing the use of the mind, they can acknowledge the particular sensations one experiences when one’s whole attention is placed in the mind. By playing games, they sense and experience the vital being and the particular sensations and perceptions that the vital elicits when this part is the most prominent in the being. For exploring the subtle physical body, I guide the people to become aware of the sensation that, originating inside their body, expands to the space around it, giving the feeling of being inside a cocoon or a bubble of energy. I then ask them to walk about consciously and to coordinate each step with the breath. In this way the participants enter in contact with and explore the physical structure. At the end I guide them in a relaxation. Here by going deep within their being, they can become aware of the change of level of consciousness that takes place, and can experience the inner Presence which is always within each one of us.

**YouthLink workshops**

In December 2016, YouthLink invited me to lead a series of nine ATB workshops (1 hour three times a week) for the gathering which the Global Ecovillage Network staged here in Auroville. The ages of the people participating were from 20+ to 40+. There were people from India, Nepal, France, UK, Russia and more. The first ATB workshop was attended by all the 30 of them. As the days went by the attendance diminished, and the last four sessions were attended by only the people who were really interested in the work, which was not more than 10. This in a way was very good because it allowed the work to acquire depth.
ATB Intensive workshops

Due to the demand from people, we added another Auroville ATB Intensive in September 2016. The enrollment lists for the ATB Intensive held in February had grown so full that many people could not attend the workshops. The places were full two years before the date of the workshop. Offering two intensives per year allows the possibility of experiencing ATB to more people. The September workshop has the same content as the one of the following February.

In September, Francesco and myself offered the advanced intensive workshop to a group of Aurovilians. This workshop and the February 17th workshop were composed of the ‘ATB 4’ and ‘5’ modules. The workshops lasted for 8 days. As we have been doing every year, in February 2017 Joan and I offered again the same workshop to 24 persons: 10 Aurovilians and 14 visitors from different countries. Again the workshops were an enriching experience that has fostered inner centring and growth in the participants, as well as in us facilitators.

Every year in April I travel abroad to offer ATB workshops:

- In the beginning of April 2017, in France I will facilitate an intensive of 8 days: ATB 1, ATB 2 and ATB 3.
- From the end of April 2017 until mid May, in Spain we will offer an intensive of 14 days composed of ATB 1, Basic tools, ATB 2, ATB 4 and ATB 5.
- In the end of May, I will offer ATB 2 in Ireland.
- And once more in Spain, in mid June, I will facilitate a silent retreat of 4 days.

ATB behind the scenes

For two years Joan and I have been in the process of writing a book on the work of ATB at kindergarten age. In this book we expound the principles and objectives that ATB has when working with small children, and we offer descriptions of a wide variety of the exercises we have been doing. We also approach how to build on these exercises to get to those that are done later. In writing this we hope that people who have the book *Awareness through the Body* can be guided as to how to introduce ATB to a beginner independently of age.

As for communications work, I am responsible for maintaining and updating the four ATB websites. I also take care of the correspondence with practitioners abroad and people interested in ATB who want to participate in ATB workshops.

ATB classes Auroville-wide

ATB has become a regular activity in Auroville schools. This year about 290 children, 128 adult Aurovilians, and 60 children from the Outreach schools worked regularly with the program, attending weekly classes in one of the following groups:

- **Centre Field Kindergarten**: classes conducted by Stefania and Francesco
- **Nandanam Kindergarten**: classes conducted by Stefania and Francesco
- **Transition School**: four first grades, classes conducted by Patrizia and Francesco
- **Transition School**: four last grades, classes conducted by Joan and Nuria (*See Transition School report, p.53*)
- **Deeparan School**: two groups, one guided by Rosa and one by Patrizia
- **Udavi School**: classes conducted by Partha and Suzie
- **New Creation**: classes guided by Sathyavani
- **TLC and Last School**: classes guided by Tamar and Aran
- **Adult classes** conducted by Joan, Amir, Rosa and myself (Aloka)
Child Protection Service

Aim of our project

Child Protection Service wants to achieve general awareness-building, acceptance of gender issues and opening of the eyes towards possible child abuse in Auroville and its surroundings. The particular approach we use starts with the grass-roots, and aims at protecting our children by creating awareness from a young age onwards. We promote this education with youths of both genders and with working women in Auroville.

Activities of the year

This year we held our programme in government schools, Auroville outreach schools, and Auroville units. Sessions were led by four part-time staff members. We reached 573 students in 4 government schools and 4 Auroville outreach schools, and 35 staff of Auroville units.

We start a class by sharing about Human Anatomy with students. Then we ask them how we can protect ourselves. From there we take them through thinking about cleanliness, healthy food and various other issues related to our body, health and environment. We show children from 6 to 18 years old the 10-minute video made by Child Line in India. The video has 12 languages, and we use the Tamil and English version. Afterward we discuss about the story in the video and what they understood. We again emphasize what are the ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ touches, when they have to be alert and seek help.

We teach the older children, of 12-18 years old, about parts of the body (mainly the Reproductive System), Child Rights, Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Child Labour as provided by the ‘Unicef’ books and information from the internet. We also teach children aged 6 years to 14 years through story-telling methods.

Outcomes

During our class we ask the students to reflect what they have learned from the classes:

- There are safe and unsafe touches. We should be aware of this.
- We will teach this information to others.
- Any abnormal incident about child abuse should be immediately reported to the parents.
- Give respect to the female child.
- Don’t throw female babies away. Families should take care of baby girls.
- To learn the functions of the reproductive organs (for both genders).
- We should not treat the children like slaves.
- In all aspects give equal rights to both genders.

The following points came out from the children:

- Parents often do not trust the adolescents girls when they want to go out to do some things. The parents should listen to girls’ opinions and suggestions.
- Girls need more freedom to express their ideas and to be independent.
Cooking Apprenticeship Program

A project by Laurence

Introduction

This program is a one year introduction program to multicuisine cooking. The course introduces students to a range of culturally different cooking styles, cultures and dietary approaches. It also trains students in basic kitchen technical skills and approaches to kitchen management. The course places students in professional kitchen environments and stages some major catering events prepared by the students.

Description of project

This was the first year of the program, running from July 2016 to April 2017, with 7 to 10 students participating through the year. The students were trained by two main teachers (Amrit and Matteo), and had classes with five other cooks from different cooking backgrounds (Jothi for South Indian cooking, Jane for raw food, Noeul for Korean cooking, Antonio for pizza, and Alison for Middle Eastern mezze).

The teaching sessions were held in the PTDC kitchen and occurred 2 afternoons a week. The students also interned part time in Auroville restaurants. They contributed to 5 major catering events, and were assessed all through the year.

Outcomes

Through this program, the students developed their skills in an overview of the different aspects of cooking activity (technical, from street food to gastronomical, managing big catering events, team spirit, managing projects).

At the end of this first year, 7 students of an initial 10 completed the whole program, of which:

• 2 are going for cooking school in France
• 1 is going for internship in villa Shanti Pondi
• 1 will work in a restaurant while studying at university in the Netherlands
• 3 will attend the second year of the program next year

Reflections

The way the program was designed – very practical, with a lot of student autonomy – made its success. The students committed for one year to this voluntary program and they could quit anytime. They developed focus and self-management through the experience.

We found that the program interested youths still in school as much as youths who have finished school; and it turned out to be more of an ‘introduction to cooking’ than a ‘cooking program’.

We had some challenges:

• It was difficult to find chefs with technical skills who also had teaching skills.
• We did not have a dedicated kitchen or classroom.
• We felt the lack of a dedicated full program teacher.
• The young age group was difficult to schedule with.
• There was uncertainty of Auroville recognition of this program. Students would have liked the assurance of a certificate or other transferable recognition to support further studies.

Future direction

Next year the program will be enriched. Students joining for their first year will replicate the program conducted this year, with the additional topics of organic farming, more nutrition, and more hygiene.

Students continuing for their second year will build on their skills, and grow in confidence and competency. They will teach new students, manage events, create menus, learn design skills, and sophisticate first-year program recipes. They will participate in workshops with professionals as well as cook in the application restaurant once a week. They will also have one-to-one personalized mentoring.
Darkali Fitness Track

**Introduction**

The Mother gave a lot of importance to physical education. Some years ago the residents of Darkali community wanted to contribute in making physical exercise accessible to everyone, and also make it appealing for children. We created a fitness track winding through a part of Darkali park, as a useful addition to the sports facilities in Auroville. After cyclone Thane in 2012 most of the original fitness track was destroyed, so this project was to develop and refurbish it into a new track.

**Description of project**

To make the fitness track functional again a lot of work had to be done. The whole layout of the 1,200-meter-long trail had to change, some of the metal structures needed changes and painting, and the 27 sign boards needed painting. Much of the work we could do ourselves, but we needed to look for financial assistance for certain aspects of the work.

The track is now finished and open daily, with the regular presence of a caretaker.

**Outcomes**

The result has exceeded our expectations. Even though the last monsoon was a total failure and the park has never looked this dry, people still enjoy coming to the fitness track. Sports teachers from various Auroville and village schools have come with groups of students; the 5km event of the Auroville marathon organised by Dehashakti came through the fitness track. Five months since it was re-opened and people are still happily discovering the fitness track.

**Reflections**

Mostly it is gratifying to see that people from all ages, genders, nationalities seem to appreciate the fitness track very much. The majority of the people do the exercises according to the boards, but some come to walk the distance, others jog the full round several times, and some do extra exercises. It is even more fulfilling to see that we managed to attract the youth. Surprisingly, even now at the beginning of May (when the weather is quite hot), we still have many people coming for their daily workout.
Evaluating and documenting the implementation of Integral Education in Auroville

A research project by Jürgen A.

Introduction

This research project tries to reconstruct and systematize core elements of Integral Education out of the educational praxis in schools and other learning environments in Auroville. The central questions of the project are:

a) What are the unique parameters of Integral Education which are distinct from other known educational systems?

b) Is Integral Education in Auroville an educational system or just an underlying philosophy for individual progressive learning in a collective way – or both?

c) Is there still a common understanding of the core elements of Integral Education according to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother? If so, are these elements known and implemented in practice?

Methodology

The author studied the relevant publications on Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, started to teach at different Auroville schools (at Future School and for a short time at Udavi School), visited relevant primary and secondary level schools and kindergartens, and made consolidated interviews with selected students, teachers and parents on their experiences in the field of education. In addition, the author participated in meetings focusing on educational ‘issues’ – for example, the Auroville School Board; ‘Conversations on Integral Education’; ‘Collaboration between Auroville and Auroville International (AVI) in the field of further learning’; a Create Auroville Together (CAT) on the theme, ‘What is education in Auroville’; and sitting in on classes at Nandanam Kindergarten and for a limited time at The Learning Community (TLC). The findings of the ‘Auroville Education Survey’ (1968-2013), as well as the results of a survey by an Auroville student team in 2016-17, are also being reviewed.

Outcomes

The findings of this research are being consolidated for presentation in a report, which will be completed and available next year.

Reflections

A few conclusions gathered from this research have been:

• Integral Education in Auroville can’t be understood as a system, but as a philosophical frame of reference for individual progressive learning in a collective way.

• In interviews and observations it became clear that, for example, the level of self-reflection of, and cooperation among, the students is quite high. Sincerity and gratitude seem to be characteristic values.

• Even if Auroville as a whole is an educative society, the most significant time for a kind of formative, or even informative education, is up to the age of 16 to 18 years. Each society should address this evolving time with great awareness.
Exploring deprogramming deep relax

A project by Rosa

Introduction

From working in individual Awareness Through the Body (ATB) sessions with Aurovilians over the last three years, and having between the regular participants some people in their sixties and seventies, the challenge came to see if we could go about clearing the subconscious program of ‘aging’. So I felt it could be interesting to explore the possibility of going into a deep state of relaxation and settling there, consciously, a new program.

Description of project

We had weekly group sessions for going through a deep relaxation with a common sankalpa or intention, to create a change of consciousness. 48 Aurovilians were involved in these explorations. Around 15 came regularly every Friday to the ATB Hall in Transition School for the sessions, and the rest followed the experience from home – as I was recording, editing and sharing the weekly link through email.

Outcomes

Here I share some extracts from participants’ feedback:

• “The collectiveness of the effort can be felt, almost at any time of the day or night.”

• “Though I have been irregular at the Friday sessions, due to earlier afternoon commitments spilling over in time, I have been aware during the sessions that I have missed that they are taking place, and seem to be able to connect while in action and from other spaces, this is precious.”

