Acknowledgments

Thank you to all report writers:

Report edited by: Kristen

An online version of this report, including many photos and links, can be found at:
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Report from the SAIIER office

Introduction

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. The Mother explained that there are five kinds of education: physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual. The team working in SAIIER understands that education includes all of these aspects, and recognizes the educational value of diverse programs. SAIIER was started in 1984 and has since been growing along with the growth of Auroville.

Activities of the year

Regular activities of the SAIIER administration include managing accounts and assets, coordinating construction projects, publishing books and other resources, and helping manifest various educational projects.


Construction projects

SAIIER undertook the construction of many building projects this year:

- **Martial Arts building**: This project was started in 2013-14 and completed in 2015-16. (Total: Rs. 82.22 lakhs.)
- **The Learning Community (TLC) - Base Camp**: This project was started in 2013-14 and completed 2015-16. (Total: Rs. 26.21 lakhs.)
- **Water infrastructure - Transition School, Future School and TLC Base Camp**: This project was completed in 2015-16. (Total: Rs. 15.20 lakhs.)
- **Aikiyam School - Harmony building**: This project is expected to be completed in 2016-17. (Estimated total: Rs. 60.32 lakhs.)
- **Kindergarten - Office building**: This project was started in 2015-16 and is expected to be completed in 2016-17. (Estimated total: Rs. 21.26 lakhs.)
- **Staff Quarters for SAIIER researchers**: This project was started in 2015-16, and the first block of 4 is expected to be completed at the end of 2016-17.
- **Deepanam School - Classroom block**: This project was started in 2015-16 and is expected to be completed in the early part of 2016-17. (Estimated total: Rs. 48.86 lakhs.)
- **Deepanam School - Awareness Through the Body (ATB) Hall**: This project was started in 2015-16 and is expected to be completed in 2016-17. (Estimated total: Rs. 38.85 lakhs.)
- **Auroville Botanical Gardens - Kitchen building**: This project was started in 2015-16 and is expected to be completed in the early part of 2016-17. (Estimated total: Rs. 21.26 lakhs.)
One highlight of the year was the experimental process taken to choose a design for the new SAIER Staff Quarters project. A call was made for Auroville architects to submit designs; 7 designs were received and evaluated by a jury in a multi-step selection process. Those involved learned a lot from the experience, and will be improving the process for use with future projects.

Publications

This year SAIER directly published two brochure-style books and a compilation:

- *What is special about the Kindergarten in Auroville?: A comparative study of childhood education in Montessori, Waldorf, Progressive schools and Auroville* (3rd edition), by Heidi Watts
- *Taking Care of Preschool Children: The Mother’s Vision and the Auroville experience*, by Auroville teachers
- *Reflections on Teaching in Auroville Schools*, by Auroville teachers

SAIER also supported several publications projects:

- *Invocation* No. 42 and No. 43, edited by Shraddhavan for Savitri Bhavan
- *Prarthana* No. 24 and No. 25, edited by Dhanalakshmi for Savitri Bhavan
- *Auroville Seythi Madal*, 12 issues, edited by Meenakshi for Ilaignarkal Education Centre
- *The Voyage of the Caterpillar*, a children’s book, written and illustrated by Jyoti Khare
- *The Treasure of the Flame Island*, an illustrated story with no words, by Emanuele
- *Sustainable Palate: From Local Farms to Auroville Plate – A Collection of Traditional Recipes*, edited by Devi for Life Education Centre
- *Snakes of Auroville and Pondicherry*, by Rajeev Bhatt

Outcomes

This year SAIER allocated funds to 60 projects proposed by members of the Auroville community. (Reports from most of them are included in this Annual Report.) SAIER also supported the functioning of its 51 sub-units including Auroville schools, Outreach schools, and others. Through its construction projects SAIER contributed to the physical development of Auroville, in anticipation of the needs of the future.
## Projects supported 2015-16

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Auroville Schools
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 help young children 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

This year has proved to be a time of challenges and churn for Aha. Through the events of the year, when there was questioning of the communication of the Aha vision and its implementation, we were required to introspect, evaluate and grow. The process, though difficult, has resulted in arriving at many understandings of what Aha stands for and aims to do. The support and involvement of many members of the Aha community has allowed us to find a core of immense value in what we do. Many good outcomes have resulted from this experience.

The formation of an Aha Support Group: A Support Group comprising of Kindergarten teachers, School Board members and parents has been formed to be able to participate in the Aha processes and to lend ideas and expertise wherever necessary. This Support Group will be an ongoing one, and will strength to the Aha working.

The creation of the Aha Vision/Policy documentation: Through a process of dialog with the parents and Support Group members, the Aha vision and policies have been drafted. This process of creation has allowed for a rich exchange of ideas and has brought clarity to the venture.

Documentation to share with new parents: A set of documents that includes the Admission Form, School Board Guidelines, Aha Policies and Vision, Parent Guidelines and Medical Form has been put together to share with prospective parents. This better allows the parents to evaluate and understand the choice of kindergarten for their child, and allows the Kindergarten facilitators to better communicate their vision with the parents.

The decision to have frequent meetings/workshops involving parents: It has been decided that there will be space created for frequent meetings and workshops with parents. These will facilitate dialog, answer any questions or concerns, and allow for more opportunity to create a shared vision.

Year-end get-together and potluck: As we ended the year children, parents, facilitators and Support Group members had the opportunity to meet for a get-together and potluck. This was a time of joyful
singing, chanting, conversation and of course, wonderful food. We were also able to invite some prospective parents and children to this event, in order to provide them an additional opportunity to experience the Aha space and spend time with the Aha family.

**Reflections**

All experiences are indicators of where work needs to be done, both individually and collectively. This year has proved to be particularly useful in reaching those understandings.

Now that these aspects have been recognized, they have to be integrated into the whole being, and then into the spaces, the interactions and the experiences at Aha. While much needs to be done, a strong step in the right direction has been taken with the close support and involvement of the Aha family.

**Goals**

This year has been about working on internal spaces. As we continue this important work, we would also like to work on the physical spaces.

We would like to create spaces so that the children can pursue their activity without interruption, and at their own pace. This means creating more usable space than is currently available. We would like to develop to completion the existing but as yet incomplete space to make this possible.

We will also require an additional washroom facility, given that we have only one at the moment.

We would like to add one more facilitator to the team, the search for whom is already begun.

**Conclusion**

Out of great churn comes great learning. We are grateful for the opportunity to explore education in the spirit Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's vision.
Introduction

Deepanam School is based on the principles and thoughts on education put forward by The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It aims at integral development of students and to provide the joy and love of learning. Deepanam School aspires to make the students capable of thinking, studying, progressing and becoming intelligent – which must continue through one’s entire life – and of discovering for oneself the aim of life and the specific role that one’s soul has come down to play in terrestrial life.

Deepanam has completed a decade of serving the Auroville community. We cater to children of ages 7 to 14 years. There are three multi-age group classrooms: Light (7 & 8 years old), Peace (9 to 11 years old), and Faith (12 to 14 years old).

Highlights of the year

Light group (7 & 8 years old)

“Near to far” was our thread which we followed throughout the year in form of projects. Our first project was “Myself”; from there we moved to “Deepanam” and from there “Auroville”; and we completed the year with “Tamil Nadu”.

- **Myself project**: This was the project very near to the children (in fact within them). We discussed the qualities that each child had and how all of us come across/experience those qualities. The outcome of the project was a special tree, prepared during the art and craft sessions. The tree had origami photo frames holding each child’s picture and the qualities written in green leaves.
  
  Our focus was to bring awareness, positivity and appreciation into our class as we all come from different backgrounds. The children felt very proud of themselves and created very positive and harmonious feeling within the class.

- **Deepanam project**: The first question put to the children was: “Why do we come to school?” We proceeded with amazing, heart-touching and technical answers. We explored different areas of our school, interviewed teachers, and made posters of the details.
  
  Secondly, we constructed our not-much-used sandpit into a concrete platform and gave it the name Rainbow class. The name represents the meeting point of Light and water. This was very tough work as they had to first empty the pit, fill it up with topsoil and then put the cement. We used broken tiles to make a mosaic floor where children poured out their hearts with designs of sea animals. Collecting and weaving the coconut leaves to make a roof was the most exiting and hard work.
  
  This extension of our classroom is being used every day with so much of love because it was built by them. Constructing our own space brought the sense of belonging and the process made us aware of the importance of team work, planning and technical details.

- **Auroville project**: By this time our students caught the idea that slowly our circle - “from near to far” - was getting bigger. To bring in some different dynamics we had the parents participate in
this project. We made 3 subgroups: People of Auroville, Work in Auroville, Farms & forests in Auroville. Parents took small group of students to explore Auroville and documented their learning in different ways, which was presented to the rest of the school for Auroville's 48th birthday.

Collaboration with parents brought immense joy to the whole learning process. It made the children very responsible and proud. At the same time the parents too got the satisfaction of first-hand involvement.

• **Tamil Nadu project:** After experiencing our previous success, this topic we explored with the different teachers on campus who might not get much interaction with this age group otherwise. Again to make it most effective we made sub-groups for the topic: Culture & Tradition, Food, Geography, and Temples of Tamil Nadu.

  The variety of teachers made this learning process very rich and brought very harmonious atmosphere in the whole campus. The culmination of the project was a field trip to Chidambaram for 2 days and a night. On this trip we explored one of the main temples, ate traditional food and learnt about the geography of the place. This trip was a real success as many of the children had never left their parents for 2 days, and also it made them feel like researchers.

**Peace group (9 to 11 years old)**

**First term:** In the first term we did a project on animals. Children selected the animals which they decided to work on. They referred to books, browsed the net and collected information from others. We also did few brainstorming sessions, where the children shared their knowledge regarding animals.

  On August 15th, 2015, the children gave a presentation on The Life of Sri Aurobindo, which included chanting and presentation of Sri Aurobindo's symbol. It was a very good collective effort and it brought the group closer to each other.

**Second term:** During this term our project was on geographical landforms and seasons. Children worked on a few landforms, making paintings and models – they were very enthusiastic. Watching short videos and making songs on seasons was also included in this project work. At the end they presented their work in the form of a short play to their parents and to the school, which was well received.

**Third term:** This term we concentrated on theatre. We scripted a story called “Five spoons of salt”, and all the children took part in the performance. The children did the stage performance with such an involvement that it was appreciated with an ovation.

  For Auroville’s birthday week we visited Matrimandir Gardens for creative writing and the inner chamber for developing concentration. Children enjoyed those visits to Matrimandir.

  The students learned Sanskrit songs with a volunteer, and presented them to the parents.

  The third term was also very devoted to an Origami project with a volunteer. With Origami classes children explored their logical thinking, eye-hand coordination and perfection. They made many models and a presentation was done for the open house.

  We also had a musical evening, where children sang the songs which they had been learning since the beginning of the year.

  At the end of the year we went to Aranya Forest for an overnight stay. It turned out to be a wonderful experience for the children, and they came up with very nice write-up regarding their time spent there.

  This year the class was encouraged to write short stories, with the option of either fictional or real. The outcome was beautiful hand written and illustrated story-books.
Faith group (12 to 14 years old)

Faith group covers far-ranging traditional subjects necessary for further studies, including reading, science, mathematics, language arts, social studies, technology, French, and Tamil. A lot of emphasis is given to performing arts like theatre and to hands-on learning. The aim for this group is to develop academic skills, life skills as well as build character.

- **Creative radio project: “I Am”**: This was a Lilaloka project offered by Sandrine. It originated in our English class, where we were looking at self-esteem and emotions using a poem titled “I’m” which was completed freely by the students. These poems were then transformed into radio by Sandrine. In her own words:
  
  "Firstly, the children recorded their written creation. During the recording many emotions came up. Then, the joyful model of the Chinese portrait, which allows defining oneself by analogy in a creative and playful, way was combined. Each question starting with “If you were...” was asked. It became a two-by-two game in a dynamic interview.

  Finally, to go one step further, some more open questions like “If you could create a new world”, “if you were president” were asked.

  It was a wonderful experience to listen to their ideals and dreams. In short: they want to save the planet, they want to save the people and they want kindness and Love to save the world!

  As a result of the project we have 10 individual self-portraits, each one unique and very personal, which the students can keep as a “sound photography” of themselves in their path of evolution and inner growth, and a reminder of their own higher goal.

- **Localicious (Gardening and Cooking) Movement**: This year we continued with our local food project. We visited Solitude Farm and learnt about the whole cycle of Permaculture Gardening, cooked a local dish and enjoyed the lunch too. The visit inspired kids to plant their own vegetable gardens and to try local food. It brought about awareness of food miles and organic farming.

- **Participation in Auroville Childrens' Theatre Festival**: In Faith group a lot of importance is given to theatre. Participating in the Auroville Children’s Theatre Festival brought self-confidence and a positive atmosphere – collectively working towards a goal. It gave a platform for opening up and disclosing the hidden talents of the students. Participation in the festival brought about harmony between schools and also appreciation of other children’s talents.

- **Hands-on science**:
  1. **Biodegradability**: Students explored the concept of biodegradability by building and observing model landfills in terrariums to test the decomposition of samples of everyday garbage items. They recorded their observations over five days, seeing for themselves what happened to trash when it is thrown ‘away’ in a landfill environment. This showed them the difference between biodegradable and non-biodegradable and served to introduce them to the idea of composting. Students also learnt about the role of engineering in solid waste management.
  2. **Physics of flight**: The aim of this project was for the students to understand the concept of forces. We identified which forces would make an airplane fly higher or land, and which would make an airplane speed up or slow down while moving through the air. We made
paper airplanes of three types, tested their flight times and inferred which one was best. We connected this to how engineers design the shape of vehicles to be aerodynamic.

3. **Human body systems:** Students learnt about the respiratory system, nervous system, and muscular system and made models of the lungs and brain.

4. **Physics of wind energy:** Students learnt about atmospheric pressure and wind speed. Students created their own anemometers (instruments for measuring wind speed). They learnt how an anemometer measures wind speed by taking measurements at various school locations.

5. **Science of sound:** Students learnt the structure of ear, how sound travels, and about frequencies and decibels of sound.

6. **Engineering of simple machines (**catapult!**):** In this hands-on activity, student groups were tasked with designing and constructing precise and accurate catapults using ice cream sticks and rubber bands. They referenced an engineered design process. After constructing their catapults, students tested their structures and see how many targets they could successfully hit. Students presented their designs to the class, suggested improvements and discussed the characteristics of successful catapults. This engaging and playful activity incorporated many math, science and technology concepts.

- **Computer coding and Scratch:** Computer classes were enjoyed by the students where they learnt the very basics of computer programming using Hour of Code ([https://code.org/learn](https://code.org/learn)) for the younger kids and Scratch ([https://scratch.mit.edu/](https://scratch.mit.edu/)) for older ones. The child-friendly interface of both the programmes have gotten the children interested in what might otherwise be a dry subject. The students made presentations and games on math and science topics.

- **Cooking and baking classes:** Weekly cooking classes were held as a component of the Permaculture Garden and Cooking project. A variety of local dishes, with some ingredients from the school garden, were prepared by students and enjoyed by the whole school. The experience integrated mathematics (measurement and fractions) and also touched a bit on the chemistry of food.

- **Ancient Egypt project:** As an extension of history class, the students made costumes and props for a drama on Ancient Egypt. They performed the play “A Different Sort of Pharaoh: The Life of Hatshepsut” for parents and the rest of the school. Integrating theatre and history brought the topic of Ancient Egypt alive.

- **Mathematics:** Apart from regular concepts, a lot of stress was laid on polishing problem-solving and reasoning skills. Various hands-on projects were integrated. Practical activities were done such as measuring the new classroom building, calculating how many desks could fit and calculating area and perimeter. Probability was introduced through various games.

The last day of school marked the sendoff of three 8th grade students.
Common Programmes at Deepanam School

• **Painting:** Expressing oneself without being judged is the aim of painting classes at Deepanam. Various media like colored pencils, pastels, watercolors and oil paints are used depending on the age group.

• **Clay classes:** Projects in clay class are designed according to age group and skill level. The children learn and apply various techniques like pinching, rolling and moulding clay. This year the outputs were toys, rattles, whistles, windchimes, decorative plates and hanging totems. The students also built geography and science models with clay. On Sri Aurobindo's birthday and Auroville's birthday week the students shape Sri Aurobindo's symbol and the Matrimandir.

• **Arts and crafts:** The craft projects are structured according to age group. This year activities included stitching, embroidery, crochet, knitting, paper quilling, thumb printing, cardboard crafts, papier-maché, weaving, drawing and colouring, and making stuffed toys.

• **Gardening:** This school year children across all age groups were involved in weekly gardening classes. The children learned about several aspects of food growing. Firstly, they learned about the importance of the soil (soil types, compost, mulching, etc.). They also learned about water scarcity and the importance of careful water use in the garden. Beds and paths were built and designed with easy access and keeping in mind that beds should not be walked on. The students were able to observe the process of production from seed to food (sowing, planting, nurturing, harvesting). The names of the fruits and vegetables were learned in different languages (English, Tamil and French). The food was harvested by the children and brought directly to the kitchen where it could be cooked and shared with the school at snack or lunch time.

• **Life Science:** At the Deepanam Life Science Lab there are saltwater and freshwater aquariums, terrariums, and ducks. These need to be taken care of, so as a class the children learn about this. Children actively participate in cleaning the fish aquariums and pumps, feeding the animals, and maintaining the Lab. Other activities of Life Science class include field studies (watching reptiles and birds), watching documentaries on wildlife, and researching specific creatures chosen by the children (bat, squirrel, butterfly, etc.). The students sometimes accompany the teacher on a snake rescue. Life Science provides interaction, care and inspiration for protecting animals.

**Reflections**

**Light group:** Involvement of parents in the learning made the process very enriching and harmonious.
**Peace group:** Students gained self-confidence and a sense of satisfaction with their work.
**Faith group:** A platform for expression was provided to the students. It was amazing to see some very shy kids open up and perform confidently on stage. Children enjoyed the hands-on activities and various projects like carpentry and cooking.