• “It is really fantastic to notice that we are more space than anything else, something very quiet, silent, a kind of emptiness that is not empty, that becomes energy, atoms, molecules then cells and body. Strange and fascinating to feel that. Who am I? What are all those cells? I feel I am not conscious of their way of living. Are all the stars, galaxies... are also forming a kind of huge body?”

• “Slowly I see my body in a different way not like a piece of matter but as a huge agglomeration of cells working together. All the cells are connected together as all the planets are connected together.”

• “It is obvious that this work is bringing me a new awareness of my body and most probably my body is also getting something new even if I am not yet aware of it.”

• “Thank you so much for creating this space, it is a beautiful and powerful gift. I feel uplifted for the day and my senses seem sharper.”

• “I am encouraged to eat healthier, so it’s a cleaning as well for me... And another effect is that I feel I am less reactive towards A, more calm and quiet... wanting to be more pure and true, choosing good texts to read... It really does me well!!!!”

• “Thank you for all your work. It touches me and has put me on a new way. A way to make true what is inside. Such a wonder.”
Reflections

These sessions have been a way to connect us in aspiration, intention and Presence. In fact we started with around 20 people, and then every week more and more people stopped me in different places to ask if they could join, as they had heard the experience of the others. Some of these people even followed the sessions more than once a week.

From this experience I got encouraged to offer a 21-day daily Yoga Nidra with common sankalpa. 24 Aurovilians have been coming every morning at 6:30 for it. During the summer I will be editing the Yoga Nidra recordings and sending them to the whole group which participated in the 6-month exploration, as well as to the ones who came for the intensive 21 days.

This project had a practical challenge in that I had applied for a very simple audio recorder, and I had to finally get a better one. Some people were saying it would be great to share the sessions through Auroville Radio, but the quality is still not so good, so if a good voice recording machine becomes available I will be very glad to use it for this work.
Film Making Apprenticeship

Introduction

This school year we started an apprenticeship of film making through “No School Productions” (Claire and RV). The teaching is done following the principles of Free Progress, and uses a project-based learning process, in which the competencies, skills and knowledge are gained through practice.

Description of project

The film making apprenticeship program covers the areas of pre-production, production, and post-production. Each student writes, shoots, directs and edits his/her own film and contributes to others’ projects on specific areas. The duration of the apprenticeship depends on the pace of the student’s work and on his/her needs. What matters is for the student to explore different kind of works and to challenge themselves, learn progressively and build on what they have learned.

The apprenticeship is open to students who are finished with high school, who are motivated and have a project. This year we worked with two students who each worked on a full-length documentary, and to a third student who was learning script writing. Our work with the students involved spending 20 hours per week in the studio, plus shooting time and teachers' study time.

We provided the equipment and trained students in each of the various craft skills. Students made all aesthetic decisions, while solving problems. The work was constantly assessed. Students learned by applying themselves to aesthetic and practical problems generated by the actual process of film making.

Outcomes

Through this program the following were created:

• One full-length documentary on physical education, completed and screened in April of this year at the SAILER conference hall.
• One full-length documentary on single mothers in the surrounding villages, in progress and to be completed next year.
• Screen writing for a full-length documentary, completed.

We also elaborated a training programme, including a learning curriculum, so as to ensure that pedagogical progress is made through the apprenticeship.

Reflections

The way this apprenticeship was shaped gave us the space and the spectrum to explore in a deeper manner the teaching of film making. The program was not organised according to a schedule but as per projects, and was totally at the service of the students' needs.

The challenge for us was to be flexible and to create the environment for a harmonious collaboration. We have observed that to benefit fully from this program, the students have to be autonomous and have the necessary maturity to organise their time.

Future direction

This year was a trial. Next school year, we plan to open the program to more students.
Growing food in Auroville schools

Introduction

This was the second year that Foodlink did educational projects in schools with funding from SAIIER. The project implemented by Priya of Buddha Garden and teachers from respective schools has been quite successful in promoting awareness among school children about growing local food. We realized that having committed teachers as resource people in the schools is key to ensuring successful implementation of the project. In each school the practical work was organised by Priya with the help of Rajan from Buddha Garden. Others involved in the project included Rajan and Ravikrishna from Udavi School, and Mahavir and Honor from Deepanam School. These schools that we have worked with are interested in continuing such projects.

Originally three Auroville schools ‒ Deepanam, New Era Secondary School (NESS), and Udavi School – were going to be involved in this project. It was planned to set up a range of different activities in each school that would help students learn about practical food growing and the wider issues related to food security. The ‘earth-to-eating’ website created by Priya two years ago would be reorganised so that the information and resources from this project (books, posters and recipes) would be made available to anyone interested in setting up similar projects. Subsequently NESS school dropped out because they did not have the resources necessary within the school for this extra activity. This report therefore describes what happened in Deepanam and Udavi School, and the reorganisation of the website.

The overall aim of the project was to educate children in organic agriculture issues by setting up practical growing activities in the school. Objectives were to:

1. Help children understand where their food comes from and the resources (soil, water, plants, animals, energy, human activity) needed to grow the food and get it onto the plate.
2. Help children to understand about food security and helping to ensure their own future food security by providing them with knowledge and skills to grow their own food.
3. Reorganise the ‘earth-to-eating’ website to share and spread the word about the projects and make available resources – books, posters and recipes – to educators elsewhere interested in setting up similar projects.

Udavi School

This was our second project at Udavi School and the work we carried out built on the work that we completed last year. At that time we set up two vegetable beds, and this year we set up two more in the same location. We worked with the same group of children that we had worked with at the end of last year. As we made these new beds, it was very evident how well the students had learnt the practical skills.

There were some challenges with working with this group. A lot of the time they seemed to be very unfocused and unwilling to work together unless they were in particular friendship groups. Relations between boys and girls were difficult and they often refused to work with each other. Presumably this had something to do with their age: 12-13 years old. Despite the seeming chaos of some of the lessons, by the end of every class it was clear that they had carried out the needed work. Gratifyingly their work was rewarded with many more vegetables grown than last year (ladies finger, beans, maize, brinjal, tomatoes, and chilli), a result not only of their work but also the soil improvements that had built up in the soil since last year.

It was noticeable for some of these students the food growing session was perceived as a time when they didn’t have to focus or bother about learning anything. The students were very unwilling to do anything outside the session such as completing worksheets. This improved when it was
decided to organise the session as an ordinary class and to include a number of other activities that were related to the gardening work. One of the most popular activities was to make mandalas on the soil using the weeds that they had taken from the beds. They continued to do this spontaneously for many weeks after the first time, displaying a lot original ideas in the process.

Half way through the year we had another group of students who were more self-determined than the first group. Perhaps because they were a bit older: 13-14 years. They soon formed themselves into four stable groups, each one being responsible for one of the beds. Activities expanded to growing seedlings from seed (seedlings had earlier always come from Buddha Garden) and building climbing frames for the first tomato plants.

Towards the end of the year, Ravikrishna from Udavi School joined the team and we decided to set up a permanent garden. This is something we had often thought about doing, but it is only possible if someone from the school is willing to take responsibility for it. With the help of the students we measured the area and plan to set up at least eight vegetable beds and plant a fruit orchard. As well as the weekly food growing session we plan to have an after-school activity once a week.

**Deepanam School**

At Deepanam School a group of students told us that they would like to learn more about rice growing. We developed a project that consisted of:

- Weekly classes with a number of sessions about food growing in general and rice/cereal growing in Auroville.
- Two visits to Annapurna farm to watch rice planting and rice harvesting.
- Growing a small patch of rice and a small patch of kambu in the school garden to compare how they grow.

A range of material was created for the classroom work which included different kinds of worksheets as well as posters and information sheets which will eventually be transformed into a book.

The two trips to Annapurna were thoroughly enjoyed and apparently students still talk about these visits. During the first trip they watched rice planting and learnt about how the cow herd was integrated into the rice growing process. During the second they watched rice harvesting and some post harvesting processes. They also learned how the failed monsoon and subsequent unseasonal rain impacted the rice harvesting process.

Based on this experience, for the next year we plan to focus more on practical work. For ten weeks a small group of students will come to Buddha Garden and join in with the early morning farm work. This will give them a structured opportunity to learn practically how to grow food on a working organic farm. We will repeat the two trips to Annapurna farm to watch the planting and harvesting. Students will be encouraged to make their own examples of what they have learnt using writing, posters or digital media like videos and animations. This will be organised by Mahavir at Deepanam in separate classroom sessions.

**‘Earth-to-eating’ website**

This website, set up two years ago by Priya, is about “all things related to growing, eating and cooking local food”. There is a downloadable book and poster which shows what things are available in different seasons as well as a range of recipes. It was decided to reorganise the website to include a range of educational material and to give it a more universal appeal in India and beyond. Priya has created a number of educational resources based on the material that she has used in the above teaching projects. This includes a book for students about how to grow food, and a number of posters about cereal growing and other relevant topics. These are in the process of being edited and will be uploaded to the website before the new school year starts.
The integral worldview and spiritual practice of the ancient Vedic seers
in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s Veda research

A research project by Nishtha

Introduction

This project involves the creation of a book manuscript that applies and confirms Sri Aurobindo’s psycho-spiritual key to the hymns of the Rig-Veda, and may as well act as a bridge to his Vedic work in general. The idea is that when the book manuscript is completed and published, it will not only meet the demand of a scholarly handling of the text, but at the same time make the subject matter more readily available to the general reader – especially the thousands of Yoga students the world over among whom many are interested in the Vedic roots of the Yoga tradition.

Description of project

There have been created so far 14 chapters in which is outlined in a systematic manner the spiritual practice of the ancient seers by highlighting the psycho-spiritual function of the main Vedic gods which the Rishis regularly invoke in their hymns.

In the course of working on this it became more and more clear that for the translation of the hundreds of exemplary verses from the original Vedic Sanskrit much more time was needed (sometimes hours for a single verse) than was planned for. Therefore after completing 8 chapters, I decided for the time being to continue mainly with the general write-up, and keep most of the original quotes either in a rough state of English rendering or leave them entirely un-translated and return to them later on. This brought me more into the flow of my overall thought and conception of the book and made place for new ideas leading to alterations and additions. Nonetheless this also took some extra time in its own way, e.g. in the right formulation of a train of thought, or in finding elucidation on a particular topic in one of Sri Aurobindo’s works (The Life Divine, Letters on Yoga).

Reflections

Since I have been doing research on the hymns of the Rig-Veda for many years, I know of possible ups and downs in the process: there are times when the translation work is very rugged simply because one or two words in a verse do not make sense in the overall thought, and one can spend hours without seeming to make any headway or at the worst feeling quiet ignorant. But thankfully there are as well times where every word and statement of thought matches with an overall vision, and there emerges for moments, hours or days a greater perception which sometimes even stays as a new settled insight into the meaning of life.

It seems to be the nature of this kind of work that the content relates to a higher vision of life which is not static or dogmatic but dynamic and integrative – which at the same time makes it difficult for oneself to accept as final any rendering of a verse or interpretation of a topic. Every time one comes back to it one feels one could say something else or more about it.

Conclusion

Out of the planned 18 chapters of the book manuscript, so far 14 have been in general completed, and many original translations from the Vedic Sanskrit used therein need still a lot of revision and improvement. At the same time in the course of the work there arose the idea to create at least one more chapter on the Vedic Godhead Soma, which was dealt with so far only in passing without giving the reader a firsthand impression of selected hymns to this central Vedic Godhead, as was done with the other Gods and Goddesses. Some more months are needed during which I will complete the project in the best possible way.
Integration of Auroville conservation work with CBSE and Tamil Nadu Board syllabi through documentation, ‘learning in action’ modules and teacher training

A research project by Deoyani

Introduction
This project aimed to systematically connect the standard CBSE and Tamil Nadu Board syllabi with real-life case studies on natural resource conservation work in Auroville. The objectives are for students to better understand the concepts in the syllabi, learn more about Auroville’s work in the bioregion, and have more interaction with the conservation projects.

Description of project
Soon after I began my work last year, I realized that the methodology I had proposed (identifying case studies in Auroville and connecting them with the textbook) will not be sufficient to meet the objectives I had defined. This was because the deficiency in textbooks was not just a lack of locally-relevant information, but a more fundamental work was necessary to improve their relevance and effectiveness. So I focused my attention on creating a framework that would bring more cohesion to the material I was developing and hopefully also help students develop more structure and clarity in their thinking process. In this way, the focus shifted from case studies in Auroville to the skills of learning how to learn and use the knowledge.

I feel the biggest outcome of my work this year was the development of this framework, which has four different threads:

1. The typical mismatches between normal schooling and brain function;
2. A questions framework for developing a conservation mindset;
3. A seven prongs approach to ‘learning in action’ modules; and
4. An approach to conservation that is more in line with Auroville’s philosophy.

The first thread was adapted from the book What Did You Ask at School Today?: A Handbook of Child Learning by Dr. Kamala Mukunda, and I developed the other three threads based on my own experience in learning and teaching.

While developing this framework, I was also teaching about conservation once a week to 10th standard students at Udavi School. This allowed me to try out many ideas, and those which worked well were then included in the framework. For example, I emphasized inviting students to think about the principles behind practices, and to find ways of adapting the principles to their own requirements. We did a simple experiment of making a wick irrigation planter using old soda bottles, to explain the principles behind efficient irrigation. The students made these planters and kept them in their classroom – but more satisfying for me was that they made them at home as well, tried out different variations and shared the photos with me on WhatsApp. Similar exercises are now a part of all the modules.

Another example was asking students to make PowerPoint presentations on what they understood, presenting these in the classroom. I found that for students to do this individually was very time-consuming and not very effective. So now the method suggested in the modules is for students to go through the material in groups of 3-4 and make presentations as a group.

After developing the framework, the next step was to apply it in creating ‘learning in action’ modules that complement the syllabi. I completed a basic outline of 18 modules for 7th-10th standards, as well as detailed notes for 7th standard Science and Geography subjects. The notes include relevant case studies in Auroville, possible experiments and activities, mapping exercises,
questions to consider, and suggestions of additional materials such as videos or articles. (See two examples in the Annexure.)

Now the next step will be to expand these notes in such a way that anyone (even people outside Auroville) can pick them up and use them without prior background in the given subject. I also want to add more explanations and documentation for teachers outside Auroville, so that the case studies can be used for teaching elsewhere as well.

**Reflections**

The ‘learning in action’ modules were developed for the Auroville Outreach schools. While the CBSE syllabus is used as a basis, I believe the modules as well as the framework can be used by any school in Auroville or elsewhere.

I was impressed by the presentation of “Garbology Lite” made a few days ago (by WasteLess, Auroville) and I believe something similar would be an excellent way to widely share the materials. So now each of the modules will be developed as a compilation of activities, each with a specific learning objective, that teachers can pick and choose according to their time availability and preferences.

The most meaningful part of this project for me was developing the theoretical framework behind the modules. It made me think a lot more deeply on what exactly I wanted students to get out of this material, and I explored different ways to achieve that. I underestimated the amount of work (thought, research and experimentation) required, but I believe that it was a worthwhile effort.

Going through the textbooks for all four grade levels was helpful in developing the framework, and being the only person working on it ensured cohesion in the material. For next year I have decided to focus on finalizing the materials for 7th standard only.

I believe that in addition to developing these materials and sharing them with outside world, it would also be worthwhile to explore the possibility of inviting teachers to Auroville for teacher training. The teachers could visit the case studies, and personal interactions with Aurovilians as well as going through the materials with other teachers could be of considerable help. This could be one way that Auroville can contribute to improving the education outside.

**Conclusion**

I found this work immensely rewarding both intellectually and emotionally, and I am looking forward to developing this work further. Since the ‘learning in action’ modules address the objectives stated by the National Science Foundation, I believe this could be a real contribution to school education in India.
Human environment module
(7th standard, Science chapters 3, 4, 6 and Geography chapters 20, 21, 22)

Science, Chapter 4: “Heat”

A. Case studies in Auroville
1. Visit Prakti to learn about biomass stoves and how principles of heat transfer are used to make better stoves.
2. Visit Johnny in Fertile to see how a Sterling engine is used to convert heat into mechanical energy.
3. Visit the Solar Kitchen to learn how the heat from sunlight is used to cook food, and also to learn about passive solar architecture.

B. Possible activities and experiments
1. Measure the temperature at different distances from a pot on flame. Describe what the experiment has taught you about heat transfer.
2. Make a simple pot skirt and repeat the experiment. What do you find?

C. Mapping exercises
1. Where do you see examples of passive solar architecture around you? Make a map showing all these examples.

D. Questions to consider
1. How can you use the properties of heat to keep your own home cooler in summer and warmer in winter?
2. Why is an umbrella black? What colours would you choose, and why? How can you improve it using just colours?

E. Additional materials
2. PBS LearningMedia - Thermal Energy Transfer (interactive slideshow) https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/lsps07-sci-phys-thermalenergy/thermal-energy-transfer/

Water and wastewater module
(7th standard, Science chapters 16 and 18 and Geography chapters 16, 17, 18)

Geography, Chapter 16: “Moisture in the Air”

A. Case studies in Auroville
1. Visit the Center for Scientific Research (CSR) to see the weather station and rain gauge.

B. Possible activities and experiments
1. Look at the humidity data on the website http://water.auroville.org.in. What does it tell you about the seasonal and daily changes in humidity in Auroville? Does location of the weather station affect humidity? Why?
2. Look at the rainfall data on http://water.auroville.org.in for the last five years. What does it tell you about the changes in rainfall? Which type of rainfall do we receive?

3. After studying the water cycle, what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of 1) storm drains and 2) paved surfaces? Can you think of ways to counter the disadvantages?

4. Look at the well water levels for the well at your school or home on http://water.auroville.org.in. Discuss how it has changed over the years and how it changes with the season. Prepare a graph from the website data.

C. Mapping exercises
   1. Observe and map the different components of the water cycle around you. Take photos where appropriate and prepare a mind map based on what you see and think.

D. Questions to consider
   1. How does a clay pot cool the water? (clue: it has to do with evaporation)
   2. Which forms of condensation do you see around you? Take pictures and explain.
      (clouds, dew, condensation on cold drink or refrigerator)
   3. Have you seen fog? Where? Think about why there is never any fog in Auroville.
   4. How does humidity affect your day to day life? (e.g. sweating, rusting of metal things, air-drying clothes)
   5. Grass, flowers and leaves are good radiators. How can you use the fact that they cool down quickly? (Remember that they use the light energy for photosynthesis, so they don’t heat up as much.)
   6. Why do winds cool down when they go up?
   7. Why is the East coast of India prone to cyclones?

E. Additional materials
   2. Interesting technology: ways to get pure water from air. Watch the videos below and compare Warkawater and Watermaker. Which one would you prefer? Why?
      i. (article) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atmospheric_water_generator
      ii. Warka Water (article) http://www.wired.com/2014/03/warka-water-africa/
      iii. Warka Water (video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjGVRuN9akM
      v. Watermaker - Jalimudi village project (video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzAkc6otyGl
“Life in a Hundred Years”

A project by Thambidurai

Introduction

As a part of integral education, many children in Auroville pursue singing and dancing. It was conceived that a dance drama would be a good platform for these children to showcase their learnt skills to the community. A dance drama was thought suitable as it is flexible and wide enough to include all types of dance, couched in a story-line.

Description of project

I wrote a drama which gives a message about contemporary issues that society is facing, calling it “Life in Hundred Years”. It depicted life a hundred years ago – how simple life existed without harming the earth, water and air – and how modern life brought complications. The overall theme was conscious and simple living.

About 125 children and adults participated in creating this dance drama. “Life in Hundred Years” was performed at Sri Aurobindo Auditorium on March 27th, 2017.

Family and friends of the performers and the Auroville community at large were the audience for the performance.

Reflections

It was a big production, well planned. Organizing drama and dance was challenging. The story may be made into comic books for far and wider dissemination in future.

Scene 1 (Present day)

Location: Lake in a Forest away from a town.
Characters: Three teenage boys and a Sadhu.
(Three boys go on cycling trip to a big lake where they visit usually. For the first time they are disappointed to find the lake dried up. As there is no scope for water-based amusement their attention turns to a Sadhu meditating in the nearby Mandapam)

Aravind: Sami, what is this? This year the lake is completely dried up?
Ganesh: No need to ask it from him. No rains no water, as simple as that. (He laughs raucously.)
Muthu: Check your tongue in front of a sadhu. Let us not make him angry, let alone we have bothered him already.

(Sadhu meditates, no motion on his body. Very shallow breath. He does not respond to the boys.)

Aravind: He is dead!
Ganesh: But he is sitting!
Muthu: Died while sitting, I suppose. Wait, he is breathing. (He pulls sadhu's beard.)
Aravind: Do not do it!
(No response from sadhu.)
(Boys discuss further course of action to spend the day there, but decide to go back home. As they are about to go, the sadhu makes noise by tapping a staff on the ground. Boys stand in front of the sadhu blinking, unsure how to start the conversation as his eyes are radiant and mesmerizing.)

**Aravind:** Sami, er, why the lake is dried up? No rains this year? *(All the boys nod their heads in unison.)*

**Sadhu:** *(Sadhu talks. His voice is thunderous. The boys stand terrified.)*

It is all because of us. The way we live. We take granted for this earth and its resources. We keep feeding our greediness on material life. The nature’s weather pattern completely disturbed. So, do not expect rains in time.

*(Boys do not understand. They indicate it by their facial expression.)*

**Sadhu:** You need to go back hundred years in time to see what I am saying. How people use to live simple yet happy life without polluting the earth, water and air.

*(Sadhu looks at them intently. The boys are transported to hundred years back in a small and beautiful village.)*
Litter-Free Auroville 2017

A project by Chandrah and Ribhu

Introduction

Seven years ago, 1,500 of us in Auroville celebrated a community event about one of our most dirty problems – Garbage! On the 29th of January 2010, many of us joined in this collective campaign called Litter-Free Auroville (LFA). It was a fun event about cleaning up our roads, our fields and our forests. It was about learning how we can improve our habits and consciousness around waste. It was about art and creating something beautiful with the things we discard and no longer want to see, learning and showcasing the exciting possibilities when trash meets fashion in a Trashion Show. It was about upcycling, education and the collective need for better waste practices in our community.

Now, seven years later, our community is doing better with managing our waste. In 2016 our resource recovery (through recycling and composting) was above 80%. But we are consuming more, throwing away more and running out of landfill space. We must continuously improve and our ultimate goal should be zero (sending absolutely no waste into an Auroville landfill).

We see that waste management is a challenge everywhere. Just thinking about our waste and focusing more within Auroville is not enough. As the villages and towns around us grow, so does the amount of garbage they produce. We at WasteLess have a dream of expanding our work, our consciousness on waste and our services to the bioregion.

Overview of LFA 2017

This year in March and April we launched a mini version of the 2010 campaign, calling it LFA 2017, and we plan to have the all-out celebration for Auroville’s 50th birthday (LFA 2018)! The final goal of LFA 2017 and LFA 2018 is to develop a sustainable resource centre focused on solutions to global waste. It will focus on an integral approach to waste management, and will combine the work of the Eco-Service (collection, recycling and community outreach), WasteLess (education and awareness) and Upcycling Studio (creative ways to add value to trash).

Our aims for LFA 2017 were:

1. Improve the way Aurovilians deal with waste.
2. Reduce the quantity of waste produced (especially plastics); develop a zero-waste attitude.
3. Reinforce community support for the units involved in waste management, waste reduction and education.

The LFA 2017 campaign ran from the 17th of March to the 9th of April. It included a 3-week long exhibition at Kala Kendra, talks, presentations and films on various topics related to waste, consumerism and the environment. To showcase and share solutions to this global problem, we ran workshops on upcycling waste, litter clean-ups and a Trashion Show, where materials that we consider ‘waste’ was transformed into beautiful and creative outfits and accessories.

LFA Exhibition at Kala Kendra

The exhibition’s aim was to highlight and showcase the different work that individuals and organisations in Auroville are doing with waste. There were many different displays including amazingly creative and artistic products made from waste. On display were creations made from plastic bags, PET bottles, tubes, styrofoam, coffee pods, broken porcelain, papier mâché, collages, Barbie dolls, etc. The artists included Adhil, Arlet, Bamboo Centre, Bel, Birgitta, Clara,
Dariya, Julietta, Orly and Rema. The exhibition was also about information:

- **Eco-Service** displayed ‘the ideal waste storage system’ (different barrels with proper lids and bin labels) that they want all households/communities to use. There was a neat waste separation system that they made to teach everyone how waste is further separated into 83 categories and then sold to scrap dealers to get recycled. There was information about the value of different waste materials, for example the value per kilo of paper, etc.

- **WasteLess** showcased the various educational materials and games that they have developed over the years, including Garbology 101 (an educational toolkit on waste, consumerism and the environment), Pick-it-Up (an educational game that teaches you how to separate the highest value waste items and sell them to a scrap dealer), and a new game called kNOw PLASTICS (a memory-style card game that educates children about plastic resin codes and the impacts of plastics on the environment, animals and us).