**Conclusion**

Overall the year was very good and there was harmony, positivity, and satisfaction of doing a good job. However we also learnt from our mistakes and would improve upon them in the future. We aspire to ignite the quest for knowledge, progress and perfection for both teachers and students.
Building a Tree House
A project of Deepanam School

Introduction
At Deepanam School we have put focus on hands-on activities for the age group of 12 to 14 years old who have a lot of energy. We had been doing woodworking as part of art activities, and decided to take a big project of building a tree house.

Description of project
by Anisha, student in Faith class:

The Tree house project has been one of my favourites this year, mostly because now, I’m one of the people who use it the most... it’s so much fun, sitting in the breeze, chatting with my friends during break.

It started like this...

First we cut the wood (we also got some help from the Bamboo Research Centre in form of expertise and some of the bamboo they gave us).

The next thing I noticed was we sought a place between three trees, and created the base, which basically means we made the floor of the tree house.

The next thing we did was cutting the bamboo into the right shape.

We did it with the cutting machines, and some other shearing machine with which we trimmed the outside roughness of the bamboo wood.

Then we tied the finish pieces of the bamboo together with jute rope to create the walls of the tree house.

And so, here you are, how we did the tree house.

Outcomes
The tree house will remain a structure on campus for years to come. Children marvel at the structure and show it to parents and other community members. The tree house is used as fun and play place by all the children of the school.

Reflections
This project helped develop patience and concentration and has given a chance of freedom of expression. It helped develop skills with the hands like precision cutting and use of simple tools (nail and hammer and shearing machines). It brought the joy of working together as a team and solving problems, and finally creating a play house that the children are proud of.
Life Science Lab
A project of Deepanam School

Introduction

The Life Science Lab at Deepanam School is a space for children to discover the wonders of Nature. It is a study space for learning about the local wildlife, as per their interest and choice of study. For encouraging this we have a Laboratory that has 14 aquariums for both freshwater and marine fauna. We also maintain data on the rescues of snakes, and on bird counts within Auroville. The aim is to encourage children to learn and care about wildlife.

Description of project

The students of Deepanam School have free choice to take up activities or projects in the Life Science Lab. Whether feeding the fishes, cleaning the terrariums, or taking up another task, it is up to the children to take their own initiative to participate in the various activities of the Lab. The children who choose to participate come in small groups of 3 or 4, for 2 hours or 4 hours per week. The timings are scheduled with their class teachers. Students in the Living Ecology class at NESS also came to the Life Science Lab this year as part of their program.

Outcomes

This is an ongoing program for the past 5 years and the Lab keeps improving with more experience and research. The most evident aspect of this project is the fascination and concern that children have for the animals. Students have a keen observation and this is awakened in them during activities related to Life Science.

Every year students get very intrigued to learn that snakes are rather very charming creatures and there is nothing to fear. We have in our cultures some very wrong ideas about snakes. This is effectively changed by observing and learning about snakes directly at the Life Science Lab. “Are all black snakes poisonous?” “Do snakes have eyes?” “Where do snakes live? and why are they needed in the ecosystem?” Many more of such questions are asked endlessly. And it is not something that is told to the children – they ask because they want to know, and this is the biggest difference between learning from a textbook and free-progress learning. The questions they ask are practical as well as important, and the answers are discovered by the students over time. For us this becomes the starting point of helping them discover more, by supporting and encouraging such a process.

Another interesting observation that needs more to be noted is that some of the difficult students who find it hard to sit in regular classes, can become very focused when working / feeding / cleaning aquariums or terrariums. They can do such activities for hours without being bored. We have found more and more that Life Science can be a tool for helping children learn to concentrate better.

Reflections

When we rescue snakes from various places in Auroville and involve the students in this process of protection and care for animals, the learning is much more natural and spontaneous. Children live the experiences much more deeply and this automatically opens the door for education of the Self.
Dehashakti School of Physical Education

Introduction

Through physical education children can be made to achieve higher values of self-control, self-confidence and respect towards team members. Along with the development of the body, physical education is an opportunity to develop mental strength, which contributes to a complete education for children in Auroville.

Activities of the year

Over 200 students from the age of 8 years to 16 years old participate in the Dehashakti program. We have a rich mix of cultures and backgrounds from 5 different schools of Auroville. To involve the students in a systematic training of Athletics, Swimming, Fitness, and Team Games is the target or challenge set before us. As coaches / trainers / teachers we respect each child's learning pace and strengths and weaknesses, and try to encourage them to make their best effort. We patiently assure them that it is their individual progress which is to be focused upon.

Activities which are part of the program include athletics (races, long jump, shot put, etc.), football, volleyball, basketball, hockey, softball, Ultimate Frisbee, kho-kho, dodge-ball, and various other games.

We have been increasing the Club-sports activities on campus. The Club sports are those which the students choose of their own free choice, outside of the regular program. They include Aikido, archery, Horse Club, mixed martial arts, Capoeira, fire juggling, and table tennis.

Outcomes

The Dehashakti program aims to offer a broad avenue for physical activities and sports games that encourage children to benefit integrally. The focus is not just a fit body but also to build a sensitive and strong mind and vital. We do this through:

- Organizing activities that enhance the mission of the program by developing young leaders from among the students.
- Providing a vehicle for progress and challenges for all students.
- Encouraging personal responsibilities amongst pupils.
- Generating healthy rivalry in friendly games.
- Building team skills, leadership skills and co-operation.

Reflections

We have over the past couple of years initiated a training program with a team of young adults who have chosen to learn to be physical education instructors here as their prime interest. These trainees were themselves students at Dehashakti some years back, and organically opted to help first as assistant teachers. Now being more confident and sure of their commitments they have chosen to plunge into an objective evaluation of the whole Dehashakti program, not as students but as teachers. We would like to continue offering such training programs for all those who wish to join our team. A larger team of teachers / coaches is needed and will benefit the students at Dehashakti.
Aurolympics
A project of Dehashakti School of Physical Education

Introduction

“It might be better to remind you that we are here for a special work, a work which is done nowhere else.

We want to come in contact with the supreme consciousness, the universal consciousness, we want to bring it down in ourselves and to manifest it. But for that we must have a very solid base; our base is our physical being, our body. Therefore we have to build up a body solid, healthy, enduring, skillful, agile and strong, ready for everything. There is no better way to prepare the body than physical exercise: sports, athletics, gymnastics, and all games are the best means to develop and strengthen the body.

Therefore I call you to go through the competitions beginning today, full-heartedly with all your energy and all your will.”

The Mother, 1 April 1966

Aurolympics events are competitions between teams, hence the contribution of every member adds or subtracts from the total points chalked up by the team. It is an excellent illustration of the motto “one for all and all for one”.

In this way all our activities — gymnastics, athletics, swimming, fitness exercises, and games — gain equally in their importance to the integral physical development of the child.

Just as we all study various subjects in school for a broader mental development, similarly at Dehashakti we offer diverse physical subjects to develop a student’s body integrally.

This year’s Aurolympics

A total of 210 students took part in the Aurolympics this year, from 5 Auroville schools. Participants were 7 to 18 years old, girls and boys, and took part in mixed age and gender training and competitions.

The training for athletics and fitness is carried out in the first phase of the year (August to December). In the next phase of the year (January to March) the team games are taken up. Thus Aurolympics is a process, lasting from August to March.

Some of the important attributes that are emphasized in Aurolympics are:

- Sportsmanship
- Team spirit
- Discipline
- Social skills

Outcomes

The aim of Aurolympics is to help each child develop his/her personality. The child acquires the knowledge and understanding of healthy living and the importance of physical fitness.
For both the teachers and the students it is a journey to work out together a process most effective and beneficial to their development.

Reflections

This year we made a survey with some students to find out how they perceive themselves and the Aurolympics. Students were asked to rate themselves for self-motivation, respect for self and others, and sportsmanship.

Such surveys are very interesting and provide a better understanding for the teachers as well. We face a unique situation because ours is a program in which:

- Mixed-age groups are encouraged to interact with one another during the competitions
- Girls and boys are encouraged to play together
- Different Auroville schools are mixed/combined; students of very different backgrounds and cultures come together in team events, etc.

This makes Dehashakti very special for it is the only space in Auroville to bring such a rich gathering of students and to create a program that encourages primarily good health and positive sportsmanship.

Conclusion

The program is growing and a lot of new activities are being introduced at Dehashakti. It is our primary focus to provide a rich and concentrated opportunity of physical education for all our students equally.

For this a team of dynamic teachers/coaches is essential. Since a few years we have realised that it is most effective to work on a training program for coaches, who can themselves continue progressing in body and mind. We will keep working to develop such a program in Auroville, in support of the growing need of physical education, based on the ideals of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.
Physical Education Teacher Training Program  
A project of Dehashakti School of Physical Education

Introduction

With this teacher training program we strive to research the best methods to be applied in the integral physical education program at Dehashakti.

“The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also.”  

Sri Aurobindo

Description of project

Four young adults who had just passed out of Auroville schools and were keen to learn about teaching physical education were selected to participate in this venture of working, teaching, learning and self-discovery.

Daily from 2:30pm to 6pm the trainees were engaged in helping and supporting the Dehashakti teachers during the physical education classes. And once a week after the lessons we sat to share our experiences and observations.

Here is a description from one of the trainees:

“Since more than a year now a few of us young teachers have been meeting once every week with Rajeev for a session called ‘The Dehashakti Action Group’. These meetings as a training have been very useful and interesting for me since our aim is to evaluate our physical education program, find and implement new ideas and ways to improve our program. I feel that sharing in a group is very important since we can each share the different challenges we face as teachers and come up with solutions. These weekly sessions involve a lot of discussions and feedbacks from each of us teachers, looking into the aims of physical education as envisaged by The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, all of this has helped me evolve a lot as a sports teacher since I learn of new methods and ways of teaching, organizing my classes and giving my maximum effort on the sports ground with the children.”

Outcomes

This training was initiated in 2014-15, it has completed a cycle of two years with the team of 4 teachers trainees. The team of trainees is of mixed ages and yet has over a very short time came to understand each other. They work as a team to bring in new possibilities and changes to the program. This process will continue as it is needed to keep the evaluation as a regular habit. For the benefit of the team as well as the Dehashakti program, such brainstorming and sharing of ideas is essential.

Conclusion

The Dehashakti team and activities have gained greatly from the teacher training program. We hope that it will have a long term impact as the trainees continue to evaluate their progress and slowly evolve into creative and inspiring teachers.
Future School

Introduction

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.

The program at Future School

Future School offers a high school equivalent education to primarily Aurovillian students. This year there were 75 adolescents/young adults from 15 nationalities enrolled in the school.

We offer a wide range of subjects to our students: Languages (English, Tamil, Hindi, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Russian); Mathematics; Pure Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology); Social Sciences (History, Geography, Economics, Psychology); and extra-curricular subjects (Information Communication Technology, Fashion Design, Photography, Film, Art, Theatre). Where suited, we also offer the possibility of Practical Training with Auroville Units, making use of the diverse possibilities offered by Auroville at large.

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

Teaching and learning methods

The school incorporates many different teaching/learning methods and environments: projects, tutorials, independent research, traditional lectures, online classrooms; small and large groups, one-on-one approach, peer teaching, work experience and self-study. In this way we hope to meet the needs of each individual. We feel that the combination of required areas of study and choice of subjects gives students the chance to both get in touch with new areas of knowledge and well as explore their own interests and needs.
Evaluation
Reflective assessment are shared during the course of mentor meetings and other conferences. We also use school seminars to engage the students and teachers in reflective assessment.

Skill based assessment 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

Highlights of the year

The Launch of Google Classroom
Future School is now connected with fiber optic internet access, giving us both better speeds and with far higher bandwidth for our educational use. In keeping with this opportunity, Future School asked for and were granted permission to use Google’s Apps for Education. In addition to our physical classrooms, we can now offer these 'virtual classrooms' that can be accessed both in the school and from home. We are happy to have this resource since it is very versatile and can truly assist the learning experience. With this resource we can we can:

• Share resources such as documents, videos or links with the students;
• Create assignments with multiple documents, links and videos and put the lessons in one place;
• Make class and school announcements;
• Give the ability for students to post back assignments, comments and questions;
• Increase classroom collaboration;
• Email student feedback.

We know that this experience will prepare the students to participate in their future interactions with more familiarity and ease. Over the next couple of years, we will try to reduce avoidable spending on paper and to increase the use of digital resources by the students.

Weekly Seminars
These have been an ongoing feature of our school for many years and are open to all students and teachers. This gives us a chance to invite interesting people to present a variety of topics. We also use this time to organize student presentations and debates. Here is some of what we explored this year: “State of Information Today” by Amba and Ashwin, with a demonstration of the prowess of Ashwin’s drone; “Film Making” by Irena; “Experiences after Future School” by past students Stav, Keya, Nisha, Kim, and Satya, among others; “Human Rights” by Malvika from Amnesty International; “Astrophysics” by Vrata; and a debate on cell phone usage in school by the students.

Open House and Fundraiser
In September, organized by the Student Council and with help from the student body, we hosted an Open House on our premises. The students ran a lively kitchen, serving snacks prepared by them with ingredients donated generously by local Units. There was plenty for the visiting friends and families to take in: demonstrations in the Chemistry laboratory, a flea-market, games, on-the-spot portrait photography, music, poetry and gymnastics performances by the students. With the help of the students and the community Future School was able to raise a significant amount to help it to keep its activities on track.
Potluck and Open-Mic 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 in the Multi-purpose Space for an evening of games and interaction.

Graduation
This year saw the successful completion of the program by 7 students. As per tradition on the last day of school, fellow students, teachers and staff members, and parents of the graduates gathered to acknowledge the accomplishments of these students. Beginning a poetry presentation of 'Who' by Sri Aurobindo, the program continued with songs, speeches, and poetry readings. The now traditional power point presentation with photos of each of the graduating students at different stages of their lives was, as always, most touching. Each student received the gift of their own 'Goodbye Book'. The event concluded with another tradition: the planting of a tree by the graduating class. This event has become a very important one in our school and is always filled with laughter and tears, joy and some sadness; it reminds us that we are a family.

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:

• **Shasun Pharmaceuticals**: On the 5th of April 2015, students from 4 different Future School Biology and Chemistry classes together with Inge, Sergei and Evgenya, visited the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) branch of the pharmaceutical company Shasun Pharmaceuticals, located in Kalapet, Puducherry. Together with 8 students from Last School accompanied by Ashwin, we left in the school bus at 9:30am and returned after lunch.
  
  Established in 1986, the plant at Puducherry is dedicated to the manufacture of Ibuprofen for supply to world markets. Besides learning about how active chemical ingredients are turned into Ibuprofen, Shasun’s leading patent, the students also learned how the pharmaceutical industry operates, including approval of regulatory bodies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. After a power point presentation where the students were informed about the layout and history of the company, its environmental considerations, the logistics behind running such a company, and the safety aspects to be considered, we were each given a helmet and then began the tour of the company. We saw how the raw materials are stored in huge tankers underground, how their treatment plant operates, the gigantic boilers in which the products are made, as well the quality control department. Although we did not have time to visit the packing division, our contact person insisted that we come back for that next time.

• **Cuddalore Flood Relief Assessment**: Led by Aneeta, the Geography students carried out an investigation to determine the impacts of the Tamil Nadu floods 2015 in two areas of Cuddalore: Ambalabanapet (a camp for Sri Lankan refugees) and Believers’ Church Nagar (a community set up for those displaced after the tsunami). The students used surveys and interviews to assess damage to property and that the secondary impacts. They also got to look at the mindsets of the population to examine why they think the floods happened.

• **Rural Inequalities Assessment**: With the help of the Auroville Village Action Group (AVAG) students went to one of the villages that are being helped by AVAG with their outreach
programs. Through group discussions with women, the students studied the impacts of social inequalities (caste, race, disability, religion, health and education), economic inequalities (income and property), and environmental issues (sanitation and safe water availability).

**Community Service**
For the past nine years, Future School has been participating in a Community Service program that allows the new students joining school to participate in a unique opportunity and experience. For three weeks before the new school year begins, each student works in three different Services, Units or ongoing projects. We find this important as it aids 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, which took place at the end of this academic year, was taken up and successfully executed by one of our senior students, Pavitra.

**Future Scribbles**
Future Scribbles, the monthly student newsletter which was launched by the Language Arts class last year was taken forward by the newly constituted student editorial team. Having acquired a spiffy new look this year, it has continued to serve as a platform for both school and community news, and for 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, commentaries. It is uploaded to the school website and sent by email to everybody who is a part of the school. A few print copies are circulated as well. Both an entertaining and intellectual project, it has been successfully nurtured throughout the year.

**Chemistry class sourcebook**
A question book containing hundreds of original problems covering variety of topics in introductory chemistry was prepared by chemistry teachers, Sergei and Evgenia. For now we use it as a sourcebook for the assessment of students. Further versions of the book will be made for use in the classroom or at home.

**Reflections**
We made specific explorations of ways and means to encourage and support self-motivated students. Through clarity and consistency of actions, seminar discussions, conversations and feedback, we were able to bring to the fore this goal from last year. As a part of the outcomes, students are going to take specific responsibility in several school activities, including the organization of the weekly seminars. The students also organized a collective analysis and feedback activity so as to influence future student experiences.

**Goals for next year**
We would like to create an environment in the school in which individuals, both students and teachers, are encouraged to increase their efforts to understand themselves, the world around them, and are able to apply this. This means providing a platform for self-discovery and self-application.

We would like to demand more engagement and more sincerity that can be expressed in regularity, self-discipline, improving performance and the will to progress.
Kindergarten

Awareness Through the Body: Outdoor circuit with a glass of water

In the classes of Awareness Through the Body at kindergarten level, one of the main aims is to help children learn how to maintain their attention stable for increasing amounts of time. The attention span of kindergarten children is generally pretty short; sometimes it amounts to just a few seconds. The tendency of the child’s focus at this age is to shift quickly towards the different stimuli which are constantly coming to him/her from his/her senses; the stronger or more “appealing/catching” the stimuli, the more likely for the child to shift his attention to it. Being that the environment, especially the natural one, is often very abundant with stimuli of all kinds, it becomes very likely that young children don’t always manage to undertake activities which require a prolonged stability in their focus and attention.

Being also that the capacity of focusing the attention is a faculty which is progressive and incremental, we regularly work on it throughout the year so it can grow and consolidate. Amongst the various activities that foster concentration, we have discovered and implemented a specific one which seems to have a particularly beneficial effect on the children.

The activity consists of an outdoor path, constituted by several elements – like planks, hula hoops, and wooden blocks of different shapes and sizes, slopes and small walls— which is required to be crossed by the children while holding a metal glass containing a certain amount of water. This path starts from the indoor school hall (where we generally conduct our regular classes), proceeds by twists and turns through the neighbouring playground area, and ends in the same hall from where it started. In this way we create a rich and expanded field in which the children have the opportunity to develop in an engrossing and varied way their balance, coordination and focus.

The session begins by giving a brief explanation of the exercise and introducing the “rules of the game”. The children need to enter the path – one at a time keeping enough distance between them — while holding a glass filled with water. They need to try to avoid spilling the water, or to spill as little water as possible while crossing the various elements of the circuit. The way they handle their glass is up to them; they can even keep it momentarily on the ground or on any structures and pick it up later on, as long as they don’t come out of the path to do so.

The activity then proceeds in a progressive manner: when they complete one loop and come once again to the starting point they have an increased level of difficulty – holding two glasses. Then the same procedure while walking and moving backwards. This progression helps the children to maintain their enthusiasm for much longer. The session continues until either the time is up (45-50 minutes) or when we see that children start to become tired. Being that every child has a different capacity we allow some children to end the activity beforehand and some to continue for one or two loops more.

As the activity is taking place in a fairly big area the presence of a minimum of three teachers is needed, so that each child can be properly assisted and guided along the whole stretch of the circuit. The amount of water in the glasses needs to be regulated according to the ability and age of the children, so that the task of not spilling will require from them a continuous present attention, but at the same time will not frustrate them and make them loose interest and/or motivation.
As a result of the above mentioned set up and care taken to follow the due steps, the effect that the activity has on the children is very remarkable. The fact of needing to balance the glass – which gives a constant and immediate feedback to every action or movement – brings the children to a state of intense concentration, which can last for a relatively long time and which doesn’t need much input from the teachers. The fact that the area and length of the circuit is big allows most of the children to be engaged at the same time, avoiding in this way those “waiting” moments in which children can easily lose their focus. Another remarkable feature of this kind of activity is the presence of several “problem solving” situations: whenever children encounter a big descending step, or a steep slippery plank or a big gap between two steps, they need to find a way to organize themselves so that they can overcome the obstacle while maintaining the water in the glasses. Because we give them freedom about the way they handle their glass, but at the same time we require a certain precision in respecting the boundaries of the path, they find themselves in the position of needing to find a coherent sequence of movements and actions that will allow them to proceed on the path without spilling. Whenever they manage to overcome these situations they have good chances of increasing the trust in themselves and their abilities.

Another beneficial aspect of the activity is the continuous stimulation of their nervous system and vestibular system, which are constantly engaged in the act of balancing the body on the structures, of balancing the glasses in their hands and of evaluating distance, height, steepness and surfaces of the various elements constituting the path. In this way children can improve and refine their self-awareness (sensing) abilities.

The time that it takes for the children go through one loop can range between 4 to 9 minutes, during which the attention of most of them is maintained quite focused on their task. Younger children of 3½ to 4½ years old can do an average of 2-3 loops; the older children of 4½ to 6½ an average of 4 loops and a maximum of 5 loops. This means that in a session a child can remain in an active focused state up to 30 minutes, which for this age group is remarkable.

We repeated this activity during the last 3 years with all three age groups and we have had every time similar positive results: extended span of focus, enthusiasm, complete involvement of the children, opportunities for solving problems and overcoming difficult situations, enhanced sense of trust in their abilities in doing so, and improved balance.

It needs to be noted that this activity can’t be implemented at the beginning of the school year and that the above mentioned results are relative to children who are regularly following our programme and are engaged in self-control and focus-inducing activities during their regular school programme.

**Special Needs Children in the Classroom Seen as a Challenge and a Gift**

At the Kindergarten we have about 15 children per group. In most groups there are one or two children with Special Needs. In the last three years at the oldest level (6 years old) we had to deal with 2 cases of speech problems, one hearing impaired, one hyperactive and one gifted (explosive) child.

These children needed special/specific attention, without which they were unhappy, unable to feel part of the group and also disruptive. Other children also need attention, but of a different kind. With Special Needs children a lot of communication between the teacher and the parents is necessary. The teacher has to get the case history, and understand the home situation. Mutual trust has to be built between all
those dealing with the child so we can share our observations and guide the child effectively. Constant communication is needed so we can see how our attempts at giving the child tools to deal with his situation are working. Often a specialist has to be consulted as well and the child will also have sessions with them outside the school.

This extra input on the part of the teachers is challenging but also rewarding. It requires time for reflection and research from the teacher. The other children in the class are challenged too, and they learn a great amount of tolerance and acceptance. The awareness of each other’s needs, uniqueness, and capacities grows. Conformity to their peers, which is important to 6-year-olds, dwindles and becomes flexible. They learn to enjoy each other’s positive aspects and deal with care and sensitivity with the handicaps.

The fact that they become aware that it is very difficult for some children to speak, or to hear, or to simply sit quietly helps them deal with their own small challenges with less fear and frustration. This can ultimately foster a healthy classroom environment of empathy, sharing and cooperation.

Communication with the parents

The Yellow Group is the youngest group of the Kindergarten (aged between 2½ and 3½). At this young age, good communication with parents is important. For some of the children who didn’t attend the pre-crèche, this is the first year the child is expected to stay alone without the parents, and naturally there is some apprehension on the part of the parents: “Is the child eating? Is he/she playing with other children? Can he/she share toys?” Or simply, “Is my child happy to be here?” When the parents pick up their children, they often ask these questions.

Last year we started taking photos regularly of the children, either in a group or alone. The photos show the children while playing in the classroom, painting, making collages, working with clay, dancing, etc. The photos with comments are sent to the parents by email. The idea came to us when a child started crying every morning while entering the Kindergarten with his mother, but stopped crying and started playing happily soon after the mother left. We told the mother about this, but at first she could not believe it and she was reassured only when seeing the photo of her smiling child.

A few comments on the photos from the parents:

- “I so appreciate these little sneak peeks!”
- “It feels so good to get a glimpse of what kids do in the school with you all.”
- “It is fun to see how they are when we are not there.”
Play of Painting at the Kindergarten

Introduction

The purpose of Play of Painting at the Kindergarten is to support the personality development of children through painting.

The atelier is a safe place enclosed in big vertical panels that shelters the inner necessity of expression from influences and distractions, from the exterior world and from all that prevent the child to be herself. Here, the natural trace, a pure emanation of the body, can appear freely on the paper. This place was created for the revelation of the personality and each child can be as she/he is, beyond notions of competition and success.

Description of project

Play of Painting has been offered at the Kindergarten for the last 13 years, starting in 2003. During the sessions groups of children paint freely together: no subject or theme is imposed. In the centre of the room is a Table-Palette with 18 pots of different colours and high quality paintbrushes. The educator “is not an instructor or task master, he is a helper and a guide”, as told by Sri Aurobindo. Each group paints once a week. Regular practice over a long period of time is necessary (at least one school year).

Arno Stern discovered that it is only in these specific conditions that the inner language of the organic memory can manifest itself as a set of 70 signs that he calls "Formulation". The signs of the Formulation repeat themselves systematically and evolve in the same order, whatever the nationality, age, culture and background of the child. Each child paints them in her own style. It means that a "répertoire" of those patterns exists in each of us human beings. It is connected to the memory of the sensations of the intra-uterin life, called "cellular memory" by biologists: the memory of the body since the origin of life, a profound and universal trace.

The educator of the Play of Painting must study in depth the signs of the Formulation and their innumerable combinations in order to serve the children without judgment. Years of practice are necessary to acquire this respectful attitude in front of the child and her work.

In 2015-16, this activity was offered to children of different ages every week. Children from Kindergarten, TLC, Transition and Deepanam schools, from Sadhana Forest, and a few adult Aurovilians painted. In addition, paints were regularly prepared and mixed for 3 groups of the Kindergarten for the teachers to conduct their own creative activities in their classrooms.

The Play of Painting team at Kindergarten is Claire and Ammu, assisted by Thérésa and Michelle; at Udavi School on Saturdays it is Claire, assisted by Claudine.

Outcomes

For the past 13 years, the paintings have been kept and archived in chronological order, with one or more folders per child. Those archives are precious to observe children's paintings evolution over 2, 3 and sometimes 4, 5 and more years. They are kept as a respect for the child and her work.
Interested parents and children can make an appointment with us to see all their paintings in chronological order, displayed on the big panels. As a painting can grow by adding more papers over weeks or months, sometimes a child had the joy to see one of her paintings covering a full panel.

Those meetings are a wonderful experience for parents and children. Parents have the opportunity to see all the paintings of their child, which is important because they don’t take them at home. They ask many questions about our work with the children, and how to create at home a space for them to draw and paint safely and happily. For that, the parent respectful and loving attitude is of utmost importance.

In Play of Painting the child can paint what she needs to paint at the moment, giving her a moment of relaxation. Old tensions are released. Often, an agitated child calm down during a session.

The child's creativity develops naturally. As a result, her confidence in her own abilities and capacities grows. She discovers them with wonder. A new attitude of respect towards oneself and others, towards life itself, is born.

**Reflections**

The most meaningful thing about of Play of Painting to me (Claire) is that by tracing freely, without imposed subjects, the child draw her strength from herself: what a joy, what a wonder to create her own world! Capacities and needs are in a perfect equilibrium.
Last School

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. This approach has a demonstrable structuring effect on their personality and increases their autonomy, self-confidence and capacity of innovation. The teachers assist the students in finding what they truly are and want to become, and to build in themselves a rich multifaceted personality, through a great variety of learning activities.

Activities of the year

The program includes literature, art, social sciences, natural sciences, philosophy, mathematics, physics & chemistry, languages, film editing, 3D modelling and sport, but also extra-curricular activities, like dance, theater, trekking, so that all the parts of the being are awakened and developed.

We had 30 full time students during the year. In addition, courses were offered to young Aurovilians and adults on Indian Culture and Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. Moreover, the Art Center is being used by some students who are part of other Auroville schools’ programs as well as by adults. Having settled in our new location, work has begun to create the garden with the help of interested students. The pond and the classroom spaces are being maintained by the students.

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

● We start every day with an Assembly with a concentrated silence.
● An art workshop takes place each semester, in which everyone, students and teachers, works intensively together for 5 days, concluding with a presentation and display of the work.
● Intensive individual writing and science projects over a period of 8 weeks concluded in oral presentations to the school as a whole.
● A class on mythology was presented by Damian, ‘The Hero’s Journey’, in which psychological types were explored.
● An initiation to Garbology was given by Ribhu, followed up with environmental studies with Lucas.
● Projects for the community at large were taken up by several students in film editing and art, including a door project for Santé, the decoration of the Tango Festival, a documentary on the products of Shradhanjali and another one on Dehashakti’s activities, and the short documentary, “The Art of Free Progress”.
● Various school outings were organized: the Puducherry garbage dump, a pharmaceutical company, a day’s work at the Hermitage forest, and short treks in the surrounding areas.
● A trek to the Himalayas was organized by Jean with some students participating.

Conclusion

This year saw an increased commitment and autonomy of the students in managing their interest, time and projects. Many have responsibilities in the school as well as outside. All this corresponds to the objectives of the school, as a preparation for a meaningful Free Progress programme.
Introduction

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

Lilaloka will be 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. Lilaloka’s Phase I building is currently under construction and the primary activity this year has been of fund raising, communication, project management and construction. In addition, some of Lilaloka members have conducted activities with children under the Lilaloka umbrella at various locations in Auroville.

Activities of the year

Fundraising and Communication

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

- We kept our social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) up to date and enlarged our network to reach more people and other educational projects in a spirit of sharing of knowledge and researches regarding new ways of education in today’s world.
- We updated our booklet and flier regarding change of activities and team members.
- Regular guided tours of Lilaloka Land and its first phase building, still under construction, were organized.
- The Lilaloka core team had meetings with people who are interested to offer activities within Lilaloka.
- We introduced and shared the vision and aims of Lilaloka with different AVIs.
- On 12 of December 2015, Yvelise and Sandrine had an Internet conference with AVI France, organized by Lilaloka, AVI France and Utopia Chloé Sanchez, on the theme “Playing is Learning to Be”. The event took place in what is called "Interactive Cafe" and happened at "L'Atelier du fil rouge", Paris.
- On 16 of August 2015, there was a fundraising event organized on the Lilaloka land to raise the money to complete the first phase and give Lilaloka a roof.
- We have started to explore and prepare material for a crowd-funding campaign.
- Lilaloka was present on the Christmas fair in the Youth Centre with a play corner and information about the Lilaloka project.

Fundraising and communication outcomes:

- Total amount raised in 2015-16: Rs. 11,40,000.
- Two possible new facilitators who are in harmony with the vision and aims of Lilaloka are interested to share their activities within Lilaloka.
- Emily Klein created a short stop-motion animation to introduce Lilaloka to be used for fundraising (music custom-made by Aristide Rosier).
- We appointed an accountant to assist us with the financial side of the project.
- Booklets and leaflets are up to date.
- Nature’s Theatre gave a presentation at the Teachers’ Centre.

Lilaloka Phase 1: construction and construction site
The roof is under construction and expected to be finished and covering the construction by the end of June 2016. Maintaining the existing construction, fence, planting and care for the land and nursery is ongoing on a daily basis. Rajan, our care-taker, started to create a garden.

Occupational Therapy and Supportive Learning Facilitation
This activity will be going on but not anymore under the umbrella of Lilaloka.

Creative Radio Sessions: a Lilaloka activity offered to Deepanam School by Sandrine
The creative radio sessions took place this year in August-September 2015 at Deepanam School with the class of 11-12 year old students. Bhakti, their teacher, initiated this project about self-esteem and emotions, using a poem titled “I’m” to be completed freely by the students. First, we used this written creation for the children to get used to the microphone, learn about themselves, their voice, how to record and rehearse, as many times as they felt needed to be satisfied and confident. Then, we used the joyful model of the Chinese portrait which allows defining oneself by analogy in a creative and playful way. Each question starts by “If you were”. It became a two by two game in dynamic interview. Finally, to go one step further, we added some more open questions like: “If you could create a new world”, “if you were president”?

It was a wonderful experience to listen to their ideal and dreams. In short: They want to save the planet, they want to save the people, and they want kindness and Love to save the world!

The final product is a set of 10 individual self-portraits, each one unique and very personal, which they can keep as a “sound photography” of themselves in their path of evolution and inner growth, and a reminder of their own higher goal.

Nature’s Theater offered by Anna
In Transition School:
For Transition School students Nature’s Theatre was offered as a two-month workshop for second graders and an introductory three sessions for third graders. We explored and learned to use the compass and constructed our first shapes: the circle and the 5-pointed star. We experienced how this shapes relate to our own body. We learned that nothing exists without a first point, a centre around which it revolves. We related that point to our own centre, to our own beginning within the belly of our mother. That point knows exactly who we are, how we look and where our talents lay.

To follow the story “1, 2, 3, and a Star We Be” gives each child the possibility to experience and understand its own centre and boundary. What happens if we lose this point and our actions become pointless? What do we lose? What happens to the collective when we shoot far beyond our boundary? With the second graders I had more sessions. We decided to create 3 worlds: one of fairies, one of pirates and one of animals. It was a collective effort with a lot of support from the regular teachers. One group created the characters, and the other three groups created the three worlds. We all experienced the joy of working together, creating together, collaborating and realized that our ideas and talents can benefit the whole. It was a wonderful experience of working together, teachers and children.
In TLC:
I worked with my regular groups of second and third graders in TLC. I have been working with these groups from their first year in TLC. Each beginning of a year is a continuation of the last, and we use that what we have learned in our new creations. Both groups wanted to make dolls and create a world for them to live in. I developed a technique and found the material to create the dolls. They had to be strong, washable and it had to be possible for the youngest ones to make them. I used the 5-pointed star within the circle to get the right body proportions in three different sizes. The children called the dolls “bendies”. They were loved and fun to play with – they became acrobats, balancing on top of each other, building pyramids. It was a joy to follow the children in this process.

Once the dolls entered the groups the stories kept on developing themselves, from individual rooms to community house, collective playground and a swimming pool. The family of dolls got furniture, collective kitchen, swings etc. The world grew so big that I made a set of 14 dolls to add to the play in our sessions. Each session was a combination of building a community and playing out the day by day life in a community.

Outcome and reflections on Nature’s Theatre:
Observing the joy and intensity with which the children were playing made us decide within TLC to give this doll community a place, so it could be used on a day-by-day basis. Many parents informed me that they were regularly taken to this place of play to follow what was happening in the doll community. It was a beautiful experience of sharing. To work with two different groups on different days on the same project was an interesting experience for all of us.

Outcomes
We expanded our communication network with many more followers of the Lilaloka project. Our activities benefited two groups in TLC, two groups in Transition School, one group in Deepanam school, some individual children, and teachers.

Reflections
Beside the running affairs, the most meaningful was our continuous communication and research in new ways of education, within Auroville and around the world. We had many requests from facilitators and parents to join Lilaloka (Newcomers, Newcomers-to-be as well as Aurovilians and volunteers).

There are more than 20 children in Auroville who are not participating within the existing schools. Most of these parents follow very closely the development of Lilaloka and would like their children to be able to join.

Conclusion
Our main focus for next year will be to fundraise for the completion of the construction (needed: around 42 lakhs) and for the Educational Equipment (needed: around 20 lakhs). We will start to offer activities (collective board games, Nature’s Theater, Fairy garden creations...) within the Lilaloka compound as soon as the roof is up.
Nandanam Kindergarten

Introduction

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

Jalam group (Age: 2-and-a-half to 3)

Our first goal was to achieve a safe space where the children are not afraid to explore and there is warmth and a feeling of belonging to the group, of being part of a big family.

This year we concentrated on the physical and sensorial development of the children, since at this particular age children are learning to integrate their sensations into one whole experience and understand their bodies with respect to gravity and space.

Another goal was to have better communication with the parents to create the space of growth for our children together.