- **Upcycling Studio** displayed their stylish, comfortable furniture made from Terta Pak lightweight bricks along with bags and cushions made from old PVC banners.

- **Information stalls** were set up by EcoPro, Auromirra (ex Aurocreation), Upasana, To Be Two, Sacred Groves and the Gabriel Puppet Display.

- **An information exhibition** about waste problems and solutions included information about: plastic in the ocean; the plastic bag problem for wildlife; microplastics and microfibers; different kinds of waste (e-waste, water, food...); toxicity in water bodies by contamination of the aquifer; environmental risks in India; solutions from around the globe (e.g. Zero Waste movement). We also displayed the plastic melting and shredding machine from Light-Fish, Auroville.

**Workshops**

We had 10 different workshops with children and adults that were organized to change the way we see waste, demonstrate possible uses of waste, and learn alternatives to producing waste:

1. Origami from waste paper with Emiko (x3)
2. Plastic jewellery from PET Bottles with Fabiola (x2)
3. Puppet making with Gabriel (x3)
4. Containers from newspaper with Well Paper (x1)
5. Papier mâché with Auroville Papers (x3)
6. Natural cosmetics creation with Mathilde and Maggie (x1)
7. PVC cushion making with Ok (x3)
8. Leather upcycling with Emiko and Maggie (x1)
9. Tetrapak furniture with Marc (x3)
10. Creation of papier mâché fishes for the parade of the closing ceremony, with The Unicorn Collective (x2)

A total of 22 workshops were offered, for free, all well-attended by adults and children.

**School visits**

Around 200 students from 7 different schools in and around Auroville visited the LFA exhibition and all of them were given a guided tour. These included children from all the kindergartens in Auroville: the two oldest groups of Kindergarten, the 3 oldest groups of Nandanam, and all the students of Aha! and Transformation. Students from 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th and 7th grades at Transition School, the ‘Peace group’ of Deepanam School, and all the students of Aikiyam School visited the exhibition.
Many groups of students also took part in a Puppet show/workshop by Gabriel where they discovered the evolution of puppet making, learned about upcycling and how different waste materials can be used to make the puppets. They had the opportunity to start to create their own puppets from waste materials.

Most of the visits by school students to the exhibition were guided if they were scheduled in advance. At least one member of the LFA team was present and took all the children on a tour throughout the exhibition. The aim of the tour was to let children and teachers learn about the goals of the LFA campaign and get them interested and involved in LFA 2018 for Auroville’s 50th birthday. The tour included sharing information about the different projects, hands-on demonstrations and answers to any questions that students and teachers had.

It was inspiring and motivating to see that most of the children were very engaged and interested to know more about the different projects. All the children and teachers were asked to give written and/or verbal feedback, and the feedback was very encouraging. It is clear that the exhibition had a positive impact on both children and teachers. Many of the teachers expressed their appreciation and how impressed they were with the amount of energy put into creating the exhibition and how much information, diversity of projects and how many beautiful upcycled things were created. Children said they enjoyed the exhibition and learnt a lot and that they would like to be part of LFA 2018 for Auroville’s 50th birthday.

Litter clean-ups

Litter clean-ups are important as litter creates environmental pollution, can harm animals and is ugly to look at. Studies have shown that people are more likely to litter if the environment around them is already littered. This means that litter attracts more litter. Therefore litter clean-ups play an important role in keeping our environment clean and pristine.

The community at large was encourage to organize their own litter clean-ups as part of the LFA campaign. Three different litter clean-ups took place:

- **Svaram** organised a litter clean-up in the Ganesh Bakery‒Saracon‒Imagination‒Isai Ambalam area on Saturday 25th of March. More than 200 people took part, mostly from the surrounding units and a few residents. More than 200 sacks of litter were collected totaling about 2,400 kg, consisting mainly of plastic. The Eco-Service provided sacks and also separated, recycled and disposed of the collected litter. It was a huge success to have so many people come and work together, clean up an area and care for our environment.

- **Last School** organized a litter cleanup which took place on the 30th of March with around 25 people (students and teachers) participating. They cleaned two different stretches: one from Last School to Dana and another from Last School to Town Hall. WasteLess lent them good strong durable gloves and pick-up sticks. The Eco-Service provided them with sacks to store the litter in. A lot of litter was collected and brought to the Eco-Service for processing. It was a wonderful activity that brought the school community together in cleaning up the environment along two roads in Auroville.

- **The Learning Community (TLC)** did a litter clean-up on the 6th of April and targeted the Auroville main road from Pitchandikulam bridge to Certitude. WasteLess lent gloves and pick-up sticks, and Eco-Service provided sacks. A lot of litter was collected and brought to Eco-Service for secondary separation, recycling and disposal of the non-recyclable waste. This was a nice opportunity for the community to work together in cleaning up one of the most littered roads leading to Auroville.

Talks from Auroville unit holders

We had talks from Auroville unit holders and members about waste education, reduction
and management. The talks were held at Bhavishyate, Bharat Nivas and each had an audience of 15 to 35 people. The talks included:

- Celia from Ecofemme about sustainable menstruation
- Lucas from EcoPro about their different projects on sanitation in villages
- Ribhu and Marc about their Upcycling seminar in Berlin
- René about utilisation of construction waste in Sacred Groves
- Marc, Palani and Ribhu about the project of the new Resource Center
- Demonstration of dry toilets with Abhinav from EcoPro
- Demonstration of jewellery from seeds with Abha from Shraddanjali

**Film screenings**

Screenings of full-length films took place on Saturdays at 4:00pm. We screened *Plastic Paradise*, *Addicted to Plastics*, and *Waste Land*. All the screenings were well attended. People seemed eager to learn more about waste, and some were coming only for the films. We didn’t screen as many films as we wanted because the projection room has no windows, so costly air conditioning would have been needed.

**Trashion Show**

The Trashion Show took place on Saturday the 1st of April 2017 at the Visitors’ Center open theatre and was attended by over 1,000 people. The aim of the Trashion Show was to raise awareness on the world’s growing garbage problem, and to inspire people within the community to challenge themselves to transform something usually considered ‘garbage’ into something wonderful.

The Trashion Show was a great success with 26 talented designers creating 42 outfits and accessories. The models were a diverse mix of individuals from different nationalities ranging from 4 to 70 years of age. Many different waste materials were collected, cleaned and used to create a wide array of stylish outfits and accessories. Some of the outfits included:

- A beautiful creation made from old fishing nets found on Serenity beach and colourful Kalamkari printed waste cloth and plastic, inspired by traditional Rajasthani tribal dress.
- A shade-net hoopskirt volumised with lampshade reinforcement plastic and made festive with reclaimed children’s beach balls.
- A cling film bodice and stitched plastic cup dress with insulation foam ruffle and accessories made from plastic bottles.
- An upcycled thread lamp bubble skirt and bubble wrap bodice, coloured with reclaimed acrylic and decorated in hand-brushed Tetra Pak and Mithai Mandir sweet-box butterflies set beneath a wrapping paper and ribbon fascinator.
- An elegant evening gown made from an old plastic sheet used as protective cover by a painter and an emergency thermal blanket, accessorized with a fancy hat made out of a bin liner.

**Performances**

- We had two sound performances by Chloé, named « Undesirable frequencies ».
- On the inauguration day there were music performances by Phoenix Band and Svaram.
- On the inauguration day and closing day, The Unicorn Collective led a parade with giant puppets going from Bharat Nivas to the Visitors’ Center, with additional musical performances from Mohanam Cultural Centre.
Reflections

The most meaningful aspect of this project was the ability of so many different people – volunteers, students, teachers, artists, puppeteers, organisations, etc. – to all come together and create LFA 2017. It was also wonderful to see how enthusiastic and engaged all the school children were when they visited the exhibition or participated in a litter clean up. They were definitely impacted in a positive way and expressed their interest in being involved in LFA 2018.

More people than we would have expected don’t know much about our environmental threats, so we explained some facts to these people. Sometimes we were able to see their face change, and we were touched when they were expressing their feelings about this situation.

One of the challenges that the LFA team faced was the lack of time in preparing for the campaign, as most of the organisers already had full time work they were dedicated to. Even though there were many volunteers that came forward to help, at times it was challenging to have enough people take on all the different work at hand. Another challenge was the amount of communication required to inform the public of the events. A lot of energy was spent on personal communication and visits to convince schools of the value in visiting the LFA exhibition.

One of the most meaningful lessons learned through the LFA 2017 campaign was that events such as the Trashion Show, which are original, entertaining, educational and engaging, draw a lot of Aurovilians. It was something new and different, and many different types of people designed the outfits and accessories and modeled them, which meant that relatives and friends were inspired to come.

We were surprised to have more adults than children (70% adults, 30% children) for the puppet making workshops. Some came back at different times to finish their puppet. According to Gabriel, very deep processes can be engaged as the puppet is a projection of some unknown part of yourself. The number of people attending the workshop has been growing every week, so maybe, we can say this technique is fulfilling a need...

A synergy was created when information about waste was put together with opportunities to create something (through art objects, workshops). Creation from a problem (the waste) can give birth to an inspiration to act, to move forward. If you solicit people’s creativity, they appreciate and will respond in many different ways, having a sense of happiness and fulfilment that creation can bring. This was expressed in the feedback we received.

Future direction

For the future we would like to have a permanent exhibition at the Visitors’ Center. We think that a place permanently presenting what was gathered in Kala Kendra could help Auroville present its achievements and projects related to waste and raise awareness among our nearly one million visitors a year.

In anticipation of LFA 2018, we plan to engage with children throughout the year about waste, consumerism and the environment. We want to inspire schools to get involved and start integrating waste management in their curriculum, and to learn through hands-on projects that they can share with the wider community. The idea is to involve schools in LFA 2018 for Aurovilles 50th birthday this coming year.
Introduction

Mira Cultural Group started 15 years ago with 12 Aurovilian women, who believe that learning music and dance together helps in understanding each other, bringing unity within oneself and between ourselves. We believe that music and dance can envelop and go beyond the barriers of any religious or cultural differences and embrace all differences within.

Slowly over the years, the women who were engaged with their workload attended less and less, so we strove to include Auroville children and also women of the bio-region. We want to integrate village people, especially children and women, in the Auroville cultural life by teaching them dance, vocal music and instrumental music.

Activities of the year

Four teachers and two organizers are involved to provide:

- **Veena class** (students this year: 1 child and 1 woman)
- **Classical vocal music class** (17 children, 3 women)
- **Folk dance class** (7 children, 4 women)
- **Classical Bharata Natyam dance class** (10 children)

The teachers are professional and qualified music and dance teachers, and the classes take place on weekends at SAWCHU in Bharat Nivas. The students are from Auroville and the surrounding villages, ages from 6 to 51 years, including boys, girls and women. We have 9 children from Auroville and the rest come from the bio-region. Every year there are more students.

All the students train to be able and join in a public live performance. At the time when the children are soon to give a performance, we offer extra classes. This year all the students presented at least one live performance in folk dance, Bharata Natiyam or classical vocal music. Performances took place during:

- **International Women’s Day celebration** in March 2016 at Bharat Nivas. The children presented the dance performance with hearts full of joy, dressed up in colourful costumes and jewels. The audience clapped encouragingly and appreciated their talent.
- **Tamil New Year**, 14 April 2016 at Bharat Nivas.
- **The Auroville Singing Festival** in September 2016 at Unity Pavilion. The women and children sang bhajans and a devotional song to Krishna in front of a big audience of Aurovilians and guests.
- **The Diwali festival function** in October 2016 at Bharat Nivas.

Outcomes

The children are our future, gifted with a lot of skills and talents and full of future possibilities. Nowadays the children tend to play video games, watch television and browse internet, roam around and learn bad habits, so we offer this opportunity to learn something meaningful in their spare time. These activities:

- Provide a welcome change to domestic and school duties.
- Give happiness and deeper consciousness through personal development, including greater concentration, commitment and self-discipline.
- Connect to the rich heritage of Bharatiya Samskritam.
- Support Auroville integration in the bio-region.
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.

We the organizers also benefit, learn and grow; we love to create a place that encourages and promotes collective listening, learning, self-expression, joyful freedom, manifestation.

**Reflections**

The education pedagogy and level is different in Auroville from outside schools. Teachers from outside who come and teach to Auroville children learn about alternative styles of education and free progress classes. The children coming from outside also benefit.

One challenge is that we face difficulty getting the right teachers given our very limited funding. We need to find teachers ready to teach well without concern for the number of students and the duration of the class.

Children are very eager to learn and want to progress. But we realize that some disciplines like Raga in classical music, and also dance, require very regular if not daily practice. So we realize that weekly classes are not enough to allow for proper followup and development of advanced learning in these fields, or that further encouragement needs to be provided somehow.
Natural Beekeeping in Auroville

A project by Erik and Fanny

Introduction

The central question of this project is to find out about the best way of keeping bees in the Auroville environment. This project is not about honey production but about honey bees' conservation. We depend on bees and other pollinators, and their destruction has become one of the main issues in the world regarding food production. It is also a big issue for Auroville and the Bioregion.

The most common way of keeping bees is intensive, and basically unsuitable for bees. Our research is to find the 'best' beehives adapted to the climate, ‘super’ melliferous plants (melliferous: produce pollen and nectar that bees turn into honey), suitable water supply systems, etc. It involves time for studying bees and creating a network with other beekeepers and scientists.

Another purpose of this project is to share our knowledge and discoveries with the Auroville community (through workshops and at schools), so that we welcome and care for bees together. And since bees can’t be separated from the rest of our environment, this sharing also creates a better awareness about how deeply we all are linked, and about the need for protection of the environment.

This work should also be shared with farmers and foresters in Auroville and in the Bioregion.

Description of project

The first and never-ending step of this project for us was to know more about bees in Auroville and Tamil Nadu: their needs, their behaviour, the way they multiply, etc.

In Auroville there are four types of honey bees:

- *Apis dorsata* (Rock bee)
- *Apis florea* (Dwarf honey bee)
- *Apis cerana* (Indian hive bee)
- *Tetragonula iridipennis* (Small stingless bee)

They all are very efficient pollinators and help a lot to increase yields and quality of farm products. We can help them to settle by providing water and food (by planting melliferous plants) all year round.

Two species, *Apis dorsata* and *Apis florea*, build one single comb in the open air and cannot be put in hives. We can only help them by creating a bee-friendly environment.

The two other species, *Apis cerana* and *Tetragonula iridipennis*, settle in cavities and so can be put in hives. *Tetragonula iridipennis* is very easy to work with. *Apis cerana* is more delicate and sensitive (it can abscond easily). Both multiply quite slowly.

Erik spent a lot of time observing feral colonies of bees in the gardens of AuroOrchard farm (where he works) and here and there in Auroville, to understand these honey bees' behaviours and needs. Meeting with beekeepers and consulting books and the internet helped a lot as well. He went through several scientific studies about bees in Asia and India.

Two highlights of this project were the participation of an intern (Camille) working with bees at AuroOrchard, and a study trip to the Keystone Foundation, described below.
Camille’s internship (September 2016)

This project had help from Camille from Belgium, who worked in AuroOrchard for three months, specifically on beekeeping. Erik asked her to focus on the small stingless bees (studying; making and installing hives). She has written a report on her work at AuroOrchard (in English) and a study on the stingless bees (in French), both available on request.

Keystone Nilgiris study trip (March 2017)

Fanny and Erik went to the Nilgiris to meet the Keystone Foundation team, especially Robert Leo and Justin Raj, both beekeepers and bee specialists. We had already started to work with Leo in 2014. Keystone is working with bees in different places in the Nilgiris: Kotagiri, Mudumalai area, Ooty. At their campus in Kotagiri, we got to study further the 4 types of honey bees and the flora they like. We also learned about Keystone’s global work on biodiversity, and local honey collection from the tribals and honey processing. We went to Konavakavai valley to meet Kurumba and Irula tribes who used to collect honey and have started to raise bees in boxes with the help of Keystone. The valley has been entirely reforested by the tribal people with the help of Keystone for the last 25 years. Unfortunately they are facing a lot of problems with wildlife concurrence, like bears and elephants, in addition to the usual problems of colony diseases that are facing all beekeepers.

We had three more days of learning in the Mudumalai area (Sigur), where the habitat is dry deciduous forest. These were mostly about how to handle and manage Apis cerana in classical Indian beehives (but mostly equipped with topbars rather than frames). Erik even experienced the making of handmade queen cells which were grafted in a queenless colony in order to raise new queens.

We ended the trip in Ooty with a visit to the Honey & Bee Museum. We got a lot of information there and were much inspired by their pedagogical exhibition. We bought educational material that we will use with schools (a book and a DVD about Apis dorsata).

Using all that we learned and based on Erik’s experience (7 years of natural beekeeping in France), we made and adopted several designs of beehives for Apis cerana and Tetragonula iridipennis. The making of these beehives was done by New Dawn Carpentry, Svaram handicrafts, the Merveille Gardens team and by Erik himself. These beehives are now mostly in AuroOrchard, because Erik’s daily presence there is useful in looking after the colonies when needed: dealing with a swarming, an ants attack, etc.

Through observing the bees’ foraging and talking to specialists, we identified more than 130 species of melliferous plants. Among them we selected some very attractive plants to recommend, including Harmony creeper (Antigonon leptopus), Turnera, cosmos, Hope creeper (Jacquemontia pentantha), Service tree (Peltophorum pterocarpum), sesame, castor, all pumpkins, cucumbers, many fruit trees, sunhemp, etc. We plan to publish some information about these plants, and to collaborate on a booklet with Leo from the Keystone Foundation.

Outcomes

Making of beehives

1. Apis cerana : 2 Kenyan cerana hives, 2 Warré cerana hives, 2 trunk hives, 2 Merveille design claypots, 4 simple claypots.

Actually only one hive (a trunk hive) is populated with a big promising bee colony that chose by itself to settle in this beehive. This colony was brought to AuroOrchard from the greenbelt by Dominik and Erik in June 2015. It has already swarmed two or three times, and some resulting colonies settled in AuroOrchard in hollow trees. We can catch those colonies and install them in our made hives, which is a bit technical. We got the precious help of the
Merveille team, and Marie came in September 2016 to help us for a colony transfer. We also installed 5 empty hives waiting for swarms to come or to be installed.


10 beehives have been populated and are doing very well. We collected feral colonies in the farm (in rotten bamboos and banyan trunks) and we put them in our hives; we made successful divisions. There are many feral colonies in the farm.

**Pictures library work**

We have taken a lot of pictures of bees in Auroville. Some of them were finished by a professional photographer, Fred Cebron, and Erik, after hours of shooting. 40 beautiful pictures of local honey bees have been printed and laminated as a study material.

**Work with schools**

Erik gave several classes in different schools, from which almost 50 children benefited in total. We already met some teachers to prepare a program for next school year. Sessions (given and planned) included:

- Last School (September 2016)
- AVM School in Chennai (two-day workshop in August 2016)
- Transition School, with class teachers Swaha and Yasmin (April 2017)
- Udavi School, with teacher Deoyani (postponed to August)
- Deepanam School, with teacher Honor (bees and pollinators study planned)

**Water-providing systems**

Water is crucial for the bees, especially in summer, for controlling the temperature of the colony. Bees do this by fanning, getting a cooling transpiration effect like we do. Bees cannot swim, so a system that provides water has to integrate this fact.

Observation brought us a lot of ideas, and discussions with the Keystone team also. The next step will be to test different designs and share the results with the community.

**Melliferous plants nursery**

We started a melliferous plants nursery in AuroOrchard farm with plants such as Harmony creeper, *Turnera*, Hope creeper, *Acacia mellifera*. It will provide plants for the farm and for those who would like to help the bees (schools, communities, individuals). Harmony creeper (*Antigonon sp.*) is one of the best ones, and Service tree also (*Peltophorum pterocarpum*): their blooming period is very long and they attract all the bees.

**Honey Bees Poster (60 x 42 cm)**

We created a poster about the four local honey bees, in order to provide people (including children) a study base about bees' biology, behaviour, needs, and general information. This long work was conducted by Fanny, Marie (Auroville Botanical Gardens), Robert Leo (Keystone Foundation), Fred (pictures), Honor (English) and Erik. This poster will be given to schools and public places that plan to do educational work with bees.

**Bee Workshop at EcoPro**

We gave a one-day workshop on September 10th, 2016, open to the community. We had 35 participants. The workshop included a visit to Merveille Gardens, a guided tour about bees in AuroOrchard, and a debate with Sneh from Keystone Foundation back at EcoPro.

We also have been providing help and advice to people about bee colonies... which were mostly wasps!
Communications

A logo has been designed by Marie and Fanny. We will use it for all communications and printings.

Fanny, who was mostly working on coordination (SAIIER, Keystone Foundation...) and communication for this project, created a Facebook page in August 2016 which is very successful and well visited: around 130 followers and around 200 'likes'.
(https://www.facebook.com/Natural-Beekeeping-in-Auroville-309169432807807/)

Reflections

Most meaningful in this project was the sharing of experiences with adults and children on the discovery of bees, especially the small stingless bee. Fascinating and joyful moments!

One challenge was that there were too few Apis cerana swarms, maybe because of difficult weather, no monsoon and severe drought.

We learned that more time is needed to multiply the colonies than we expected.

Future direction

This project will keep on going; it is being supported by funding through the Project Coordination Group (PCG) for the next two years.

• We will improve the number of colonies through swarm catching and divisions (Apis cerana and Tetragonula iridipennis), and install some of them in schools, farms and communities, with a common agreement on the way of taking care of the colony, in a respectful natural way!

• We will continue studying to find efficient systems for providing water to bees in a safe way, and develop simple protection systems for hives (against ants, termites, cockroaches, squirrels, etc.).

• We will give more classes with schools, and organise workshops with people who are interested.

• A booklet and other materials will be published.
Orientation to Auroville workshop

A project by Grace

Introduction

The aim of this workshop is for participants (Tamil women who are Aurovilians and Newcomers) to learn about the values and aims of Auroville. This includes getting to know Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and studying how karma yoga can be used in our daily life of participation in Auroville’s development. Each one here in Auroville is called to learn and do service collectively as well as to develop individually.

Description of project

Aurovilian and Newcomer women attended this orientation to Auroville workshop, given once monthly on Saturdays at SAWCHU (Bharat Nivas) or Mitra Youth Hostel. The classes were conducted in Tamil only; participants could easily understand and keep it in their memory because it is our mother tongue.

The workshop starts with a concentration for a few minutes. Then we go through the different kinds of books of The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and on Auroville. Our teacher Ramalingam tells us many small stories of The Mother when She was at the Ashram. We go through some of the flowers that The Mother gave significance to: the flower's name and the meaning of the flower.

Gratitude

“There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude. One hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, observes an act of generosity, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at a setting sun – no matter what – suddenly, this kind of emotion comes upon you so deep, so intense, that the world manifests the Divine, that there is something behind the world which is the Divine.” (Questions and Answers 1956, p.40)

Each one read one line of this paragraph and the teacher explained it to us in Tamil. Then the teacher told us stories of The Mother related to ‘Gratitude’. Then everyone in the group told about when they experienced Gratitude, and some time that they didn’t feel Gratitude – how people forgot the Gratitude.

Also to the flower which The Mother called ‘Gratitude’ (Ipomoea carnea) we never give enough attention because it grows easily in wasteland. It’s a surprise how important this flower is for Mother to give it the name Gratitude.

Aspiration

One must have a fixed and unfailing aspiration, vigilant and constant – an aspiration of the entire being – an aspiration that takes hold of you completely, an aspiration to unite with the Divine... to give oneself totally to the Divine, not to live outside the Divine Consciousness, so that the Divine may be all in all. (paraphrased)

The flower ‘Aspiration’ (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis) Indians offer normally to the God Shiva. Now everybody in the group understands the meaning which Mother has given.

Progress

The very first condition of inner progress is to recognise whatever is or has been a wrong movement in any part of our nature – wrong idea, wrong feeling, wrong speech, wrong action – and by wrong is meant what departs from the truth, from the higher Consciousness and the
higher Self, from the way of the Divine. Once recognised, it is offered to the Divine for the Light and Grace to descend and substitute for it the right movement of the true Consciousness. (paraphrased)

‘Progress’ flower (*Catharanthus roseus*) in Tamil is ‘savu poo’, meaning ‘death flower’. Nobody gives importance to this flower, but after learning that Mother named it everybody respects it! After all, death is a step in the eternal progression towards the Divine!