Activities of the year

This year we had 5 boys and 10 girls in Jalam group. Over the year we explored the new playground specifically made for Jalam group. Our space is larger than it was before; we utilized the big sandpit, the balancing structures, the trampoline, the slide, the ducks and the monkey gym a lot. The outdoor tables were a great help and fun for messy activities like clay, maida paintings, whole-body mud baths, soapy and bubble painting, colouring with paints, natural dyes, collages with natural things, sand paintings, etc.

Individual games and activities took preference over group ones in the beginning, gradually shifting towards more collective activities by the end of the year. Social skills were introduced right from the beginning. Development of motor skills is a continuing theme throughout the school year.

- **Corners:** To create a safe space, many activity corners where set up which the children could explore independently and also with their teachers throughout the year. Some of them were painting corner, craft corner, reading corner, puzzles and games corner, dressing-up corner, doll house with dolls, clay corner, trampoline corner, the big sandpit with sand toys, and a little water-splashing corner.

- **Self-reliance:** Children were encouraged to serve themselves at the dining-table, eat without help, use the toilet independently, put on their own clothes, take care of their bags and shoes and handle school materials with respect, ask for help from facilitators when required, etc., helping them become more independent.
• **Motor-skills:** Activities like pouring liquids into different-sized containers, putting sand and seeds into differently-shaped and sized containers, putting buttons on, using a zipper, and other practical life activities based on Montessori activities helped children develop their concentration as well as their motor skills. Sorting things according to size, beading, cutting, tearing, gluing, hammering, etc. helped develop their fine motor skills. Big movements like walking the animal, being an animal, jumping, skipping, hopping, running, throwing, catching, running like a train all over the playground helped develop the gross motor skills.

• **Spatial development:** Building structures with wooden blocks, Legos, kuppala, feeling their bodies with respect to gravity in activities like balancing, Awareness Through the Body etc. helped develop their sense of space.

• **Sense of beauty and concentration:** Making mandalas with different designs and materials (like flowers, leaves, seeds, coloured tiles, stones), playing with different shapes and with toys like animals and dolls helped develop the children's visual perception with colours and designs and a sense of beauty. Painting, seeing beautiful things, helping to keep things neat and tidy also brought about the development of the sense of beauty. Passing the candle in different ways also helped develop their concentration and fine motor skills.

• **Sensorial development:** The development of sight, sound, taste, smell and touch was taken into consideration throughout the planning of all the different activities during the year.

• **Language:** Language was explored through many nursery rhymes, action songs, story-telling and narrating many stories. Children themselves took up the narration of stories with books during story-time. Through games, listening to instructions, and stories, they grasped many new words and enriched their vocabulary.

• **Music and dance project:** When we saw the children's interest in music and dance we took this up as a project. We listened to many different types of music. We played many different types of instruments like the drum, xylophone, cymbals etc. Children danced to simple rhythms and beats. We visited Svaram and explored the musical instruments there. At Svaram each child made a necklace with a bell, and this inspired us to create many musical instruments with the children. We recycled material like tissue paper rolls to make rattles, plastic bottles to make drums, etc. Children also learnt to distinguish different types of sounds through this project.

• **Outings:** We went on many outings - Matrimandir, Bharat Nivas, Solar Kitchen, Certitude, visited some of the children's homes and visited places related to our projects like Svaram, Botanical Gardens, Baraka and Aurogreen. Many nature walks were undertaken in nearby areas like Aurodam, Centre Field and also the big Nandanam campus. These outings are opportunities to practice social skills and fine and gross motor skills. They stimulate the children's creativity, imagination and curiosity.

**Communication with parents**

We made a very conscious effort to maintain a good communication with our parents on a daily basis. We got together to share and also had parents' meetings and individual parents' meetings to understand what each child was going through, what are the needs and how we can create this space of growth and love together for the children. This has been a very fulfilling experience.

From our experience of the previous year, an event to bring all parents together was organized – a potluck lunch. This was felt to be an excellent way to provide a platform for parents to get to know each other better; since because of their children they were likely to be thrown together and may need depend on each other in the next several years, when the group continues together first through Kindergarten and later primary and higher secondary schools.
Reflections
This year we explored the new playground a lot. It has inspired us to go deeper into researching new activities for the physical development of this age group.

Every year is a new experience for the teachers and an occasion for greater understanding of how to support the children better for their personal growth.

Goals for next year

- Next year we would like to record and develop activities for the physical development and body co-ordination of children.
- We plan to consciously work on language so that children accept English as an emotional language and not simply as a language of instruction. We hope that they will have a good vocabulary so that they can string words into sentences.

Vayu group (Age: 4+)

This year the class was full, with 16 children. There were 13 Tamil children, two children from North Indian family and one child of German and Tamil origin. It was not a mixed group where English naturally becomes common language for communication between them all. Yet gender-wise it was balanced group. We had 10 girls and 6 boys. We were three teachers – two Tamil and one Chinese.

We kept a fixed daily and weekly plan in which all children participated together (circle times, story times and time for physical activities) as well as weekly activities with the whole group (Awareness Through the Body, Write Dance, swimming, outings, singing classes, building with blocks). We had to take half the group at a time for some other weekly activities, to offer a quality working space for the children (yoga classes, Play of Painting, and the Children's House).

Throughout the year we the teachers set up our classroom according to the projects that we were working on. We created visual displays which helped the children be connected to what was going on. We kept many different types of games, books, and different kinds of materials for all of us to explore and learn through the project. We kept different activities planned and ready for the children to learn by doing.

We were aware of communication skills and created a very safe and comfortable space for children and parents to practice social skills. We helped children understand emotional faces and body language, and how to deal with difficult situations between themselves.

English being a big concern
For the first two terms it was difficult to convince children to speak in English, because for most of the children the strong and obvious question was - “Why do we need to speak in English when the two teachers are Tamil?” Some children didn't want their teachers to speak to them in English at all, though they could understand and follow instructions. We had to explain to them in simple manner that the medium of learning in schools here is in English and if they didn't learn the language, it would be difficult for them to enjoy the classes. Consciously we always spoke to them in English. Initially though, to bond with the children, gain their confidence and to be sensitive to their needs we heard their feelings either in Tamil or in English. Every day at ‘story time’ we read them stories in English which they loved and looked forward to. During free times we read stories to those children who wanted them, which also helped them individually. Singing songs every day helped them to improve their vocabulary and get familiar with right pronunciations. All of this helped them outgrow their question of “why do we need to speak in English?” Initially we had to help them express themselves in small sentences in English, and it worked well. Now most of them can speak and follow instruction in English very well.
Physical development
We had noticed that some of the children really needed to develop their motor skills. Their physical being wasn't developed to their expected age. We noticed they had a lot of coordination problems. So we planned in our daily planning where they could explore different games and activities indoors as well as outdoors. We did gardening as one of project in the first term to explore the body. We did activities to develop muscle tone, like having them balance on different structures and in normal space; did a lot of activities for eye movements like catching balls; did many exercise to improve their bilateral integration like jumping with two legs, galloping, skipping, and exercises where they crossed their hands and moved the hands in different sides up and down, etc. Two teachers came once a week throughout the whole year to give a class on Awareness Through the Body, where the children explored the different parts of the body in different ways. The children had great fun with all these activities for physical development.

We also did many different activities every day for their fine motor skills, such as cutting, gluing, stitching, painting, drawing, beading, and playing with sand and water. A teacher came to give a Write Dance class every week for the first two terms, which worked a lot on their bigger motor skills and introduced them to their first pre-writing skills.

House visit
We had a child who hardly spoke in class. We teachers tried different ways to get this child to speak but it was still very difficult. So we decided that the teachers would take turns visiting her house to see how she was at home. To our surprise she was very talkative at home and opened herself with a lot of excitement to all three of us. We were in tears. Based on that experience we planned to bring all her classmates to visit her house and to give her chance to feel free and good. It had a impact on her and she started to open herself to few of the children in the playground and to some of the teachers as well. This was a wonderful learning for all us so we decided to visit houses of all the children. The children were very proud and happy to show where they lived and be with all of us in their home. The children had a wonderful time coming to know their friends' houses. They remembered a lot and they made a lot of connections outside of school as well. We all connected to each other much more closely. We found very good space to work with the parents for their children.

Projects
• **Insects project:** In the second term we did a project on Insects. This is the children's world: they were very fascinated with this project and it was a beautiful experience, as with the previous year. The children learned to be comfortable around the insects. They became very sensitive to nature and developed awareness about their environment. We the teachers refined our knowledge and explored together with the children, and had great fun learning together.

• **Senses project:** In the last term we decided to do an intensive project on the five senses. We created nice displays for the children in their class as well in the common spaces where they could connect to the project. We enjoyed playing many different games and doing different activities like cooking. We went to visit different units in Auroville to taste different kinds of food, smell different kinds of perfumes and incenses, and explore different musical instruments. On the whole it was a complete learning experience for the children.

Reflections
Initially children were afraid to explore the playground structures during their free play periods. We played different games and planned various physical activities regularly at the playground. Now they are very happy to call us and show all the different things they can do at the playground. It is an amazing experience to see how the children have grown up. It made us realize how important it is to focus on the
physical development and exposed them to various physical challenges regularly, as they are otherwise quick to forget and lose contact with their body.

We saw that through parents' gatherings, inviting parents to school to celebrate their child's birthday, the potluck, going to visit their house, and through parent-teacher meetings the communication between teachers and parents became very smooth and transparent. This created a happy and comfortable environment that supported well the development of the children.

Teachers improved their capacity to focus on individual needs of each child, and learnt many things on various fronts.

Conclusion
It was a full group of 16 children. It seemed such a big group that initially it felt like a big challenge for us. But slowly we were able to create space for each child and receive him/her in his/her totality, catering to each and every one's needs. It built a wonderful relationship and we started missing them if they were absent even for a day. We have learnt a lot from each other.

We would like to receive next year's group in the same spirit, and continue to create a safe environment and to give a happy experience at school, focusing on their individual needs.

We would like to take up projects that come from the children's interests and to have an enjoyable experience. We would like to continue building a close relationship with the parents.

Agni group (Age: 5+)

Our two big projects of the year were “Me and My Body” and “Transport”. Along with the activities of these projects, children learned letters and their associated sounds, words and rhymes, numbers and manipulation of numbers. We also did music and chanting, Awareness Through the Body, Play of Painting, Write Dance, building with blocks, learning Tamil, and going on outings.

“Me and My Body” project

The project “Me and My Body” was taken up with the children with an aim to bring an awareness about their body and themselves – to know what is inside their own body, its basic functions, and to know how to keep the body strong and healthy. With these aims in mind we got the physical environment ready by arranging the display board with different body postures, different body parts with their names, etc. Seeing the display, children started asking questions and thus we began our project.

The body is most concrete and near for all. We can feel it, sense it and touch it. Children took a great interest in drawing their own faces looking into a mirror. They were very curious to see the colour of their eyes and the shapes and sizes of their noses, lips, ears. They understood the different functions of each organ.

We played many sensorial games with the children, and this led us to explore emotions and feelings. Children reflected upon them and expressed their feelings through drawings and made their own feeling books.

Sensing the children's interest to know more about the body and to bring more clarity in their understanding, we decided to visit the Health Centre and the Dental Clinic. At the Health Centre we did a simple check-up of each child. Doctor Satish checked their ears and told them about hygienic habits. He showed them how doctors wash hands properly. Then he showed a model of the body's internal organs. This led us to listen to each others' heartbeats through a stethoscope, and made us curious about the digestive system. During the eye check-up we discovered that one child had a vision problem.
Children enjoyed looking at each other's eyes through the opthalmoscope, and finding alphabet letters and objects in the test for colourblindness.

Children saw a model of the human skeleton. They had fun without being scared of it. This led us to a craft activity of cutting a paper skeleton each, and learning the names of the main bones. Children made a model of the digestive system, with paper, wool and coloured power. They understood how the food travels through their body and how food is important for energy.

After working intensely for a few weeks and observing their eagerness to learn more we explored teeth. At the Dental Clinic, resource person Suryagandhi explained about teeth by using models. She showed the children how to brush their teeth and how to look after them. She explained how important it is to chew food well in order to digest it. Each child became a dentist and looked at the teeth of his/her partner using a torch light and dental tools. Thereafter as Doctors they prescribed how their friend should look after their teeth. They enjoyed this role-play very much. A beautiful movie on teeth was also shown to them. Each child made a clay model of the set of teeth.

Language and Math were also explored through the “Me and My Body” project. We introduced measurement of height with a measuring tape, weight with weighing scale, and distances for long jump and high jump in the playground. The concept of ‘small number’ and ‘big number’ was introduced by making a chart of the children’s height, weight, and high jump and long jump data.

We worked on language by turning what they were learning about their bodies into a script for a play. The children had started taking circus classes with Kalou in Miracle, and took a great interest in learning different postures and movements. Observing their interest we wove their play with the physical movements of the circus, and performed it for the parents and children of other schools. Circus class helped the children a lot by bringing flexibility, balance and harmony in their body movements. It helped them conquer their fears. Performing it in front of a big group helped them overcome their shyness.

Transport project
Children showed a lot of interest in playing with cars and vehicles, so we took up Transport as our next project with the aim of helping children learn about the different kinds of transport. Children sorted the vehicles into land, air and water transport, understood the importance of transport and how recent all this development is, and how to distinguish different types of transport according to their use.

Following the thread of their interest we visited the railway station, went on a train ride in the Botanical Garden, distinguished rural and urban environment, saw the road signs and signals. Children made a model of a city with its different kinds of transport. Models of vehicles were made through stitching, paperwork and clay.

Outcomes
On the whole, the children had a year of joyful learning, progress and growth and teachers also grew along with them. Children developed awareness about their bodies, the different functions of the parts of the body and how to look after themselves. They developed their skills of sorting, sequencing, and differentiating. They acquired some knowledge about types of transport and their uses. They wondered at the history of transport. They enriched their language – vocabulary and power of expression – through dramatization and puppet shows. They improved their fine and gross motor skills through art/craft, free play, projects and daily activities.

Reflections
It was really a joyful experience being with the children, helping them in their learning process and simultaneously observing ourselves and growing along with them. The rich and intense activities done with the children gave us further clarity regarding planning and implementation of these activities. It was a year of progress, growth and learning for all involved.
Play of Painting at Nandanam Kindergarten

Introduction

Our purpose with Play of Painting at Nandanam is to provide a physical and psychological safe environment for the children, where they can express themselves freely through painting without examination, competition or judgment. When there is no praise or influence or intervention of any kind, children begin to paint what is their own expression, their innate playfulness. Research shows that a universal language progressively emerges. Arno Stern named it “Formulation”. “Formulation” is a transformative process, emerging independently from socio-cultural environment or any outside influences. It emanates from deep inside and appears very early among the needs of small children. Formulation works integrally and results in personality-fortifying, balance and fulfillment.

Description of project

Each group of children at Nandanam (Prithvi group, Vayu group, and Agni group) came once a week for Play of Painting. Jalam group – the youngest children – came during the last term as usual. Each groups' paintings were documented digitally and stored physically in a methodical manner.

We ensured a continuous presence in the studio, Mita and Nadia acting as servants. Their role was to ensure that all materials were in place so that all the participants could concentrate exclusively on the creative act. Four days a week were utilized for the actual activity of Play of Painting with the groups, and one day was used for updating work.

Outcomes

All the 58 children of Nandanam Kindergarten benefited from Play of Painting. A safe environment was created to shelter the children from pressure and outside influences, where each child was given the space to express himself/herself through painting. This allowed the children to fulfill themselves among others rather than against others. Children learned to trust, to express the richness of their world and to respond to their voices within.

Reflections

The purpose of this activity is not to produce a painting, but to have the pleasure of freedom of expression. This method makes it possible to remove oneself from criticism and pressure, both internal and external, and just concentrate on the creative act alone. This was achieved in our work this year. The research for this work was done by Arno Stern for over 50 years, then by Claire at Kindergarten and now by us at Nandanam. We see how it helps the expression of the deeper self and the joy and happiness that children experience after their expression with colours. Now we continue Play of Painting at Nandanam as a regular activity aligned with integral education.

Conclusion

In general it was a satisfying year – we could create a safe environment and provide the materials needed for Play of Painting. Children enjoyed expressing themselves and growing due through self-affirmation in the collective. It gave us enormous satisfaction to see the emergence of Formulation in the work of the children.
Teachers' Center

Introduction

The aims of the Teachers’ Center are to encourage the development and implementation of Integral Education in Auroville through collaboration, networking, research, and innovation; provide teacher training, advisory services, and a teachers resource center; research and develop didactic material; offer skills, tools, knowledge and sharing to understand and implement Integral Education. The Teachers Center is a space for making and storing educational material, to meet and host gatherings, seminars and informal meetings, to view videos and do online research.

Activities of the year

In its first year the Teachers’ Center (TC) worked on the different areas defined in the aims and objectives:

- Teacher training under the umbrella of the Teachers' Center happened regularly. Most of the Teachers' Center members were engaged already in training teachers in different Auroville schools: TLC, Deepanam, Transition, Future School, Oli, Nandanam, Aikiyam, Udavi and New Era Secondary School. The training is different depending on the needs, and can include: workshops, meetings in the different schools or in the TC, consultation with teachers, advisory services, individual following of teachers and class observation, teacher guidance and support.
- Networking happened through the weekly “Conversations on Integral Education” held in the TC, which teachers from all the schools were invited to attend.
- Educational materials are being made and can be borrowed by teachers to use in a variety of projects. Volunteers have been engaged to help in the making of the material.
- A library was started with books on professional development which can be borrowed.
- Over 1,500 books for children on different topics have been stored and catalogued on the Teachers' center computer, for teachers to use in their classes. Some books have been printed.
- Children’s books on science-related topics have been purchased as a part of building up the project boxes. The Teachers' Center now has close to 100 beautiful books on different subjects.
- Online educational material has been purchased and made available to the teachers, including “Reading A to Z” and “Science A to Z” for elementary school, and “Big History Project”.
- Films on different topics have been saved and catalogued.
- We have been sorting out and analyzing the maths material developed by Auroculture, to duplicate it later for teacher and student use.
- As an outcome of the “Special Needs Consortium” started last year, the Teachers’ Center facilitated an eight-month long supportive learning program with teachers from many of the Auroville schools participating. (See separate report.)
- A course for parents and parents-to-be was started. Initial meetings were held with midwives and pregnant women, with the intention to raise awareness of the importance of the beginnings of a child's life.
- We worked with the STEM Land team to develop their understanding of Montessori materials.
- The Teachers’ Center opened a Facebook page.
- Work in identifying the special needs required for the Teachers' Center was done, with the support of an architect specialized in spaces for learning.
Outcomes

The Teachers' Center brought more exchanges between the different schools and their teachers. As it is a space dedicated to all teachers and not located in a particular school, it brings more unity between the teachers and gives a sense of working all together for the education in Auroville. By bringing our ideas and experience together as well as our difficulties and needs, it creates a positive energy enabling us to find a way to progress. The teachers, students and parents in Auroville benefited directly as well as volunteers and guests.