**Courage**

As Sri Aurobindo says: “The forces that stand in the way of sadhana [the spiritual discipline] are the forces of the lower mental, vital and physical nature. Behind them are adverse powers of the mental, vital and subtle physical worlds.” (Letters on Yoga - II, p.150). “The one thing to do is to keep the mantra of success, the determination of victory, the fixed resolve... and go bravely on with [...] your Yoga. [...] [T]he inner doors too will open.” (Letters on Yoga - II, p.116)

The wasteland flower which The Mother named ‘Courage’ (*Calotropis gigantea*) is used for devotions to Lord Ganesh on his birthday; otherwise it is just ignored. It grows naturally and doesn’t need water.

**Outcomes**

We are conducting these classes once a month and it gives us quite some experiences and knowledge of Auroville. Many of us are benefitted by these classes.

The participants acquire a working and loving knowledge of the lives and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, including the aims and meaning of Auroville. This love will grow into a better appreciation and identification with our true self, our learning and working in Auroville.
Premium Waste Cushions

A project by Ok

Introduction

The Premium Waste Cushion is an interactive product upcycled from PVC canvas, which users fill with clean plastic waste which otherwise would be thrown away. It is designed for users to become more aware of their use of plastic and be invited to improve their waste habits. The Premium Waste Cushion is a project of Upcycling Studio, where we have the motto that “change starts with me”.

Description of project

8 workshops for making Premium Waste Cushions were held from December 2016 to March 2017, at the Upcycling Studio at Udavi School. 45 people participated, including Aurovilians, Newcomers and guests.

Participants were asked to compose two cushions out of PVC, one of which they could take home. The other cushions were for putting in public places, mostly around Auroville, to raise awareness and engage the public in this project. Participants created 60 cushions in all, and 23 cushions were put in schools and public spaces.

Each cushion filled with premium waste (clean, soft household plastic waste) diverts 3-5 kg of plastic from the landfill. When people fill the cushion, they find how much plastic waste they create in their life and are encouraged to join us in finding a solution together.

Outcomes

• This project introduced and spread the idea of upcycling PVC to divert it from the landfill. It also introduced the idea of ‘premium waste’: when waste is clean it is a material, not just waste.
• The cushions will save up to 300 kg of plastics (3-5 kg per cushion x 60 cushions) when filled fully.
• We connected with the Youth Center and The Learning Community (TLC) who used PVC waste for their buildings.
• People engaging with this project become more conscious of the plastic products they buy, and see how much plastic they use by filling cushions. This can lead to more often refusing plastics in one’s life.

Reflections

This project was started recently. Because we know that PVC is the worst plastic in the world, we hesitated. In the end, we chose upcycling as a good solution. In the workshops we opened with the story of PVC and how harmful it is (but nobody left!).

The PVC canvas we use comes from a tent manufacturer. In creating their product 10-15% waste material is generated, which is normally landfilled. Now, the company has said they are launching a bag brand in effort to try to reduce their waste to 5%. This is good, even if we can’t get the material in future.

Conclusion

It is challenging to make these kinds of changes. We need to follow up continuously with our projects and find new ways to ultimately refuse plastics.
“Restoring Connection” FilmFest

A project by L’aura

Introduction

Our intention was to raise awareness about restorative justice, and to explore how as a community we can restore trust and safety after a painful act or offence has taken place, and how we can learn to forgive and/or reconcile, without compromising on holding each other accountable for our actions.

Description of project

We hosted a 6-day Film Festival on the theme of “Restoring Connection” (from October 17th to 22nd) as part of our larger Restorative Circles project in Auroville, where we are working to raise awareness about Restorative Justice and hopefully contribute to building a justice system that is in alignment with our Auroville values. With the FilmFest, our hope was to offer yet another approach and medium through which to explore the subject, as we want to touch and engage with as many Aurovilians as possible, and not everybody will choose to come to our workshops or attend a live Restorative Circle.

We selected 13 documentaries and feature films about Restorative Justice from around the world, based on true stories of pain and loss of connection. The films showcased different examples of how people involved in or impacted by conflict choose to respond – in ways that honoured healing and reconciliation over hatred and punishment. After each film, we offered a facilitated dialogue space. We had a tent outside the cinema hall, with a circle of chairs and cushions, and we welcomed our viewers to share about their movie experience – what touched them, what challenged them, and how they might connect elements from the movie to Auroville.

We also invited two special guests, Nimisha Desai (Gujarat) and Duke Duchscherer (Canada/USA), to present their respective documentaries and to offer workshops during the week. Unfortunately, Nimisha’s trip was cancelled (more details below), so this part of the FilmFest did not take place, but we are so happy with the outcome of Duke’s 3-day Cross-Cultural Dialogue, which turned into an entire new project of its own.

In addition to the Rs. 46,600 we received from SAIIER, we also received Rs. 1,00,000 from Stichting De Zaaier, and an additional Rs. 26,000 from other donations, which covered the expenses for both events (FilmFest, plus Cross-Cultural Dialogue).

Outcomes

We were touched by how many people attended the movies and dialogue spaces, and at the same time we would have enjoyed an even larger attendance. Most screenings attracted between 60-100 people (a full house being 127 seats), although some (especially the matinee screenings) were lower in numbers. Several people returned over the week, so it was hard to count exactly how many Aurovilians attended in total, however we estimate at about 150.

The overall feedback and response to our FilmFest was positive. Our viewers were touched and inspired on many levels – they appreciated the depth of the movies and the selections made. They found value in the subject matter, and appreciated that we offered movies as a medium of exploration. Also, many said that they absolutely loved our dialogue spaces, as it offered them a space to process and digest their experience, as well as to connect and share with other Aurovilians. Many expressed how much they miss dialogue (and circles and connection and sharing) in Auroville.
One participant shared: “I feel confused in Auroville. What is spiritual, what is psychological, what is uplifting? This circle space opens it all up. So many of us old Aurovilians have stored so much pain and so many stories. And even though Auroville is being threatened and under pressure from the outside world, the most beautiful things emerge from within – like this FilmFest.”

Reflections

It was special for us as a team to receive support from friends in hosting these dialogue spaces. For example, Bridget (who is Irish) facilitated the dialogue after the Irish movie “Five Minutes of Heaven”, Niva (who is Israeli) the Israeli movie “One Day After Peace”, and Neil (who is South African) the South African movie “On the Path to Forgiveness.” This certainly added an additional flavour to our dialogue spaces!

In addition to people’s personal sharings about conflict and healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, two common themes emerged over the week: (1) how many long-standing and unresolved conflicts we have in Auroville and discouragement that we are not better equipped to handle these situations more constructively, both on an individual and a collective level, and (2) our lack of connection and exchange with the surrounding villages and real concern about the impact this attitude could have on our shared future if we do not start to make more concrete steps in this direction. People expressed a longing that as a community we would really learn to love, to forgive, to share, and to overcome our conditioned ideas of superiority versus inferiority.

“Forgive means taking a step towards yourself. If we’re afraid, we cannot be ourselves. Fear just makes us close down.” (A participant)

“The power of naming something contributes to healing – giving it a voice, being heard and hearing others. Listen carefully and act slowly.” (A participant)

Hosting this event involved a lot of coordination, and we are grateful for all the support we received – from the technical side like testing the movies, to on-site arrangements like setting up the tent and chairs and lights, to being able to use the City Centre Canteen and providing refreshments, and more.

We had one big disappointment. We had originally planned to open our FilmFest with “Women for Justice,” a documentary about a grassroots movement in women’s justice in Gujarat, and Nimisha Desai, who runs this NGO, was to be present and host a Question & Answer session after the movie, as well as offer some workshops for women and youth from the bioregion (in collaboration with Auroville Village Action Group). But at the last minute, we were encouraged to cancel this screening due to expected violence on the roads connected to the local panchayat elections. And then our next rescheduled dates happened to clash with India’s sudden demonetization plan, which seriously impacted Nimisha’s NGO, and she needed to stay back to sort out their financial challenges. Unfortunately, we lost quite some money with booking and then cancelling Nimisha’s tickets twice, and we only received partial refunds. Also, we lost the cost of a one-way Chennai airport taxi pick-up, as we were too late in informing the taxi company.

We were so much looking forward to having a movie about India be a part of our program, and we had arranged for the text of the movie to be translated into Tamil, so that we could offer simultaneous live translation during the screening, so that Tamil-speakers from the bioregion could also be inspired by Nimisha’s work. We want to put this program on again, later in 2017, if we are able to coordinate dates between our team, Nimisha, and Auroville Village Action Group.

Conclusion

For the future, we may continue to share films on the theme of Restorative Justice, possibly on a monthly basis or so, as our hope is to continue to raise community awareness and because people appreciated this format.
Introduction

The ‘Master List’ is a project of the herbarium in Shakti community. The aim of any herbarium is first to identify each plant in the collection correctly, provide it with a full botanical description, and place it with its latest accepted botanical name in the appropriate family folder. The next step is entering information about the plant's distribution, ecology and uses on the respective labels. The ‘Master List’ goes one step further in providing information beyond the above mentioned points.

Description of project

Work on this project involved extensive research on topics including:

- Authors of plant names; their curriculum vitae; special field of interest; places where they collected; publications; families and species named after them, etc. (See Annexure for the example of Carl Linnaeus.)
- Botanical names of plants; what is the meaning of those botanical names (etymology); why has the collector chosen this specific name.
- Plant history:
  - Where was a certain plant first discovered; how did it travel around the world; is it mentioned in ancient writings (Sanskrit, Greek, Egyptian a.o.).
  - Whether is it the national tree/shrub/flower of a country.
  - Natural history. For example: it is thought that *Gomphoteres*, a now extinct elephant-like animal, may have been instrumental in the dispersal of the fruits of *Crescentia alata*. Since there are no large herbivores anymore in South America, the species came near to extinction. The distribution of *Crescentia alata* is now taken care of by domestic horses and cattle; they break the hard rind with their hooves and eat the pulp.
- Other notes:
  - Anecdotes about acronyms, interjections, location confusions, etc.
  - Anecdotes about interesting translations. For example: There is a species named *Iris inominata* L. Henderson. Translated, this Iris's name is “unnamed Iris”.
  - About misnomers. For example: *Gymnosperma glutinosum* (Spreng.) Less.; this is an Aster and belongs to the Angiospermae group.
  - The spiritual significance of the flower, as given by the Mother, is included wherever applicable.

Outcomes

The ‘Master List’ wants to show the herbarium as something more than a collection of dried plants with some very specific information interesting mainly for botanists. It wants to open the collection to a wider public, with a bigger field of interest, and be easy to access.

As of now we have 5,396 species names listed in the herbarium. Data on any one of them are entered in our computer on a daily basis, and will be published as an online database at flora-auroviliana.in as soon as a sizable part of our collection is covered.

Apart from the description of almost all of the species kept in the herbarium, we finalised the curriculum vitae of 76 authors and collectors, and completed the etymology of around 1,500 family-genus-species names.

This, of course, is an ongoing work.
L. stands for Linnaeus. His father’s name was Nils Ingemarsson. In accordance with the Scandinavian name system, Linnaeus’s name would have been Carl Nilsson (son of Nils), since most Swedes didn’t have a surname in those times. But when his father went to the university, he had to provide himself with a surname for registration purposes. He created the name Linnaeus in allusion to a large tree (Tilia cordata) which grew on the family property and was known in their dialect as ‘Linn’ (a Linden). Their property, incidentally, was called Linnegard. The name Linnaeus was thus of Latin form from the beginning.

After his ennoblement Linnaeus was also known as Carl von Linné.

He was a Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist. (born May 23, 1707, Råshult, Sweden – died January 10, 1778, Uppsala, Sweden)

Linnaeus is also called the ‘Father of Taxonomy’. His great contribution to taxonomy was the introduction of the binomial system of naming plants. In this system only two names are necessary to designate any given plant: a Latin name for the genus, and a second name for the species. These two names make up the binomial species name.

This simplified naming of plants immensely. Before the binomial nomenclature was in use the naming of a species could take some doing.

For instance, a certain rose named by different botanists:
- Rosa sylvestris inodora seu canina
- Rosa sylvestris alba cum rubore, folio glabro
- In Linnaeus’ system it became Rosa canina.

Linnaeus became one of the most famous scientists in Europe.

In one of his autobiographies Linnaeus lists his own achievements. “No one has been a greater Botanicus or Zoologist. No one has written more books, more correctly, more methodically, from his own experience. No one has more completely changed a whole science and initiated a new epoch. No one has become more of a household name throughout the world...”, plus another fourteen exploits.

However Linnaeus was not the only one to speak well of Linnaeus. The Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, who seldom had anything good to say about anyone, sent a message to Linnaeus: “Tell him I know no greater man on earth”.