Reflections

This year the most important task was to gather a team eager to participate in the work and offering a variety of abilities. A great team has formed, with professionals in the field of education.

We have been working to better understand the needs that the Teachers' Center has to care to; this has been done through surveys and feedback. We have seen that to be able to fulfill our objectives we have to work also with parents and concentrate on early childhood. We have started with this and will continue next year.

Until we have a physical library space we have to limit the Teachers' Resource Center to books and materials that can be stored on our computer, and printed by teachers. There is a great need for a library space to store materials in an organized manner, where materials can be catalogued and teachers can borrow them.

Goals for next year

- To continue the work on the project boxes for the use of schools and teachers.
- To make more educational material with the help of volunteers.
- To have our website operational (with newsletter, ongoing events, sharing); work is in process.
- To increase our collection of books – books for teachers on professional development, and educational children's books to be joined to the project boxes.
- To offer an interesting collection of topics for our weekly “Conversations on Integral Education” with teachers, following closely the needs of teachers. Also to organize amongst teachers a sharing platform to communicate our best practices.
- To organize a variety of workshops with guest teacher trainers which can help teachers to progress in their daily work.
- To create a visual database with photo material and videos on of all the Auroville schools and their activities, as well as posters for display and leaflets to disseminate.
- To continue to support Special Needs by organizing courses.
- To work on developing tools for Unity aiming to improve the relationship between people and their environment.

Conclusion

As a service we want to develop what the Teachers' Center can offer by learning from our work with the teachers what works and what does not. One example of this is the model of the Supportive Learning program offered this year that was very successful. We will apply the same principles in other courses that we have been requested to offer during the coming year.
Supportive Learning Teacher Training  
A project of the Teachers' Center

Introduction

In 2015, the Teachers' Center coordinated a series of sessions on supportive learning and special needs over the year. A Consortium For Special Needs with facilitators, parents and educators was subsequently formed. A suggestion emerged to create a teacher training programme for Auroville teachers.

In 2016, the course on foundations for supportive learning began with facilitators Stacy, Marion and Maya; and guest facilitators Angelika from Deepam, Heidi Watts and Marie Francoise.

Description of project

The Supportive Learning teacher training course aimed at developing teachers’ and parents’ skills and terminology related to ‘developmental delays’ in early childhood and later ‘learning disabilities’. The course also aimed at developing participants’ observation skills and report writing for improved transdisciplinary communication. Tools such and descriptive review, case studies, developmental screenings and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) were introduced to participants.

16 participants applied for the course; 13 participants from schools in Auroville were accepted to participate in the training course. 11 were teachers from Auroville schools (Kindergarten, Nandanam, Deepanam, Transition and TLC). 1 was a student from Last School, and 1 a parent with an interest in the subject.

The participants were given training materials:

1. Enhancing your Child’s Development by Sonja Wittthous
2. How the Special Needs Brain Learns by David A. Sousa

These manuals were the foundation for the first half of the course. Self-study groups and school supervision enhanced the framework.

For the second half of the the course, participants applied their observation skills in their respective schools. To the training group they each presented individual case studies of children with special needs, with realistic recommendations for family, child and school.

Book resources, Montessori tools for activity analysis, and therapeutic tools were also introduced during the course, which enriched the course process.

Outcomes

Feedback from a parent who received the Supportive Learning service at TLC this year:

“We have been working through the IEP with our son for the past year and a half.

I find it a very thorough and clear tool to engage facilitators and parents in a concise and focussed manner. By periodically revising the content of the IEP we are able to reevaluate goals, check progress and reassess future objectives. [...]
I find the tool particularly useful as it incorporates goals and process in both the home and school contexts and creates a platform for assessment which enables both parents and teachers to input and share experiences.”

Feedback from a student from Last School who attended the theory section of the course:

“Thank you for this wonderful learning opportunity I was offered during this course. I am grateful for the way the information was organised and easy to understand. I will certainly use the books again to look back at specific topics, especially when they will be relevant to individuals around me. I feel disappointed in myself for not having invested myself in the course as much as I had decided I would, however I am certain I will get other chances to develop my capacity to help people in need. During this workshop I was rather caught up with school and other concerns, but I felt as though it opened a door towards the direction of being of service. This is indeed a direction I am aiming for in my future, and I sincerely thank Stacy, Maya and Marion for helping me through a step that made this clearer to me. This course also provided me with tools to help me do so. Thank you for offering something I believe in.”

We asked for recommendations on improving the course from participants, and will be improving future courses based on the feedback.

**Future direction**

We will be offering a follow-up course, “Foundations in Supportive Learning Part 2”, with 11 participants from July 2016 - May 2017 in monthly sessions. Marion and Stacy will also be offering support to teachers, parents and students. We also see the need for a parent support group to be formed.

Nandanam and Aikiyam School had the most participants interested in this course and committed to the course and the process; they with TLC are actively implementing support strategies in their schools. Representation from Udavi School and Aha Kindergarten, and participation of ATB facilitators, would be beneficial for a unified approach in Early Supportive Learning. The goal is for the schools to create a more collaborative network of handover and support for the child and for the teachers who receive the child.
Introduction

This year The Learning Community (TLC) worked with 33 Aurovillian and Newcomer children and their families. We continue to use Base Camp as our center, with 2 main classroom buildings and an art center, while also spending much time in other communities and outdoor spaces in and around the wider community.

Our programme includes focused and structured classes, where academic subjects are covered, and through which social and learning skills are addressed, as well as more unstructured sessions, where children are given the opportunity to steer their own explorations, with the help of willing facilitators, when needed. Children’s schedules are tailor-made to suit their individual interests, needs, levels and learning styles; and the adults’ learning and deepening is encouraged through group sessions, sharings and individual processes.

Highlights of the year

Metal project (ages 11-14)
In this project we explored the properties of different metals, their uses, and the range of different metals that surround us. By investigating a material that is so ubiquitous that we don’t tend to give it much thought, I hoped to open the children’s eyes to being curious about our surroundings. We realized just how common metals are when we actually counted how many objects made of or containing metals we use per day (around 40!). While studying when and how humans first used metals, we echoed them by embossing symmetrical designs on brass plates. Using household metal objects we compared their properties such as conductivity, flexibility, magnetic attraction, and melting points. Through watching documentaries we learned that metals can be highly reactive, such as the explosive properties of sodium and potassium, in contrast to the stable, unreactive nature of gold. A short excursion led us to realize that metals are not just ‘out there’: our bodies are full of them, requiring them for most functions and acquiring them through the food we eat. However, we cannot just swallow a nail – the iron needs to be absorbed by plants from the earth, and enter our food chain in that way.

Our understandings of metals as hard, heavy and solid were seriously challenged when we worked with a young French volunteer, Kevin, on forging and welding a steel sculpture, first at Youth Centre then at Sacred Groves. The children were amazed that just through the application of high heat, this seemingly unyielding material became soft under our hands; how a material known mainly for square, structural building seemed to be infused with movement, life and beauty. While working with dangerous tools, high temperatures and requiring quite a bit of strength, the children gained insights into a way of working that ensured safety, care for the materials and tools.

The metal project continued outside the class – Johnny built a forge with the children in Fertile and we started forging there, too. A bronze caster comes once a week to instruct a group of children in the lost wax technique, and we have cast some beautiful pieces in aluminum. The metal work in Fertile opened up metal work to other children who had not been part of the metal project, some as young as eight years old.

Metals are used everywhere. Some remain for many years where they are placed, such as in buildings, bridges and cars; others, however, reach the end of their usefulness to us very quickly. Or have they? What happens to that can of beans, the lid of a jar, the broken pot, after we have used
them? Do we reuse metals? How? From watching a shocking documentary about ship-breaking in Bangladesh, to experiencing our local metal recycling yards, the story of metals continues, and recycling does not always mean that it is ecological.

We visited Eco Service to understand how many different categories of waste there are, and learned that metal waste is divided into at least 8 categories. We realized the importance of segregating waste in the home, and followed the metal waste trail to a big scrap dealer in Pondicherry. The children had collected metal waste from their own homes and we were able to sell this waste to the scrap dealer – the children realized that also waste has a value, and learned which materials are more valuable for recycling.

As a final outing we visited the Kurumbapet Rubbish dump. It was an unforgettable experience for us all – the stench of smoke reached us before we were even close to the dump. There we interacted with waste pickers who burnt waste to extract tiny amounts of metal – the most valuable waste – producing acrid smoke in the process. The dump was an eye-opener to all of us about the importance of segregating waste at home, as well as making us reconsider which kind of items we buy in the first place.

**Earth Studies project (ages 11-14)**
The aim of this project was to enhance and deepen the kids’ understanding of the earth as a dynamic planet, and to explore the ways in which large-scale earth movements occur, how they are measured and how they impact on people’s lives. We began the Earth Studies sessions with the kids inspecting a variety of large photographic prints of actual earthquake and tsunami damage and volcanic eruptions. We asked the kids what they thought was going on in these scenes and what questions they had about them. Some of these questions were central to the elaboration of the project.

The themes which we explored together were:
- the earth’s internal structure and the theory of plate tectonics;
- the nature of the waves generated in seismic events and what they can tell us about the earth;
- how to read a seismogram;
- triangulation of seismic data to determine the epicenter of an earthquake;
- understanding different scales for measuring earthquakes, based on the amount of shaking as measured on a seismograph and the intensity which people feel and record;
- collapsing buildings and structures as the major cause of loss of life in earthquakes;
- how buildings respond in earthquakes, with attention to wave frequencies and the phenomenon of resonance;
- earthquake-resistant engineering;
- tsunami generation, damage and survivor stories.

**Methods:** Our methods in this course were centered on the idea that effective learning is inextricably associated with having an experience (beyond theoretical knowledge), and being able to make connections between apparently disconnected phenomena. We wanted to replace ‘teaching about something’ with enabling the kids to perform roles. For example, instead of teaching kids about seismology we aimed for the kids to become seismologists (in a simplified but still real-world form) by interpreting actual seismological data to carry out tasks that seismologists would do. One assignment resulted in a certificate as a ‘virtual seismologist’. We encouraged the kids to become engineers through experimenting with models of buildings and modifying them for earthquake resilience, albeit in simplified conditions.
We did a lot of hands-on activities and modeling to help frame the key understandings. These included:

- classroom enactments of wave types;
- experiments on convection patterns and non-Newtonian fluids;
- interpretation of actual observations made by people in an earthquake;
- demonstrations of resonance with the swing at Base Camp and with models of buildings;
- experiments in designing earthquake resistance structures using simplified models.

We drew on raw video clips, animations, live earthquake data, and documentaries to help explicate, link, inform and stimulate thinking about seismic events and how they impact on people.

**Demonstration:** At the Open-House event in April we created an interactive Seismic Zone. There were four stations:

1. Quake Catcher Network, through which our laptop was connected to other devices around the world to record seismic data as a citizen science network; live earthquake display.
2. Building Oscillation Seismic Simulation: a place to explore the impact of resonance at varying frequencies with model buildings made out of stiff card of different heights.
3. Earthquake Resistant Engineering: a place to explore the effects of bracing, base isolation and mass damping on model buildings (wooden blocks) and their relative resistance to shaking.
4. Record Your Seismic Footprint: using the accelerometer on a smartphone to record and replay the seismic event (vibrations) caused by jumping off a table onto a wooden floor. We used the Seismograph app for Android.

**Thinking about learning, learning about thinking**

Our very first session explored kids’ perceptions of learning and their experience of learning in their lives. The key components that we elicited are: you learn something if you want to; it often entails struggle; you often need the help of others; a sign of having learnt something is the ability to apply it; you feel satisfaction with the new skill or understanding that has been acquired. We want to develop the theme of how we learn and how we can make this learning ‘visible’ during the coming year.

**Service Week (ages 9-13)**

In addition to our regular ongoing activities, we undertook a week of ‘service learning’ where each child chose a unit in the larger community of Auroville and worked there for a week. 'Community' implies a two-way movement: what the learners get from the community, and what the learners give to the community. Every aspect of the community is an integral part of the learning program. Farms, forests, parks, shops, services, units, the streets and the environment provide learning opportunities, facilities and services for self-learners. At the same time, learning becomes a service to the community as future citizens become involved in the local community taking part in any or all community activities.

The community provides a context for this learning, and community members serve as resources and partners in teaching. Helping in the community is seen as people-to-people shared learning. The "teachers" are community members of all ages. The teachers are not necessarily schoolteachers. They are motivated people who have acquired knowledge and skills and are willing to share these with children. This way of relating also fosters professional mentorship, as students make contact with working professionals in the community.

The service week offers a way to extend children’s attention beyond the classroom to the world as it actually is, and prepares children to understand and respect their community.

This year the children were placed in: Botanical Gardens, Shradanjali, Tamarind Bakery, AuroOrchard, Naturellement, Miniature, Eco Femme, Well Café, Abri Puncture Service, Auroville Bakery, Bamboo Centre, Aha Kindergarten, Discipline Farm, Youth Center, Baraka, Nandanam Kindergarten, Matrimandir petals, Free Store, Mandala Pottery, PTDC, Auroville Library, Maroma, Le Morgan, and Solitude Farm.
Water project (ages 7-11)
This year the younger children worked with the project theme “water”. They studied many different aspects of water. Exploring the Earth’s land and water, with the help of a huge floor map of the world, the children discovered how much of our planet is covered with water. They learned the names of the oceans and continents, the large rivers running through each continent. They learned to identify different land and water forms, such as peninsula, bay and isthmus. Through stories, films, and groups work, the children developed an understanding of the water cycle.

The children’s great interest in animals steered the project to a study of life in water. The children explored this through individual projects, films and guest facilitators. A visit to the Ashram aquarium in Pondi was organized. They went to the beach to collect seashells that they cleaned and identified. They also saw films on the plastic that has been dumped in the oceans, and the harm that it is causing for life in and around the oceans. Also in this context, the children cleaned plastic from the beach, which then extended to a cleanup of our Auroville roadsides on Earth Day.

Experiencing sound and music (ages 7-10)
This year the two younger groups had weekly music classes, where in addition to note-reading a variety of activities took place. We sang many songs from all over the world, and went from unison to canon and first practice of harmony singing, as confidence and independent singing skills grew throughout the year. Some of the children decided to take their recorder study to the next level, so during third term we organized a focused study time for this group.

Rhythm was explored through rhythm-maths, rhythm as part of life, body percussion, rhythm raps and as apotheoses we enjoyed a visit of the Svaram team who brought instruments to explore rhythm together.

A highlight was the “Peter and the Wolf” project, where we explored music and instruments as a means of communication that has its own voice and character. The kids made their own musical play where they developed their own characters, and where they were matched to an instrument (thanks to skilful musicians Kaeridwyn and François). A story evolved with the children as silent actors, allowing their musical instrumental partner to tell the sound part of the story for them.

Gardening and cooking (ages 10-11)
Last year, we saw that when children are involved in the harvest and cooking of their own meal, they are more open and curious to taste the less known/popular vegetables and millets. So this year, we wanted to emphasize this aspect. And as part of the research on the Auroville multicultural richness in the food sector – from growing to processing – we had a weekly workshop with around 7 kids aged 10-11 years. A typical morning would include: weeding, planting, watering, mulching and harvesting, in our Base Camp vegetable garden for around an hour. After snack we would prepare/cook 2 or 3 dishes to be added to our regular lunch.

During the first sessions of this workshop, we researched and brainstormed about food in general. For example, we made a mind map around food, discovering the links between growing, processing and consuming and the places our food comes from. We also studied the pictures of families with their weekly food assortment (from “Hungry Planet: What the World Eats”) and we went to PTDC to read the labels of the packed food.

On some days, we organized a morning work/visit on a farm. We went to Annapurna, Samridhi, Buddha Garden and AuroOrchard.

During the cooking sessions, we often invited a guest cook to share new ideas, skills and conviviality. In the first months, we proposed recipes based on what was available in our garden and in Auroville. Our aim was to use local produce as much as possible. The children formed teams and followed the recipes under the guidance of an adult. Close to the end of the year, we gave the children the
opportunity to write and cook their own recipes using ingredients available on the table that day. We were astonished by their creativity, competence and accuracy. Over the following weeks, we improvised most of our dishes, and some children were even able to prepare and cook fully on their own.

We are planning to continue these gardening and cooking sessions next year, even more intensively – several times a week so that more children can participate – as it is a wonderful applied-learning experience.

**Baking English (ages 10-13)**
*See separate report.*

**Field trips**

Field trips and wilderness experiences play an important part of TLC’s educational framework. Wilderness experiences embody the values of tenacity, responsibility, self-discipline, and compassion. These experiences strengthen self-confidence, improve relationships and encourage good judgement, thus building maturity and character. The ability to work as part of a team, to take orders and respond accordingly, and to eventually to lead others requires among other attributes: good communication and listening skills, effective interpersonal skills, overcoming challenges, and utilising initiative, drive and motivation in oneself and others. Wilderness experiences can develop these qualities within individuals.

These excursions are also an opportunity for self-learning, introducing children to a place where external distractions such as noise, pollution, peer pressure, family conflict, inter-personal relationship issues, etc. pale into insignificance. The wonders of tranquillity, raw and uncontaminated nature and internal and external ‘space’ can facilitate a connection with one’s inner self. In such environments, individuals can learn to appreciate nature and its resources, understand the importance of conservation and sustainability, and be aware of the finely balanced relationship between humanity and the sensitive ecosystem of our planet.

**Hampi**

This year two groups of children and adults, about 15 in each group, visited Ecodaya in Hampi, Karnataka. We chose to see field trips as an important and indispensible part of TLC’s yearly program. The trip to Hampi offered many situations for work on collaboration, trust, teamwork, independence, perseverance, trying new things, pushing one’s boundaries, creativity, patience and much more. These kinds of learning opportunities, together with the closeness that develops between the individuals on the trip, and the discovery of new places in India, make the trips a valuable educational experience.

Each group spent just under two weeks in Ecodaya, experiencing sleeping outdoors in caves, eating and appreciating a simple vegan diet, silence, and going for long walks exploring the rocky terrain. Ecodaya is situated on an island, with the Tungabhadra River running on either side of it. The river offered many learning opportunities: understanding the flow of currents, their strength, the water’s power to form the rocks it flows through, wildlife in and around it, and of course endless swimming.

Hampi is a UNESCO world heritage site, having been the largest city in the world during its time, the former capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. An outing to visit the ancient temples and monuments took us back in history, viewing the ruins from the top of a high hill. It also gave insight in the stories of the Ramayana, being Hanuman’s home, as well as bearing carvings and inscriptions telling its story.

The trip offered a stopover in Bangalore, where we visited the wonderful Science and Technology Museum, and a big city experience.

Travelling long distance by train, bus and van also gave the children an opportunity to experience India, the size of the country, its richness in people and places.
The Beach Walk – an account by Johnny Fertile

The best way to appreciate our 5-beach trek is to see it through X's (12-year-old) eyes. For him, the best part of the overnight train trip from Pondi to Mangalore was the odd-bods he befriended on the way – the Hijaris, the beggar in a dress, the man from his planet to whom he gave 50 rupees (“money problem”). Then, when we finally camped on the first beach with a tantalizing island almost within reach, X managed to immediately get his fishing tackle in a huge tangle. (The best part is that the passing fishermen are so adept at disentangling lines!)

We came around the first headland the next morning and there was such a perfect shaded stone platform with a long shallow beach below that we couldn’t see any good reason to go any further. Also perfect rocks for fishing, but just as X had a perfect Banjiram hooked for our dinner, blow me down if a giant crab didn’t snap his line and get off with his catch!

As we walked those 5 idyllic beaches, we couldn’t help but be grateful that the small fishing villages we did cross were Muslim, so no meandering drunks or broken glass...

The main problem for X was that we slept on the beach – he couldn’t abide sand in his sleeping bag. The best thing though, was that he could sleep equally well standing up!

There’s no need to mention the athletic routine of back-bending, somersaulting and deep breathing that Y seemed to think was an essential part of staying alive... including a sort of convoluted foetal position in order to sleep when Z stole his bedding.

Just fabulous in the end, we walked the beaches (up to 10km) at night and camped on the shaded headlands by day. We lived principally on green coco nuts and fish ... and tea.

After 5 days we arrived at the estuary before Golkana and were just about to take a ferry across, when someone suggested the local bus to Golkana railway. Shame really, because we were looking forward to the water crossing and determined that next time we’d arrange for a few boats and extend the adventure into the backwater.

Nature Explorations

In our attempt to use the larger community of Auroville as our classroom, the children chose to spend time in Pitchandikulam, Fertile or the Forest Exploration activity. Pitchandikulam is a rich and diverse environment where the children are able to absorb a lot about our natural habitat by simply immersing themselves in it in a largely unstructured and explorative, hands-on way. A butterfly project was also facilitated whereby the children learned about the different local butterfly species and created a butterfly memory game.

During the afternoons in Fertile Forest the children explored leatherwork and hot wax sculpture, and the Fertile Foundry was established. This was in addition to their free exploration of the forest and Fertile’s carpentry workshop.

The Forest Exploration activity was a group that explored the Auroville forests and bioregion on cycle. During the course of the year we explored more than 15 different locations in and around Auroville.

Building a Supportive Learning environment

As the observation came that some of our children needed specific support in areas of learning and/or behavior, we developed an environment to foster this “supportive learning”. Two of the TLC teachers joined the yearlong Supportive Learning Course offered by the Teachers’ Center, to provide us with more support and knowledge.

Simultaneously, within TLC “supportive teams” were formed around specific children. Facilitators (according to the child's needs) together with parents, formed a caring circle where information, advice,
support and mentoring were shared to maximize the learning opportunities for students both at school and at home, since learning happens not only 'on campus' but throughout life itself.

We aim to form strong relationships between students, facilitators and parents, understanding that no learning can happen without a safe environment that cherishes self-esteem. Students will be better served when we know them well and understand their needs, interests and aspirations.

To give direct support to these students we have developed a range of strategies including: direct instruction, one-on-one facilitation, facilitated presence in group activities, customized materials, assessment of progress, sessions with special needs professionals, and technology-assisted strategies through customized apps. These cover areas such as social integration, behavior, language and communication, literacy, and numeracy.

Next year...

In the coming academic year we will welcome 6 additional students into our younger groups. We aim to implement a new learning system for the older groups which will include several hours of “independent study” each day, where the children will have the opportunity to deepen their learning, allowing each child to work at his/her level and pace and allowing for individual interests and research. With such a program the child becomes an active learner, a driver of his/her learning process.

In addition, we aspire to inaugurate our new Base Camp kitchen, where children and adult teams will prepare dishes to supplement our daily lunches and snacks. Our kitchen garden in Base Camp, cultivated and nurtured by TLC’s children and adults, will support the cooking project with a ready supply of seasonal fruits and vegetables.

We are grateful for an enriching and challenging past year and look forward to the coming year with joy and curiosity.
Baking English
A project of The Learning Community

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; to take 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.

Description of project

The Baking English project was initiated in The Learning Community four years ago. Over the past 4 years, small groups of children (maximum 5 per group), participating in the ‘Baking English’ classes, have explored 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 classes were held twice a week in Tamarind Bakery, Evergreen. Classes comprised five children, four of whom participated in the baking process and the fifth documented the process with a digital camera. Using baking as a tool, the class explored different themes of the English language, each theme spanning several classes (for example, an exploration of punctuation, using the recipe texts to understand the use of full stops, commas, capital letters etc). 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 included the recipe texts, step-by-step photo illustrations, as well as the written work that they completed throughout the year (poems, stories, research, etc). Many other elements naturally came into the classes such as cooperation and teamwork, hygiene, time management, etc.

Outcomes

A methodology was established whereby the study of the English language can be taken out of the textbooks and into a real-life situation. Children were increasingly empowered to take responsibility for their own learning process, and experience the nurturing of the faculties of co-operation, self-discipline and patience.

Reflections

Over the past 4 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 were given the opportunity to invent and bake their own recipes, documenting the recipes in their notebooks. The products were proudly shared with the rest of The Learning Community and demonstrated much skill and creativity.
Transition School

Introduction

Transition School is a primary and middle school that serves the Auroville community. We offer an integral education that aims to develop the mental, emotional, and physical natures, and to open students to their spiritual consciousness. At our school, children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds grow together in an atmosphere of protected freedom and harmony, developing an understanding that we are citizens of one world, aspiring to manifest a truer and higher life on earth.

“The children should be helped to grow up into straightforward, frank, upright and honorable human beings ready to develop into divine nature.”

Sri Aurobindo

Some background on Transition School

Transition School opened in 1985 with about 40 children. Since that time it has continued to grow. As more children came, it was necessary to build classrooms, a library and other facilities. The material development of the school and the program based on the thoughts of Mother and Sri Aurobindo has adapted to the changes in Auroville and developed. Now, Transition School provides a learning environment for about 165 children ranging in age from 6-14. These children and the adults who work with them represent about 20 different countries and diverse cultural and language groups. The school program initiates what will hopefully be a life-long process of individual development towards a balance of body, mind, and spirit. The team of adults working with the children regularly work to improve the program and teaching methods.

Each class in Transition School is viewed as a tool for self-discovery, as well as an instrument for children to learn to express themselves and gain knowledge. We aim for a healthy balance of conventional subjects and those which are less conventional.

The program includes subjects such as reading, writing, math, science, computer, environmental and social studies, music, physical education, and arts and crafts, as well as Awareness Through the Body, Sandplay and “logic and strategic games”. The languages of Auroville – French, Tamil, English and Sanskrit – are taught at Transition. English is the medium of instruction, French and Tamil are taught as first and second languages, and Sanskrit in the form of songs. Our children learn subject matter, and equally important, they learn how to be together, to share, to express themselves, and to be responsible for their actions. We believe that this approach and focus help our students to become effective, self-directed learners who can function both independently and cooperatively.

Our deepest aspiration is to prepare our children and ourselves to live in a higher consciousness to manifest a truer and higher life on earth. Sri Aurobindo and Mother are our guides and the ideals of the Charter of Auroville are foremost in our minds.

Transition School is a teacher-run school. The collaboration, cooperation and discussions of individuals within this team have been important in the development of the school. Many new ideas have come up through the teamwork, and this has led to involvement of the teachers, experimentation and innovative projects.
Highlights of the year, in the words of the teachers

1st grade: Ex-students volunteering in class
One of the highlights this year was the return of ex-Transition students who volunteered to assist in the class. These young people understand the ethos and values of Transition School, having participated in the programme as children for eight years. Many of our ex-students fondly remember their years at Transition as a time where they grew and made progress in a protected, caring environment.

With twenty first-graders of different levels and abilities, it was wonderful to be able to give them the extra attention that they needed. The young volunteers related well to the students, and made many useful observations during their time in the classroom. They accompanied us on class trips and were fully integrated in the first grade programme.

Sometimes, when a whole group activity was taking place, the volunteers would give extra attention to the students who needed it, sitting beside a particular student and quietly assisting them with their work. On other occasions, a volunteer could work on a separate project with a small group; for example, an advanced reading group of four or five students would work on a story and comprehension questions.

1st grade: Reading buddies
Another highlight in the first grade was the reading buddies programme. The 8th grade students came once a week for half an hour to help with teaching the first-graders how to read. We follow a phonetic reading programme which consists of thirty small books. The 8th grade buddies could initially use flashcards to teach the new vocabulary to their younger buddy. Then they would practice reading the story, with the older buddy checking that they understood the story and any new vocabulary words. A strong relationship developed between the two classes. This gave the young buddies a lot of confidence and the older buddies the sense of caring for a younger person.

Apart from reading together, we also shared presentations. The eighth-graders gave a presentation on the human body, and the first graders presented rainforests and poetry. There is a big difference between a seven-year-old and a fourteen-year-old, and the buddies programme is a way to encourage interaction between the youngest and oldest students in the school.

3rd grade: Morning Circle
One of the major changes in the 3rd grade class this year was our morning circle. As many of the children were having difficulty focusing on lessons, the morning circle was utilized as a space to introduce new topics, review (math, geography, science, spelling, etc.), or play a game. It began with a guided concentration, and then the whole class read the morning message for the day. One student would spell the date (day, month, number, and year), tell the time to the nearest minute, and read temperature from the thermometer. After the message, we went around the circle and greeted each other. Even this was an opportunity to learn. Some days a flower was passed in the circle. Children were told the botanical and spiritual name of the flower that was passed in the greeting. When the children were doing research on different countries, we learned the morning salutations in those languages. During morning circle we practiced greetings in these different languages. Finally, we played a spelling game which involved spelling the words from our current spelling list and/or making sentences with the words.

Overall, the circle became a welcoming, safe learning environment. Even shy children actively participated. As the teachers found it a very effective teaching tool, any subject areas that needed to be reviewed or introduced in this focused setting, were incorporated into our morning messages.
6th grade: The Dig Project – Inventing our own civilization

This year in the last term of the 6th grade, after looking at two ancient civilizations, the class decided to invent our own civilization. We, the teachers, divided the 19 students in 2 groups, and in secret, we wrote about the culture, values, habits, invented an alphabet and gave clues through writing. We created a whole book about the civilization, made artifacts, buried them in the ground, and then exchanged digging sites and dug out the other group’s culture. We then had to figure out all about the excavated culture, make a museum and do a final presentation of our findings. Then each group presented their own culture to the others.

The students learned a lot, had fun, and pushed themselves by taking more and more responsibilities. This project not only develops collaboration and communication skills between the students, but also creativity, planning, and thinking, and helps them understand more deeply the nature of a civilization and its diversity.

Arts and Crafts, 1st to 8th grade

The goal for the Arts and Crafts this year was to introduce the basic elements of Art, which are: shape, space, value, form, texture, and color.

Along with these basic building blocks of art, we also wanted to expose the students to art history. To inspire their creativity, we created many projects connected with the artworks of great artists like Dalí, Picasso, Da Vinci, Mondrian, Frida Kahlo, Andy Warhol, Matisse, Maurice Sendak, Van Gogh and Keith Haring. We also created an “artist of the month” board and showed the students slide shows and documentaries about the Renaissance in Europe, Rodin, Diego Rivera, Beatrix Potter, Japanese art, Greek art, Mexican folk tradition and the Pop Art movement the others.

Our intention this year was also to interact more with the main class teachers, developing art projects related to the topics that the children were working on in class. We created projects relating to the human body, the solar system, ornithology (study of birds), geography, waste, Garbology and the “Dig Project”. We also tried to be more involved in helping with different school events, such as school topics, theater plays, open houses and presentations and costume party decorations.

Along with these key points, we also wanted to showcase the alternative activities that allow the children to work outside the classroom with other Aurovilian artists, artisans and educators, giving them a wider experience and view of what art can be.

We always try to give the children self-confidence within the freedom of creativity and help them with personal and collective projects.

Values for Human Unity: Trust

In 2001, Transition School teachers decided to experiment with an all-school project: an exploration of values. The first value chosen to explore was Truth, and since then we have chosen a value every year. The exploration of values is important to our work, and is included throughout the program and in the physical and psychological environment of the school. Special care is taken that material used (books, videos, computer programs) reflect values.

This year the 8th grade class wanted the school to work on Trust. Throughout the school year, we used many different approaches to try to understand and feel the value. We understand that it is not enough for children to hear about values; to really learn about values, they must experience them at many different levels. Children of all ages worked on poetry, read books, did skits and role-play and wrote stories that helped them express their ideas of trust. Social studies and science programs included the theme of trust. We referred to the present, to our own lives and the state of our planet today (environmental studies and ecology), and discussed how past history affects our lives today – how life has changed so rapidly.
A teacher describes how Trust was incorporated in the 5th grade class: This year we read “Island of the Blue Dolphins”, by Scott O’Dell, with the 5th grade Unicorns. It is a beautiful novel about Karana, a 12 year old Native American girl, who survives alone on an island, and is based on a true story. Besides working on text comprehension and analysis, we had various discussions on issues which came up in the story. We also explored how trust, which was our school value of the year, was central in the story. We then worked in collaboration with the Arts and Crafts team and the students made beautiful dioramas or shadow boxes illustrating different scenes from the book.

Awareness Through the Body, 5th to 8th grade

“I think ATB is a special class and it helps you to find the real person inside of you. ATB also teaches us about senses in a deeper way.” (A 13-year-old writing about ATB)

“When I am in moments of restlessness or stress, I always remembered how we would begin an ATB class, with the atmosphere in the room being strange (or non positive) and how our class would end with a different vibe when we left the room. So, in my difficult moments I would remember exercises that we did in the class and fit them to my situation and it really helped me at times” (A 14-year-old writing about ATB)

There are two kinds of activities that particularly stand out this year:
- Deepening into the experience of the Quiet within, and the ability to tune to it at will.
- Exploring Trust and No Trust as sensorial bodily experiences.

The Quiet within

“ATB gives us peace. We do many exercises to control our body and to be calm, and to participate more in what we are doing.” (A 12-year-old writing about ATB)

“I think it is a good thing to do the concentration when we enter ATB classes, because when I enter I feel excited, restless, sometimes hyper, and sometimes I feel like doing nothing. But when we do the concentration I feel this powerful energy ball and it calms me down and makes me feel peaceful.” (A 12-year-old writing about ATB)

We have been emphasizing this activity in the past years and it is remarkable how well children have been integrating it. (We explained this activity in last year’s annual report; here we just add a brief follow-up.)

Throughout the year we regularly assisted children in practicing to find the Quiet within, in two ways. At the beginning or end of ATB class we would do this with a short specific concentration; and when in the middle of an activity we would encourage children to stay in contact with the Quiet within while continuing to be engaged in the action. What was remarkable is that this year it was evident that this Quiet within was something very tangible to them; everyone could go quickly and easily deep into it, and they felt good in it. This was very noticeable in the atmosphere of the room and in the presence of the children. We could see that they have touched a clear bodily experience of it.

Trust as a sensorial experience

We approached Trust as a sensorial experience. Our objective was to help children develop a sense of Trust in their being – a sense of Trust grounded in physical sensations, as a bodily experience. We worked on it during the whole year and also as a specific project for about 8 sessions. We linked the
work to the whole-school value of the year. The fact of it being a whole-school value helped us bring the children deeper into it. We also saw that by incorporating Trust as a bodily experience they also went deeper into the value, acquiring understanding of what Trust really is.

During the regular ATB classes we used every opportunity to encourage children to trust themselves, their sensations, perceptions and abilities. At the same time we asked them to notice their inner process of how they came to Trust, how they were using themselves to Trust.

We also worked with specific exercises in which children were placed in situations where they had to trust either themselves or the others, and they needed to practice being trustworthy. To conclude these classes we would ask them to recall the sensations of Trust they had experienced during the class and to spread it to their whole body and around it into their subtle body, while noticing how they were doing that.

During the activities we encouraged children to identify what was happening in their body when they were trusting, and what was happening in their body when they experienced mistrust; what signs could they spot in their body that could tell them that in a part of themselves there was fear or distrust or mistrust or anxiety or insecurity..., and how these sensations would compare to what they experienced when they were able to Trust.

During specific Trust exercises we often had to remind children that daring is not equal to full trust. One may challenge oneself to dare to do something because of curiosity, peer pressure, preset thought or emotion, and go through it but with the physical body contracting in different ways as a response to a fear or anxiety or insecurity that is not consciously perceived. The child might, instead of acknowledging and working upon these inner holdings, push the mistrust into the background, away from the conscious consciousness. And it is precisely these deeper inner holdings which we wanted the children to notice more.