One of the publications that built Linnaeus’s scientific reputation was ‘Systema Naturae’. He had started to put much importance on sexual reproduction in plants, so he created an easy system, based on the number and position of stamens and pistils (which he sometimes called husbands and wives), to classify each plant. This ‘Sexual System’ as he called it, became extremely popular, surely not only because it was a practical system but also for a great part because of its erotic suggestions and its allusions to contemporary gender relation. Some critics also attacked it for its sexually explicit nature, as may well be understood when reading some passages. For instance: 

“The flowers’ leaves serve as bridal beds which the Creator has so gloriously arranged, adorned with such noble bed curtains, and perfumed with so many soft scents that the bridegroom with his bride might there celebrate their nuptials with so much the greater solemnity. . . .”

One opponent, botanist Johann Siegesbeck, called it “loathsome harlotry”.

But Linnaeus was a dangerous man to criticise. He had his revenge, by naming a small, useless European weed Siegesbeckia.

He even wrote a manuscript “Nemesis Divina” (Divine Justice), published posthumously, in which he described meticulously the ill fates befalling persons who, in Linnaeus’s eyes, have either misbehaved or committed offenses against him.

He published 30 works, including 3 Floras (F. Lapponica, F. Svecica, F. Zeylanica).

There is a bust of Linnaeus in the garden of Hartecamp in Holland.
A project by Aryamani

Introduction

This work was a continuation of the project of bringing Sri Aurobindo’s plays on stage. Although Savitri is not a play, some parts of it can be explored in a very experimental way and be given a dramatic form. Our first experiment happened in August 2015, and was called “Scenes from Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri”. The last one we called “Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri – Man, sole awake...”.

We kept the expression “Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri” and we plan to use it in all future explorations of the poem.

The broader idea behind this project is to bring Sri Aurobindo’s words to a large public.

Description of project

This time we made a selection from Books I, II, and III of Savitri. The performance opened with the very first line of the poem, repeated three times in different tones of voices, and went on describing Savitri’s awakening among the tribes.

We used the small amphitheatre in Matrimandir Gardens in an experimental way, having the performers on the stairs and on the platform, and the audience sitting close to the Banyan, with their backs towards the Matrimandir.

Some elements from “Scenes form Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri” were re-integrated, such as having a fire and Vedic chanting, but in a different manner. And like the earlier exploration, we tried to evoke ancient times. Lights were reduced to a minimum, to give the sense of forest dwellings.

Musicians played live music, with strings and percussion. Music always comes as part of the whole project, and we work closely with the musicians in order to smoothly integrate voices, sound and movements.

And Savitri too awoke among these tribes.

She had brought with her into the human form,
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy.

Her self and all she was she had lent to men,
That heaven might native grow on mortal soil

Savitri, Book I \ Canto I

Reflections

I would like to say something about the rehearsals being out in the open, around the small amphitheatre by the fountain at Matrimandir Gardens. We started rehearsing in June, with the group of people that would represent the ‘humans’. We had rehearsals in the late afternoon, the time of the day when Aurovilians, and children, and their friends come to this area. Many of them would stop by, sit with us and see the work taking shape.
As with our previous experiment, we experienced again the power of the lines of *Savitri*. On both days of the performance, at the end the silence and the concentration were maintained, holding everybody together for several minutes.

The only thing I would do differently if possible is to perform more times, instead of only two days. The amount of dedicated work and the challenges that had to be overcome – in fact the whole set up – is quite big. And we found that the performance space was too small to accommodate the full audience. So, I believe that to perform four times instead of two would be a good improvement for our next project.

**Conclusion**

I believe this is an exploration that will continue. Working with the poem *Savitri* is a challenge that may keep us occupied for a certain time. I am looking forward to continuing this research.
Stewardship for New Emergence

Introduction

Stewardship for New Emergence is a leadership workshop designed to empower individuals and transform organizations and projects through a holistic methodology and integrated design principles. It offers opportunities to all Aurovilians and paid employees working in commercial or service units to build alliances and create paradigmatic shifts.

Solutions to Auroville’s and the world’s problems lie in our capacity to design and implement projects that have lasting impact and are grounded in our values. Stewardship for New Emergence is an innovative leadership program that has been proven globally to generate needed paradigmatic shifts. This is a unique results-oriented, learning-in-action program that sources our wisdom and existing expertise, enables us to hold multiple perspectives, and guides us in designing for system-level and cultural changes. The program consists of a series of 3 workshops, spaced apart by 1-2 months each. New capacities are introduced in workshops and in interim weekly sessions, we practice these capacities in action. All participants must commit to participating in all the three workshops (i.e. missing even one is not allowed).

Program details

‘Stage 1’ Program – The objective is as to build integral stewardship capacities in Aurovilians and associates. This workshop series provides tools to the participants that will enable them to design and implement projects that will have a sustainable impact in Auroville and in the world at large. It offers the opportunity for established and/or budding leaders to explore issues and action that can transform organizations and projects.

‘Stage 2’ Program: Manifesting Transformational Results – The objective is to deepen understanding and practice of stewardship principles for participants that completed a full Stage 1 program. The focus is on applying the tools learned to concrete projects in order to better deliver results. Participants look at gaps and limitations, enhance their ability to handle triggers, get clarity about accountability and responsibility, explore trust, and practice being assertive in order to progress in projects and community involvement. Projects planned through the program are designed to have the greatest impact while being inclusive and working for all.

Practitioner Coach Program – Practitioner coaches are trained who can in future facilitate training programs. The approach is that one practices oneself before coaching others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program dates</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28-30 October 2016</td>
<td>Executive Program (Session 1)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Focus on communication and organizational development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October to 2 November 2016</td>
<td>Big Projects</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Learning-in-action program for units/activities/projects with more then 10 team members. Participants were: Aura Auro Design, Yatra, Upasana, Udavi School, Isai Ambalam School, Auroville Consulting, Auroville Village Action Group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 November 2016</td>
<td>Stage 1 (Session 1)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8-9 November 2016</td>
<td>Stage 2 (Session 1)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Duration</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 November 2016</td>
<td>Stage 2 (Practitioner Coaches)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Training of practitioner coaches to facilitate future Stewardship for New Emergence programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-27 November 2016</td>
<td>Executive Program (Session 2)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Focus on communication and organizational development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18 December 2016</td>
<td>Stage 1 (Session 2)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Delivered by Bridget, Martin and Sanjeev R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 February 2017</td>
<td>Stage 1 (Session 3)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Delivered by Bridget, Martin and Sanjeev R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>Translation Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some additional materials were translated into Tamil. Other translation groups such as Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean have taken up work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes**

Some initiatives that were inspired and guided by Stewardship for New Emergence over the last years are:

- STEM Land and Aura Auro Design
- “Sourcing Our Oneness” initiative
- “Amma Appa” program (Stewardship for New Emergence in Tamil)
- Thamarai
- Legal Upaaya
- Transformational Entrepreneurship (women’s collectives in Cuddalore)
- Swadharma Semester Programme
- Alcohol issues in Edayanchavadi village

Overall many of the participants expressed that they feel charged to take on daunting tasks ahead and that they feel more comfortable facing project-related tasks.

Following is some feedback from participants (“If someone asked you to describe the Stewardship for New Emergence Programme, what would you say?”):

- “It helps you to be self-aware, to know where you stand, to know what are your fears. It offers different tools to come out from fear and be stronger in your stand.”
- “This is a place where you come to connect to yourself and act from your inner wisdom.”
- “It helps you to know who you are and to manifest that in action to shift cultural norms.”
- “A program in which you learn to think further and deeper about what you’re actually doing.”

**Future direction**

The aims for the coming year (2017-18) are to strengthen the current capacities of practitioner coaches to deliver a full Stage 1 program series (9-day program); and to build new capacities especially among youth and Tamil native speakers.
“Tamil for Everyone”

A project by Chitra

Introduction

Tamil is the language of the bioregion and it is one of the languages of Auroville specified by the Mother. It is important that we all should have a basic knowledge of the language and the culture.

The goal of this project is to teach basic Tamil conversation for everyone, mainly Aurovilians, Newcomers and volunteers. This strengthens the relationship between the non-native and native speakers and promotes the qualities of human unity.

About the class

Starting on October 17, 2016, Tamil classes were conducted twice a week at the SAIIER conference hall by Chitra of AuroTraduction. The duration of the class initially was one hour, but it was extended to an additional 45 minutes due to the interest and enthusiasm of the participants. An average of 14 students attended each class. Once the course began, we were not able to accommodate students who would have liked to drop in on occasion – the class was for regular and dedicated students.

The learners were taught in a joyous and interactive manner, which enhanced their perseverance for learning Tamil. The class not only offered instruction in spoken Tamil, but also provided an introduction to Tamil culture.

We are attempting to give the student a basic understanding of the language and at the same time give them the opportunity to learn practical and proper conversational Tamil, so that they can use it in their everyday life.

Reflections

Through collaborating with the people of diverse nationalities, we found how Tamil and other foreign languages (namely Japanese, Portuguese, Korean, Russian) are connected.

The class was announced only once in the News & Notes, in October, and we have experienced a strong demand. We are constantly receiving emails from Newcomers and Aurovilians who would like to join the class.

Future direction

We would like to offer a 6-month structured class for beginners that will meet 3 days a week for three hours.
Tinkering Studio

Introduction

This academic year, Udavi School students were lucky to undertake tinkering activities with experiential educational kits which made the teaching and learning of science engaging and captivating. From September 2016 to March 2017, the “Tinkering Studio” ran successfully with great enthusiasm and a joy for learning and doing. The Studio was seed-funded by SAIIER with a view to creating a new generation of young innovators, utilizing model kits which develop independent learning and creative problem-solving skills.

Setup and use of the Tinkering Studio

We purchased more than 101 different materials and pieces of equipment that included electronic components, tools, science kits, robotic motor engines and other models. Hands-on activities were provided to make learning easier and more interesting. The Studio was designed to accommodate 8 to 10 students in each session, and was offered at primary and upper-primary levels with around 30 students participating over the year.

Sundar and I (Sudhir) were the resource persons present as guides at the lab, and used the facility regularly. We found that the students wanted to be in there often too.

We noticed that whilst in the lab, students were naturally quiet as they concentrated on the resources available to them: they were very much attracted towards the materials available to tinker with, and engaged themselves in various activities. As things moved on, ideas started to flow, and students began to think differently. They began to use their own engineering ideas.

Students’ tinkering projects

Students from grades 6 and 8 used the tinkering lab to make their required science working models and presented these during Open House Day. As a result of the tinkering, it was assessed that the standard of the students’ work had improved greatly as they developed a better understanding of the subject.

• **Bubble gadget:** The 6th standard students had a couple of motors in their equipment stock. They were eager on biasing them, and started with removing the gear from the motor and setting a flan blade to it. The children noticed that wind was only produced in one direction when connected to terminals of a battery: it was either inward or outward. So by changing the polarity, the direction of rotation also changed in the motor. Then came the idea of creating a bubble gadget. At first the students used two of the same kind of motors (same RPM): one for blowing air and the other for creating bubbles on a stick attached to a copper ring made by shaping copper wires into a circle and using a glue gun to stick them on. They discovered that this did not work as both the motors were synchronized together. They got a 100 RPM motor and used it as a substitute, which made it possible to create the bubbles. Then they cut wood to make a platform to support the set-up.

• **Soldering:** The students wanted to learn soldering. They came up with simple circuits connecting LEDs to PCB boards and powering up using batteries. One of them had also seen a buzzer that produced sound when the circuit was completed and wanted to implement it in the tinkering lab.

• **Safety alarms:** Students working in pairs took on a project to make window and door safety alarms. It was a grand success and introduced simple circuitry and measuring of output voltages. The students mounted the components and applied flux and then soldered them to
the PCB. The buzzer is now ready for use as a window safety alarm.

- **Exploring shapes**: Students’ problem-solving skills were further enhanced by using straws to build shapes within provided constraints:
  1. Using 12 equal straws, to build 8 equal squares.
  2. Using 6 equal straws, to build 4 equal triangles.
  3. Using 8 equal straws of one kind and 4 equal straws of another, to build 2 equal squares and 4 equal rectangles.
  4. Using 8 equal straws, to build 4 equal triangles and 1 square.

**Outcomes and reflections**

We believe that true learning comes when it’s being experienced through tinkering activities. At Udavi School, the activities were planned to handle real parts, real science, real engineering by using real tools. Imagine a child being able to use a battery operated screw driver to fix things together, completely independently, in the real world, and be able to say ‘I have done it’.