Throughout the process of all these exercises we kept encouraging children to discover inner holdings or shrinkings and to find ways to release them while noticing what they did to release them. By conscious acknowledging of the inner holdings and how one releases them into a sensation of Trust, children went deeper and brought Trust into their body and subtle body: a body felt experience of Trust and confidence in oneself.

We rounded up the project with a reliving of Trust sensation while in deep relaxation.

Children had opportunities to share their experience with the group. In the first round of sharing we encouraged children to verbalize what they had noticed happening in themselves and especially how they used themselves to Trust. At the end of some exercises children were asked to write about what sensations they experienced in their body.

Here follow extracts from the children’s written feedback about their sensations for Trust and mistrust:

- “I can feel trust in my heart. When I feel No Trust my heart beat goes fast, I feel stiff, fearful, heavy, smaller, breath stop, worried, mind stressed. When I feel Trust I feel relaxed and soft in the body, the body feels light like flying, less stiff, happy and continuous breath.”
- “Trust: I feel proud of myself, I feel dense and happy. I feel it in my heart. The color of trust was yellow; my heart was swelling up when I trusted someone. No Trust: I feel fear and not safe, I feel very stiff. I feel no trust mostly in my brain.”
- “No Trust: When I don’t feel trusted I feel empty. I feel distrust mostly in my chest. I see distrust as the color brown, and it feels like velvet and I feel dense. Trust: When I feel trusted I feel really light. I feel it mostly in my arms. I see Trust as the color orange.”
- “For me Trust feels like a glowing light in me that glows at a certain time and to certain people. It feels respectful, bright, wide and nice. No trust feels empty and like being alone. It feels lonely, with a dark color, contracted and weird.”
Awareness Through the Body, 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade: Using blindfolds

In our classes of Awareness Through the Body one of the aims is to offer opportunities to the children to come in contact with themselves, with their internal sensations and perceptions.

To work in this direction, during the year we regularly make use of blindfolds for activities like structure settings, sensory awareness, relaxations and explorations of the subtle physical body. Because the general tendency is to rely mainly upon the sense of sight and to exteriorize the attention towards the stimuli coming from it, the use of the blindfolds helps the children to make more use of the other senses; it also helps them to focus and internalize their attention so that they can more easily notice their own personal sensations and perceptions. This internalizing of the attention also brings to them quietness and calmness. Thanks to the use of blindfolds children can also develop trust in their ability to perceive, responsibility for their own safety and sincerity/fairness when they overcome the wish to peek. They also have chances to deal with unusual or confusing situations and to face and work on their fears.

Starting from 1<sup>st</sup> grade we introduce the use of the blindfolds in a progressive manner, so that the children can get gradually acquainted with keeping the eyes closed. At the beginning children have the tendency to peek, and they can become restless, afraid or fidgety; and when asked for feedback they mostly talk about what happened outside or around themselves, rather than about what they experienced internally.

We start with very simple exercises that build up onto activities like the walking outdoors blindfolded sensory exploration. As part of the classes on sensory awareness, we gave to the children the opportunity to explore blindfolded the special garden next to the ATB hall. This garden was purposely designed to offer a wide range of opportunities for sensory exploration. After a preliminary indoor preparation we guided the children to freely move about and explore the garden silently for about 20 minutes. We concluded the session with a moment of rest lying down on a place they chose within the garden, we then sat together and the children shared their experience.

During this activity with the 4<sup>th</sup> graders we could see the result of the work done during the previous years and the current school year on sensory explorations blindfolded. The children were more absorbed in the exploration and they could stay focused for a longer period of time. Some of them were so engrossed in their experience that they wanted to stay longer after the activity had finished. We could also notice that children trusted more themselves and their senses other than the eyes and with that the general wish of peeking had decreased. We noticed in their feedback that this year their focus had shifted more towards their personal sensorial experience rather than their position/location within the garden and interaction with others.

Here follows some feedback from the children at the end of these sessions:

- “The garden with the blindfolds is magic. It’s like a different world where the places can change.”
- “It was the first time in my life that I really smelled the grass.”
- “The stones normally feel hard, but today they felt soft to me.”
- “I felt calmness inside while I was lying down and I loved the touch of the sun on my skin.”

Teacher Training at Transition School: Report from a first year teacher

My name is Yasmin Levi and I have been a part of the teacher training program at Transition School for the last year. I decided to apply for this program, and to become a part of the team because I believe that the children of Auroville are its future. At the same time, I was a teacher back in my home country, Israel. I specifically chose Transition School because I relate to the idea of integral education and I saw
the team working together, using different methods, while reaching for the same goal – which is to give the student tools for life and to motivate them to reach for their full potential.

My training program this year was to work as a teacher’s assistant for the 6th grade students. During this past year I learnt many new techniques of class management as well as how to behave in different situations with students inside and outside the classroom. Working with an experienced teacher of many years in the school is a daily learning and joyful experience. Throughout this year, her personal attention, patience, knowledge, and the aim to improve all the time, was my biggest benefit. Additionally, she is admired by the students and is a wonderful role model.

From the beginning I had a feeling that the other teachers accepted me and were willing to help in any way for my assimilation. One of the most important tools for training teachers is to be able to actually teach, prepare lesson plans, and to get a feedback afterwards. During this year I did get the opportunity to have actual teaching practice – however, I believe it can be improved.

I believe that a program like this should be available for all the teachers in Auroville schools. The main purpose is to give tools and to make sure that we will all see eye to eye what the responsibilities of a teacher and what the goals of teaching are.

I am pleased to be in the teachers training program and especially to be a part of Transition School.

Teachers helping teachers
As mentioned previously, Transition School is a teacher-run school. This year there were many instances in which teachers got the opportunity to learn from each other. Our teachers’ team has people with a variety of special skills (e.g. math, geography, dealing with difficult behaviors, etc.). Everyone was willing to assist other teachers or become involved when requested. We also had some study days on pertinent topics that were organized by teachers. This empowered teachers with ideas and tools they might not have had access to if working in isolation. Though everyone has a designated job to fulfill, most people are willing to put in an extra effort to help another. This creates a strong, supportive teachers’ team which gives teachers the space to become more innovative in their classroom approach.

External support occurred when four teachers from an outreach school came to a class at Transition School. Each teacher observed the class for a minimum of two weeks. During this time they became immersed in the class and a different way of working. When their observation time was complete, they were provided with whatever tools (projects, songs, cursive books, etc.) they requested to use in their classrooms. From feedback received, they are using many of the ideas they learned at Transition School and the children are benefiting. The classes are more lively and interactive.

These examples illustrate that the individual potential of a teacher can be surpassed when they work cooperatively together. This collaboration invites creativity into the learning atmosphere which engages students and motivates them to learn. Within the Auroville context, work, help and support for teachers by teachers benefits all children in Auroville and outreach schools.

Reflections and Conclusion
A question we frequently come back to is, “What is needed to help children become independent, life-long learners? How can we help the children learn to take ownership, initiative and gain confidence in themselves to become life-long learners who have their own unique potential and are learning for their own pleasure and growth?” The motivation involved in this kind of learning needs to be based on an internal striving for progress.

Each child is unique: has his/her own interests, learning style, talents, hopes, strengths and weaknesses. Next year we plan to focus more on this, to learn more about techniques to assist different learning styles and to work on study skills throughout the school.
Learning from our Environment
A project of Transition School

Introduction

There is a commitment to developing the whole child at Transition School. We try to include various methods in the program so that different learning styles and interests of the children are addressed: cooperative learning, individual work, class projects and field trips and outings. Field trips and school outings are known to be important moments in learning. They enrich and expand the program. They also provide the students with the opportunity to explore various topics in a real setting outside the school environment, increase children’s knowledge in a particular subject area, are memorable and help children to ground their learning and make sense of the world around them. They are also fun; the children look forward to these days.

The following brief reports demonstrate some of the wide range of experiences that were offered to the children this year.

Trips in Auroville

Education and progress are central to the Auroville society. There are many activities and areas of research and innovative work, and this offers opportunities to extend learning beyond the walls of the classroom. A wonderful aspect of our trips in Auroville is that they give the adults the chance to meet the children and the children the chance to get in contact with Aurovilians and see what is happening in Auroville. In Auroville there are many knowledgeable people happy to share their expertise and we benefit from these resources as much as possible opportunities.

- Farms, forests and gardens are great places for the children to go. The caretakers are happy to see the children and the children love the nature and animals. This also reinforces their study of environmental science, animal and plant life and care for nature. Students from 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade visited Pitchandikulam Forest. There is so much to see there: many birds and animals and plants. There is a special focus on medicinal plants that the children found very interesting.

- The 7\textsuperscript{th} grade students went to Hermitage to learn more about water conservation and see the check dams. This was part of a project on Water. The students enjoyed themselves, asked pertinent questions and learned a lot by actually seeing the changes that happened in that area because of the bunding and water collection. Kireet was a very inspiring guide.

- This year the 8\textsuperscript{th} grade class went on several outings that were related to our study of science. We started our study of environmental science with a trip to CSR. There we met Tency who spoke to the students and then showed them a very interesting Power Point presentation that helped them become aware of the work done by CSR and others in Auroville on working towards a sustainable future. It highlighted work done in the field of renewable energy systems (wind, solar, biomass), appropriate architecture and building technologies, waste water recycling and sanitation. The exchange with Tency was relaxed and pleasant and the students were impressed and one boy even said now he knew what he would do as an adult: he would come and work with CSR.
• The 8th grade class had a project on biochar, conducted by Deoyani. First the students had a Power Point presentation on biochar, its benefits, applications and its manufacture. Then they were introduced to the use of biochar in Auroville through trips to Annapurna and Discipline Farm, where they learned about the comparative yields with and without charcoal. They then continued their learning by making some biochar at school. We used this biochar to enrich the garden that the 2nd grade students were planting.

• Many groups of children visited the Matrimandir throughout the year. The children learned about different gardens, twelve petals and other stories about Auroville. Some of the children got to go to the top of the Matrimandir.

• The second grade students had a special guest Mr. Frederick who is a long time Aurovilian. He shared his experience about Auroville with the children.

• This year in the 6th grade (the Dolphins) studied Ancient Civilizations and the advent of writing. We decided to see how paper is made. We went twice to Auroville Papers. Once we went to see the process, all the different steps, and learn how to make paper. The second time we got to make our own paper, plain paper, and double layered paper with seeds and leaves in between and enjoyed it a lot. We pressed them and finally put them to out dry. The class loved this adventure and felt they had learned and experienced a new kind of learning through this technique that is actually thousands of years old.

Trips outside of Auroville

• The second grade class went to Vandaloor Zoo in Chennai as a part of our Animal research project. Some of the parents joined us. All the children were extremely excited to see the different kinds of animals. We were inside the zoo for 3 hours. It was really a learning experience for all of us. Some of the children’s comments: “it was really the best trip”; “wonderful trip”; “we wish to go again”, “the best day of my life”, “our favorite trip”. We learned a lot and had lots of fun.

• The 4th grade students (Jaguars) while studying birds went on a trip to Vedanthaangal, one of the most important bird sanctuaries in Southern India. We are lucky to live not far away from Vedanthaangal – it is a two-hour drive from Auroville. Birds from as far away as Siberia migrate to this place during winter. The migratory birds arrive in September and stay until March. We spent the day observing and studying about the birds. The children immensely benefited from this trip. They were happy to see the migratory birds in close quarters. We saw beautiful Painted Storks, glossy Ibis, gray Pelicans and Eurasian Spoonbills among other birds. On the way home we stopped by Crocodile Bank. Even though it is a place for crocodiles, it is also home for birds. Here we could see their nests very closely and how they feed the young ones.

• The 4th grade also made a field trip to Kazhuveli Wetland, a home for many migratory birds. The 10-year-old students made this trip a memorable one. They were up at 4:30 in the morning to travel to Kazuveli. We were there well before the sunrise. We walked about three kilometers along the bank of the swamp to observe and study birds. The kids understood to tread softly so that the birds may not be disturbed. They also learned to be quiet to not to chase the birds away. We were guided by two research students from the Department of Ecology, Pondicherry
University. During our field trip we spotted purple heron, gray heron, little egret, great egret, intermediate egret, northern harrier, pied kingfisher, kingfisher and a very shy bird, pheasant-tailed jacana which is not easy to spot. Thanks to the Jaguars for their love for birds, parental support, and the unwavering moral and material support of the Transition School management which made this project a success.

- This year we took the 5th and 6th grade students on an outing to the Pondicherry Science Centre and Planetarium. We visited the gallery on Marine Life as well as the “Fun Science” section, which has a variety of interactive displays where children can explore different principles of science. We then went for a show at the Planetarium where we learned about the universe and our Solar System. This outing, as well as being educational, was a great opportunity for interaction between children of the different grades.

- The 7th grade students went to Devanandapettai, a natural reserve area near Gingee. This trip was related to environmental studies but the students also learned that they can do difficult things like climbing small mountains, and they also noticed the importance of water and shade for the well-being of humans and animals. We had to carry our own drinking water and many of them ran out before we were back at the bus. Although the trip was difficult at times, we all learned from it.

- With the help of Joss from Pitchandikulum, the 8th grade students had the great opportunity to visit Adyar Poonga. This is an eco-park in Chennai. It is the result of the restoration of the freshwater eco-systems of the Adyar River and estuary. This was a very uplifting experience. The students saw that with attention and hard work even areas which had been made into an ecological disaster could be restored. They can see how with hard work, dedication and the knowledge of science what can be done. This is important as sometimes children of this age feel overwhelmed with all of the news about ecological problems and disasters. After this trip they all wrote a personal narrative telling about the day, what they learned and how they felt about it.

Outcomes

- There was a lot of enthusiasm and interest generated through the trips.
- Some classes gave presentations to other classes about their outings.
- The children wrote entry slips for their portfolios.
- Ideas for places to go were shared by teachers.
- Through environmental outings, the children are becoming more aware and also more knowledgeable in this area.

Conclusion

Including outings and field trips is a really important part of integral education. The students can see, really understand and meet the people who are doing this inspiring and important work.
Learning to Learn Independently and the Importance of Children’s Choice
A project of Transition School

Introduction

Transition School’s program strives to initiate a life-long process of individual development towards a balance of body, mind, and spirit. One of our objectives is to help our students acquire the attitudes, values and skills that will enable them to become independent and lifelong learners. This is a progressive work with students ranging in age from 6-14, and the preparation for independent learning is built on over the years. We aim to create a joyful learning environment where the children are given various opportunities to learn about themselves as they acquire learning skills and develop attitudes that will help them progress, become more self-directed and have more control over their learning. The program is child-oriented and varied so that the children can be introduced to many different topics and get to better understand their own interests.

Description of project

The theme of learning to learn independently was one that the whole school concentrated on. Many discussions were held in the teachers’ meetings and with small groups of teachers. We explored questions such as the following throughout the school year:

- What is needed to become an independent learner? (1) In the school and classroom (2) In the family and home.
- How can teachers and parents help the students be more motivated?
- What are helpful techniques and strategies?
- How can we help the children learn how to “choose” what they would like to do or to learn?

Individual teachers planned their classes and projects to include activities in which the children were offered choices: in the way of learning information, practicing skills, working with others, and demonstrating and assessing their work.

The following are reports of two projects that illustrate the value of learning independently and the importance of children’s choice.

Music

Activities in the field of performing arts have seen a large increase in Auroville in recent years. Concerts and performances that include children are common, and increasing numbers of students pursue music regularly at a higher level outside of school. A music program in a large school such as Transition has to reflect this. Children are no longer looking simply to learn music, but to take it further and apply it to the projects that they are involved in elsewhere. In order to do this, we have made a conscious shift in the music curriculum from large group-based learning – in which the aim was to give all children a musical base – to individualized project-based opportunities that offer students a variety of choices and develop more advanced techniques and ideas.
Projects that offer student choice allow teachers and students to work in areas that are relevant to both of them. Teachers are able to guide through their experience and expertise, and students are able to tackle projects related to performances that they practice with other musicians.

Another aspect that has developed in this area is the inclusion of Tamil songs. Many of our Tamil students are naturally interested in music, due in part to the large movie industry and popularity of film songs. Including these songs in our program is a natural way to generate enthusiasm toward learning music. Not all of the popular music is suitable for use in school, but children are taught how to discriminate between songs which are appropriate for school and those which are not.

Another way the music program has for appealing to a wider range of students is for it to be up to date with modern music-making methods. Almost all music of today uses technology of some kind, and it is important for students to be aware of the tools that are needed. This can range from computers for music-making to sound production and recording.

This individualized, project-based approach is mainly used with the upper classes of the school. In the younger grades, children still need a solid foundation, and working in large groups with activities such as singing is still very important. As they get older however, students start to express the need to explore other areas in music and the program aims to offer this.

For us as music teachers this type of work is very rewarding. It allows us to work with children in a way that resembles a more traditional music-making environment. It also allows for a flow of creative ideas between student and teacher, rather than the more one-sided instructional learning.

Poetry

This year the 8th grade students did a project on poetry. In their exploration of poetry they profited from both whole-class experiences and individualized learning. An introduction to poetry helped them learn to properly read, understand and discuss the poems. In the classroom we have many poems from many different poets, and after studying together the students were given time read on their own, for a more personal experience. After reading many poems, they were asked to choose one that they especially like, to read it to a group and to explain why they chose it. We did this many times, over several weeks. We also read and wrote haikus. Finally the students were encouraged to choose and memorize a poem for a presentation. The feedback of the students was very encouraging. Some said that they developed a new appreciation for poetry and wanted to study and read more. Many children wrote beautiful and very interesting poems and haikus. At the end of the school year the class had a “Music and Poetry” presentation for their parents.