To have a tinkering lab on a school campus is a good way to provide skill-based activities. We find it a very helpful way for young children to explore new ideas and learn through practice and making models from scratch. Some children have a tendency to want to explore ideas of their own, which has not always fit in well with the traditional classroom situation. From this experiment at Udavi, we believe that a tinkering lab provides the perfect educational environment for such children. Tinkering activities change the learning atmosphere, and we find that the students who have this experience are now motivated to learn.

This has been a highly successful learning methodology for both students and teachers. We have all enjoyed the working atmosphere and fun of making different models and exploring ideas together. It has been suggested that a future tinkering lab could be called Auroville Tinkering School and a proposal has been put forward to SAIIER in this regard. The Tinkering School would be equipped to offer many more hands-on activities to interested teachers and students who wish to tinker within the classroom teaching/learning process. We have a plan to offer this opportunity to the students of other schools in and around Auroville because we believe that every school would benefit from having such a lab where children are welcome to tinker and in the process develop many interesting ideas and activities. Multiple tools, consumable materials and science kits will be purchased for next year, if the project proposal is approved.

As with all new experimental initiatives, there is room for refinement of some issues/processes. We welcome the opportunity to meet that challenge next year. After all our efforts, the tinkering lab has become a learning environment of highly motivated young children and adults as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful educational outcomes for students</th>
<th>Areas for improvement / Future challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Fostered independent learning</td>
<td>• The Tinkering School will need more</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gave opportunities for creative and</td>
<td>physical space, and will need to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>analytical thinking</td>
<td>improved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Encouraged development of problem-</td>
<td>• Outreach schools and Auroville schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>solving skills</td>
<td>will be contacted and the students and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraged enthusiasm for experiments</td>
<td>teachers encouraged to join in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fostered teamwork</td>
<td>Tinkering School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encouraged students to face challenges</td>
<td>• More sessions will be planned to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developed fine motor skills</td>
<td>increase the number of student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students flourished in the supportive</td>
<td>participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>environment</td>
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The Unicorn Collective, Season 1

Introduction

Season 1 of The Unicorn Collective strove to bring more imagination, wonder and artistic happenings into the community of Auroville at large. Through spectacle, large scale imagery and storytelling, the collective engaged with all ages at different venues and events through the 2016-17 season in Auroville.

Activities of the year

The three main participants in The Unicorn Collective activities have been Celine, Veronique and Kaeridwyn. We have also had involvement from Gabriel, Jesse, Isa and other volunteers. We have also worked with visiting artists from India and abroad.

• **The Flutterby Parade:** We made three giant butterfly puppets for the ‘Lively Up Your Earth! Eco-Music Festival’ held at Solitude Farm on September 24, 2016. We partnered with Upcycling Studio and Solitude Farm for this event. The Unicorn Collective created and puppeteered these puppets (with 6 additional volunteers, 3 people per puppet), leading a parade with music and upcycled flowers out to the field for a shamanic circle. In the circle, the community participated in Chi Gong and spontaneous singing. The parade ended at dusk, with LED poi from Kalou, and the butterfly wings lighting up with their own LEDs to lead everyone back to the evening offerings of music and food.

• **‘The Short and the Long of It’ Storytelling:** An unplanned part of our season, ‘The Short and the Long of It’ was a community storytelling event that took place December 9, 2016, in the house of Louis and Veronique. It was an event to bring a sense of wonder and community to a small audience on a winter evening, involving 5 storytellers telling traditional stories. The storytellers included Hamish, Yam, Paula M., Veronique and Kaeridwyn. Stories were told from African, Irish and other traditions.

• **Training and research for Aurovelo show:** The Unicorn Collective hosted visiting artists from December 19-21 and 27-29, 2016. Jayanth Kumar (Chennai), Anoop Mohandas (Trivandrum) and Florence Brady (London) had all connected with Kaeridwyn at a workshop in Bangalore with Anna-Helena McLean (‘Moon Fool’, London) and came to Auroville afterwards to continue that training and to prepare for the Unicorn Collective’s show to be held in Aurovelo.

  Each artist brought their own specialty (dance, music, singing) to the collective as we worked on material for the developing show in Aurovelo. We created gestures, worked on music and developed the characters that had emerged so far for the show.

• **New Year’s Day butterfly sighting:** Patrons at the Visitors’ Center saw two of our giant butterflies on January 1, 2017 to welcome in the New Year. We roamed about for the hour ‘twixt dusk and dark to take advantage of the natural light, and then again after dark using our LED-lit wings. Visiting artist Maggie Winston, a puppeteer from Canada, participated as a puppeteer and also helped us to improve our puppet design.

• **Youth Centre ‘Nallaki Fair’:** On January 7, 2017, all three butterflies were sighted at the Youth Centre fair! Three appearances were made in the late afternoon and early evening, for the delight of small children to adults. Maggie also participated in this event.
• **Litter-Free Auroville 2017:** The Unicorn Collective partnered again with Upcycling Studio to participate in their festival of upcycling and awareness around the problem of waste. *(See report of Litter-Free Auroville 2017, p.173)*
  - We created two large-scale ‘human’ puppets (named ‘Victor Vert’ and ‘Firey Fiona’) out of waste materials such as old cardboard and saris. The puppets can be puppeteered by one person each and are easily transportable. Victor and Fiona were seen at the opening of the event (March 17, 2017), dancing to the music. Next they were sighted at the Trashion Show (April 1, 2017), both at the entrance to welcome people and taking a spin on the catwalk during the show itself. Lastly, Victor and Fiona led the parade on April 8, 2017.
  - We also led workshops during Litter-Free Auroville to create papier maché fish puppets. These ‘community puppets’ were then decorated using waste materials, and comprised the main part of the parade on April 8.
  - In the parade, approximately 12-15 volunteers of all ages puppeteered both the fish and a ‘river’ made of old fabric for the fish to swim in. Musicians from the Bamboo Centre and Mohanam Cultural Centre accompanied the parade on found-object instruments. Firey Fiona and Victor Vert led the procession from Kala Kendra to the Visitors’ Center and back, to the delight of all onlookers.

**Outcomes**

The Unicorn Collective created:
- 3 giant butterfly puppets with LED lights
- 2 giant humanoid puppets out of waste materials
- 6 fish puppets, also out of waste materials
- 1 jellyfish puppet
- 2 river sections (puppeteerable)

The Auroville community benefited through the delight, wonder, and imagination of the experiences and a new piece of community culture. Those who participated as volunteers and in the workshops gained new skills, including coordination and working together to animate and perform with the puppets. Visitors and guests to Auroville experienced beauty, surprise and a sense of Auroville’s cultural scene. Those who participated in the workshops or as volunteers could connect in a more participatory and active way to Auroville, while also activating their own creativity.

**Reflections**

The most meaningful part of this project was bringing the culture to the public, rather than the opposite. We found that everyone was full of amazement and joy upon seeing the butterflies, and that this only increased with each appearance. The momentum created by the butterflies was then capitalized on at Litter-Free Auroville with the puppets Victor and Fiona, who are much more expressive and able to communicate and play with people.

It feels like Auroville really hungers for these kinds of public spectacle happenings, and we will continue to work in this area, hopefully bringing more and more life to the streets and public places in Auroville with this interactive magic.

Challenges of this project included time and people, which actually was a question of funds. This was particularly the case for the Aurovelo show. We had wanted to create an original, site-specific show of professional quality at Aurovelo. Although we had funds for materials, members of the collective found that just to make our own monthly living expenses, we had to work elsewhere part-
time. This made scheduling extremely challenging, as the other work was time-consuming and also tiring.

At the same time, we required some additional members for casting in the Aurovelo show. This was in itself a challenge, as a certain level of commitment and proficiency was required and this was difficult to find! Even visiting artists Jayanth and Anoop were quite interested to work on the show, but it would have been necessary to find funds for them to live here during the development process, particularly as there would be no profits from the performances. Something like an artists’ residency in Auroville (which includes an actual place of residence) might help to facilitate such collaborations in the future. Therefore, the show in Aurovelo is still in development and will require some further planning to have all the performers committed and in Auroville for the development and performance period.

Future direction

We will continue more on the community engagement work (the puppets and storytelling), as that has been the most successful part of our season. We would like to also continue to do theatre work, but as mentioned, will strive to get some additional components in place before we are able to continue development of that piece.

We enjoyed hosting visiting artists, and in future would like to organize workshops with visiting artists to continue developing the theatre and performance art proficiency in Auroville.
White Peacock Ceramic Studio

Introduction

White Peacock Ceramic Studio offers guided classes as well as open space activities for all age groups. The creative space gives the possibility for people in Auroville to explore the unique, responsive material and altogether magic process of the ceramic media. We exist for inspired amateurs and children, and focus on the process and research.

Activities of the year

Anna and Saraswati are the teachers (Anna is working with adults while Saraswati is mostly focused on children), with the help of Fedor (technical support – kilns servicing, exploration of the most effective ways of firing). We offer regular classes, interact with visiting groups and artists, and take part in special events around Auroville.

Regular classes:

- Adults, 2 times a week (7-10 participants)
- The Learning Community (TLC), 2 times a week (5-7 children)
- Sunday open class (up to 25 people)

Events:

- Open Air Exhibition (December 2016): This is our annual event, held at our studio, aiming to shape an ‘open house’ as a more interactive experience. Along with a big exhibition of all the students' works, we offered clay-related activities and made on-the-spot pancakes. (The “Pancake Corner” is very creative also and run by elder students of the White Peacock club.)
- International Potter’s Market in Auroville (January 2017): At this event held at the Visitors' Center, we conducted clay corner and jewellery making corner for everybody on a non-commercial basis. Our stall was run by children (elder students of White Peacock club) and gathered a lot of attention. About 90 people participated with us.
- Auroville Youth Activities showcase (April 2017): We set up an exhibition at this performance event held at the Bharat Nivas auditorium. It was a small and stylish exhibition of all the young students' works, in the auditorium hallway.

Other activities:

- Methodical support for the Kindergarten clay class (ongoing).
- Consulting for representatives of educational institutions on how to start a clay workshop (on request).
- One-week workshop for Tibetan students visiting Auroville (10 people participated).
- Workshops for visiting students.
- Teacher training workshops.

Outcomes

This year we explored many new techniques and deepened the knowledge of the old methods with our students/club members. We are working towards making a great collection of video presentations from internationally recognized masters to enrich our teaching and learning process.

In the middle of the school year a new stream was born in White Peacock: elder students formed an independent group and decided to study deeper the sculptural approach to ceramics. They meet
twice a week, led by Masha and Hye Yoon. Next year will be their final year at school, and they plan to make a final exhibition on ceramics to mark their ‘graduation’ from White Peacock too.

**Future direction**

Our goals for next year are:

1. To continue conducting regular classes. To explore further the endless possibilities of clay work.
2. To put up an exhibition at Citadines (or Pitanga – not decided yet) at the end of the school year, showcasing the works of the elder children. Most of the students will be making solo as well as team projects for the exhibition.
3. To participate in the 4th annual Auroville Potters Market (end of January 2018). Apart from being the main fundraising event for White Peacock, this festival dedicated to pottery gives the amazing feeling of being a part of the professional community, and gives the opportunity to interact with the other masters and to learn from them. (Students and teachers of White Peacock bring some life to the event too.)
4. To involve more people in teaching – volunteers, interns, guest artists, while they are visiting Auroville.
5. To purchase and install all the equipment for Raku firing, and to start a successful Raku learning process with the elder children as the main force and younger children as involved observers.
The Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) coordinates educational activities in Auroville and undertakes educational research toward giving practical shape to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

This report is a compilation of reports from SAIIER sub-units and projects, describing and reflecting upon the activities of the 2016-17 year.

New projects this year:
- Integrating Art, Craft and Puppetry with Regular Academics
- Values and Education By Design at Isai Ambalam School
- Aurovillian Women’s Health Survey
- Cooking Apprenticeship Program
- Darkali Fitness Track
- Evaluating and documenting the implementation of Integral Education in Auroville
- Exploring deep-relaxing
- Film Making Apprenticeship
- Growing food in Auroville schools
- The integral worldview and spiritual practice of the ancient Vedic seers
- in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s Vedic research
- Integration of Auroville conservation work with CBSE and Tamil Nadu Board syllabi
- “Life in a Hundred Years”
- Litter-Free Auroville 2017
- Natural Beekeeping in Auroville
- Premium Waste Cushions
- “Restoring Connection” FilmFest
- Shakti Herbarium ‘Master List’
- Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri: “Man, sole awake…”
- “Tamil for Everyone”
- Tinkering Studio
- The Unicorn Collective, Season 1