Learning through project work

Learning through project work is very motivating for the children. They learn to practice the skills necessary for the work, and work on something that they have chosen. Students choose an area that interests them about the topic they are studying in class. They research it further, either in small groups or individually. The computers and the library are valuable resources for the students. The final outcome might be a written report, accompanied by an oral presentation and a visual display, or possibly a Power Point presentation. This process enables the students to share their knowledge and creativity with their classmates.
Many projects were worked on in all the different classes. Here are a few examples:

- The 1\textsuperscript{st} grade students learned about the rain forest. They then chose a rain forest animal that they wanted to learn about and did their first research project!
- The 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade students studied animals and then learned more about them.
- 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade students worked on a “wellness” project to learn about elements of healthy living.
- The 4\textsuperscript{th} grade students completely immersed themselves in researching and learning about birds for one full term.
- The 5\textsuperscript{th} grade studied solid waste management through the “Garbology” curriculum. We did a number of educational games as well as a research activity where the students wrote texts about different waste categories. These texts were later used when making posters in Arts and Crafts.
- The 6\textsuperscript{th} grade worked on “The Dig Project”, in which they created their own civilization and culture. (See the Transition School annual report.)
- The 7\textsuperscript{th} grade studied Environmental Science through experience.
- The 8\textsuperscript{th} grade studied the history of different areas of the world (the Renaissance in Europe, history of India, history of Africa) and chose areas to learn more about.

**Outcomes**

Personalized learning gave many opportunities for children to learn both independently and together. We find that joy and enthusiasm are essential for learning. From our observations, when children are given a guided freedom they are enthusiastic – they take more ownership of their work and their progress.

**Reflections and Conclusion**

Many teachers reported that teaching with these values caused the students to be more motivated and excited about learning, and this has been acknowledged by the students themselves.

In this structure, a strong basic program should be presented; afterward individual attention and guidance is more easily available. Some of the children need more guidance. The teachers need to be very aware of each individual and follow and assess the work.

We do feel that our children need to develop more focused study skills and to improve basic skills. We will work on this next year and integrate it into all of the work that we do.

Overall, individualized learning has helped empower the students and encouraged them to take responsibility for their own life-long education.
Outreach Schools
Introduction

Aikiyam School is following project-based learning as part of its curriculum every year. Aikiyam teachers have found and have been experiencing project-based learning, as a dynamic approach to teaching in which students explore real-world problems and challenges while children learn curriculum skills.

Aikiyam School micro projects have proved that project-based learning is filled with active and engaged learning. The queries, problem settings and findings inspire students to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they are studying. Students retain the knowledge gained through micro project approach far more readily than through traditional textbook-centered learning.

Description of project

Aikiyam School teachers chose different topics for their classroom micro projects that are related to their syllabus. This year the class teachers and children chose the following topics:

- Kindergarten: Wild Animals
- 1st Grade: Animals' Life
- 2nd Grade: Water
- 4th Grade: Plants
- 5th Grade: Tamil Poets
- 7th Grade: Mother Earth (theatre)
- 8th Grade: Ramayana (story-telling)

Students and teachers started the project work during the second term (October – February). Each class chose a topic related to the theories and facts they learn and allotted some time for the project within the class hours without spoiling their regular studies. Teachers designed their projects so as to use many learning activities to understand problems, facts and find new solutions and suggestions.

Once the project was over, the class exhibited their findings and shared their ideas with other children and parents.

Project descriptions from class teachers

4th Grade (Plants): The project took place roughly from December 2015 to March 2016 and included a big diversity of activities as well as trips to the Botanical Gardens in Auroville and Pitchandikulam forest. We taught the students theoretical knowledge as well as practical knowledge and also did a lot of creative and craft work with them. So they got to know about different kinds of forest, leaves, and roots; parts of flowers; photosynthesis and lot more. They had a lot of fun trying to raise their own plants in school and documenting their success, but also trying to figure out why some of their plants were dying. Little models of trees were made with clay and with wire. Bookwork was also a part of the curriculum, where they were able to recite the learned things, and also writing their own stories about nature and
making pictures, some drawn and some glued with dried leaves. Finally we also did a drama on the topic of the importance of trees, which the children did entirely by themselves.

2nd Grade (Water): This project took place in February and March 2016. Teachers took the students to the library to choose resource books about the topic of water. We showed videos about water and its sources, and conducted experiments with water. We went on many field trips: Ousteri Lake, the sea, the village pond, a dam, a well, and Sadhana Forest where we learned more about saving water. Other activities included singing, dancing, performing a play, reading and writing stories, drawing, and playing games.

Outcomes

- In the process of completing classroom micro projects, students improved their organizational and research skills, and developed better communication with their peers and adults.
- Because students were evaluated on the basis of their projects rather than narrow rote learning, they were completely into the work and enjoyed doing it. Students could connect their academic learning with their real-life facts and problems.
- Booklets, theater play and debates were some of the outcomes that were shared with others. An open house was conducted by individual classes where friends, children from other classes, and parents were invited to see the work.
- Field trips helped to make the children aware of real situations. This year, students went to the wildlife sanctuaries, zoological parks, farms and water bodies.
- Teachers made enough arrangements so that day-to-day learning activities were purposeful.

Comments from the 4th Grade teacher: “What astonished me most is, that they really began to care about plants. In our daily morning sharing a lot of them told us that they planted something themselves at their homes, and afterward reported with great joy if the plants got buds or fruits or with grief if the plant got eaten by an animal. Projects are a nice way to find new ways out of the classroom routine and the students seemed to enjoy the project a lot. It most probably raised the awareness for nature of most of the students, and they won't forget the project because they still have their plants at home.”

Reflections

- Since classroom micro projects follow a strategic and integrated learning process, meaningful and long-lasting learning is assured.
- The effectiveness of micro projects is made clear through the critical reflections of the students in the classroom.
- Through these projects children learn to observe things and to model the intellectual inquires of the teachers.
- The class tends to be very democratic while working on projects.

Conclusion

Classroom micro projects have far-reaching implications for the success of integral education. Since teachers and students plan cohesively together, they participate thoughtfully to understand and analyze the issues/topics they have chosen. A satisfying learning environment is created.
Aranya
Forest Sanctuary

Introduction

Aranya is a service unit aiming to spread awareness for teenagers, school kids, teachers, local bodies and NGOs about natural and cultural perspectives, ecology and environment.

Aranya started as a soil reclamation project on 100 acres of land, funded by the International Development Research Council. After this initial work the Aranya community came into existence. Aranya Forest has been taking up various activities to explore nature and forests with school students.

Visitors to Aranya

The following groups visited Aranya this year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of the school / college</th>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
</tr>
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<td>Mohanam Cultural Centre, Sanjeevi Nagar, Puduvai</td>
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<td>26.04.15</td>
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<td>TLC, Auroville</td>
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<td>Govt. Publicity Officer</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
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<td>02-05.15 - 04.05.15</td>
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<td>Awareness &amp; Camp</td>
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**Gatherings**

This year we took part in the following events:

- **June 3-6:** Tree Planters Meet & World Environment Day meeting at Palakkad, Kerala
- **September 5-6:** Visit to Gangavaram Forest
- **October 3:** World Nature Day Camp at Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala
- **October 11:** Low Carbon Development & Climate Change gathering
- **October 15:** Dr. A P G Abdhulkalam Birthday Meet at Pondicherry University Dep of CPEE
- **January 1:** Tree Planters Meet at Thirsur, Kerala
- **January 28-30:** Tarumitra (Friends of Trees) Eco-Fest, Aadi, Attapady, Kerala
Camping/Adventure Zone

This year we continued working to establish a Camping/Adventure Zone for the children from Auroville and surrounding villages, to promote the method of gaining knowledge and skills through experience. Its varied landscapes of forest, canyons and nearby lake provides a scenic atmosphere filled with birds, butterflies, snakes (venomous and non venomous) and animals ideal for the experiential learning activities proposed.

Conclusion

Our aim in this work is for visitors to gain knowledge in environmental conservation and apply it in daily life, so that this earth is protected by present and future generations. Each year more and more students participate in our camps.
Research on green playground spaces

The first step that we took in starting the project is to order certain books recommended to us by Heidi Watts, Professor Emeritus on this topic. We received the following books:

- **Wild Play** by David Sobel
  This book is largely autobiographical where Sobel describes his experiences with his own children and the connections with nature.

- **Forest Kindergartens** by Erin K. Kenny
  This book is a description of an actual Kindergarten within the Forest. It talks about creating a Kindergarten rather than green playground spaces.

- **Establishing a Nature-Based Preschool** by Rachel A. Larimore
  This book is about creating a Preschool in nature. It is very interesting but has no direct bearing on the subject of creating green playground spaces,

- **Risk and Adventure in Early Years Outdoor Play** by Sara Knight
  In this book the issue of risk in nature play is discussed. The book also talks about the primary elements of earth, water, air and fire. It talks about seasonal changes of natural creativity in relation to outdoor play spaces. A good case is made that the element of risk should not prevent nature play spaces.

- **Childhood and Nature** by David Sobel
  In this book David Sobel makes the case that concern for protecting the environment and nature is best served by a love for nature. He also makes the point that it is not a question of making a curriculum out of nature, learning names of plants etc., but experiencing nature. He cites five design principles for nature play:
    1. Adventure
    2. Fantasy and Imagination
    3. Animal allies
    4. Maps and Paths
    5. Private places
  Sobel believes that the age between 5 or 6 to 12 years, the middle childhood, is the most sensitive for nature play.

We also found on the internet an interesting article from the Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood ([http://www.greenheartsinc.org/](http://www.greenheartsinc.org/)). The article describes design principles in nature play spaces. This essay was very useful for us to learn others' recommendations for creating nature play spaces.

After discussing the above principles and looking at the spaces at Aranya, the group made a brief for Dorothee, our architect, to work on a plan.
Brief for architect: Elements for natural play spaces in Aranya

1. There is a need to earmark a relatively similar place for the smaller children, possibly with some fencing which is natural.
2. We will need a larger space with trails, roads, strings and cycle path for bigger children.
3. We may need to use big boulders or broken trees to create structures for multiple use.
4. Restrooms and drinking water should be provided at an appropriate location. Similarly vehicle access and parking should be thought about.
5. We can use turf grasses to shade the areas from view and create small and closed space. In one of the spaces, we could use hammocks, some kind of chairs and benches.
6. We can have a supply of loose parts to build structures. These parts should be used by children to build structures.
7. We need a climbing structure. Wherever there is a climbing structure, below that we need to provide a deep soft tall grassy walls, slanted climbing material, all in natural appearance.
8. We need to have a digging pit with loose soil, or somewhere soil is stuffed for children to play with mud.
9. We need to have a safe pond with water for swimming and a stream.
10. We need mud balls, mud holes, nesting boxes.
11. We could plant a few fruit trees and the children could enjoy the fruits.
12. We should have a grassy patch where children can lay around, sit and talk, etc.
13. We need to identify existing trees which can be climbed by them. We can attach a sloping climbing net or wooden cleats finely bolted into a trunk – good surfaces.
14. We will need tools, soil relevant to mud play, etc.
15. For the big children’s play area, there should be some natural fencing also.

Proposed construction projects

We invited our architect Dorothee to study the landscape at Aranya and propose how to incorporate some of the features that we want to materialize there. She proposed a list of civil works that can be done to enhance facilities at Aranya to create a nature playground:

1. Place for small children with natural fencing. Grassy spaces, place to play with mud, in the main area.
2. Cycle paths and footpaths, of different length and difficulty, possibly round ways. One path that leads up to the lake. Sign boards along the paths to indicate features (trees, animal habitats...).
3. Structures for multiple use in main area. There is one structure existing; one is to be added as dormitory and restrooms.

Dorothee also made a drawing of the proposed pathways at Aranya for nature walks.

We will pursue the continuation of this project in the coming year.
Introduction

In Tamil, Arulvazhi means “Way of Grace”. Arulvazhi 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, Morattandi Chavadi, 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. Arulvazhi has a crèche and kindergarten in the campus; all other groups go to outside schools for their studies and come to Arulvazhi for the activities offered.

Activities of the year

Arulvazhi has seven areas of activities:

- **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. (12 children)

  *A happy note from the crèche and kindergarten*
  
  This year, the crèche and kindergarten resource person, Nimila Arun, noticed that a pair of twins who were considered dumb started speaking after two or three months. Other parents reported that tiny tots who had been very quiet at home started blabbering some rhymes or words. The parents were very happy with this development.

- **Primary school group** with activities of daily physical exercises, stories, songs and drawing classes in the evenings. (33 children)

- **Computer classes** for beginners in the evenings, this year held from January to March 2016. (10 students)

- **Yoga asana practice** in the mornings, facilitated by a qualified yoga teacher. (30 students)

- **Adolescent girls’ classes** in the evenings, focusing on health education and social awareness, particularly in relation to gender problems and cultural expression. (10 participants)

- **“Good Sportsman” programmes** are held in the evening for a group of children. (10 children)

- **Study of Sri Aurobindo's Savitri** in Tamil as well as cultural education through slokas and stories. (20 participants)

**Highlights of the year:**

- An educational tour to Maharishi Vethathri Yoga Centre was organized in May 2015, with 13 students and our yoga teacher M. Velmurgan as guide. There the whole group fine-tuned their knowledge of yoga practices. They all visited the Kodaikanal Flower Show and Palani Hills.

- A summer camp with the theme “Wellbeing of adolescent girls” was conducted by M. Muthukumari from May 11 to May 31, 2015 for 20 girls. *(See separate report.)*

- We celebrated the 1st International Day of Yoga on June 21st, 2015 at the Morattandi village community centre.
● In September 2015, members of the Sri Aurobindo Centre at Chengleput visited Arulvazhi and enjoyed yoga demonstrations by the students.

● Students visited the Matrimandir on October 19th 2015 and visited Sri Aurobindo's room on Siddhi Day, 24th November.

● Students visited the annual science exhibition in February 2016, this year held at New Era Secondary School.

● As part of our extension work, on February 14th 2016, members of our school visited the Sri Aurobindo Centre at Ottivakkam at their invitation. There they gave an asanas demonstration, demonstrated measuring the aura with a divining rod, and gave a talk on Mother and Sri Aurobindo and Savitri.

● On February 28th 2016, Auroville's birthday, the students gave a yoga demonstration at Promesse community.

● In March 2016 our students participated in the Saint Tyagaraja Music Festival.

● In March 2016 the students ran a semi-marathon.

● On March 8th 2016, during the Women’s Day celebrations at the Morattandi community hall, students gave a yoga demonstration.

● On March 26th 2016, during the Tamilnadu-Auroville seminar conducted at Bharat Nivas in which delegates from centres in Tamilnadu, Puducherry and Auroville participated, the students gave a yoga demonstration.

● Festivals including Independence Day, Saraswathi puja, Deepavali, Chirstmas, Pongal and Republic Day were celebrated and the inner and outer significances were highlighted.

**Reflections**

The most meaningful event of this year was the starting of regular badminton and volleyball games for children in May 2015 by Jothi Charles Rajan with the ideal of turning out good sportsmen. The Mother has enunciated the qualities of a good sportsman in the context of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in the Ashram. As the Ashram is the laboratory of Evolution created by Her, the code of good sportsman given by her is taken as the basis for sports activities for our centre. From the beginning of the games activities, every aspect has taken place with the active participation of the village children. A competition for “Good Sportsman” was conceived and first held in December 2015 for senior boys; two boys were given first and second prizes. In addition to the games, videos on volleyball coaching and documentaries on environment awareness and on the lives of great men and women of the world were screened weekly. It is proposed to improve this program further in the coming years.

**Conclusion**

All the programmes of the Centre were conducted with the collaboration of Varadharajan and Syamala, senior Aurovilians who had some direct guidance from the Mother on education. The beneficiaries of these programmes are children from the village who go to the outside schools, where they are mostly exposed to subjects of academic interest. Here the children are given the experience of values that Auroville stands for, at the same time connected to their roots. The impact on them and improvements in terms of human experience become quite visible when their relatives and friends visit them from other rural areas. We see a ripple effect of whatever they imbibe spreading among the peer groups of participating children, in their homes, friends and outside.

Our goal is to perfect more and more our methods in the light of the teachings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.
Introduction

Usually the well-being of adolescent girls is attempted through outer means. An introduction of inner means will enable them to understand their problems and solve them better. A summer camp was offered through Arulvazhi Education Centre with this focus.

Description of project

A 20-day programme was held from May 11 to May 31, 2015 for 20 girls.

Activities included orientation on planes and parts of the being, how to feel the sushma energies and how to utilize them for solving health and psychological problems, and knowledge of the functions of the human organs. The participants went through a programme of prayer, asanas, pranayama, mudras, meditation, concentration and relaxation.

They experienced the significance of flowers, balancing the energies of different bodies (koshas), Savitri reading, herbal cures, Shramdhan, etc. They had practical demonstration by diving rod, measured their auras and saw how the protecting auras changed with different emotions (anger, happy memory, etc).

They visited Matrimandir, Savitri Bhavan, the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Chidambaram Nataraja Temple, and Sri Ramalinga Swamigal’s Sathyagnana.

Resource persons included Muthukumari (Thamarai), Varadharajan (senior Aurovilian), R. Thillai Ganapathy (longtime Aurovilian), Dhanalakshmi (Savitri Bhavan), Anand and Iyyanar (Ilaignarkal Education Centre).

Outcomes

This program was designed with the cultural ambience of these rural girls in view. This multidimensional knowledge of inner and outer means are not given to them either in their homes or in the educational institutions. Their knowledge will have the ripple effect of spreading through their in the village and schools. They asked to have more such camps, so that the benefits will be more and deeper.

Conclusion

The girls participating in the programme are very happy to have acquired the practical knowledge offered in the camp. They understood that the more they put their theoretical knowledge into practice, the more they will advance their well-being.
Aurohamsadhwan Arts Centre

Introduction

Aurohamsadhwan Arts Centre started initially with two people learning veena, then slowly developed other music activities with Auroville students and village students. This centre has been running for ten years now, with team of five members from Auroville.

Activities of the year

Professional teachers taught our students with five different music classes: Veena, Bharat Natyam, Vocals, Keyboard, and Guitar. The students are from Auroville and surrounding villages, aged 4 to 50 years, including boys, girls and women. Classes took place at the Last School Heritage building. A total of 59 students participated this year.

Our veena students gave several performances in Pondicherry including Manakulavinayagar temple, Meghalaya Governor Visit to Puducherry festival, Gandhi Thedal, Doordharshan, and Sithananda temple.

The veena students also participated in the Bangalore Art of Living Programme conducted by Sri Sri Ravi Shanker, in which two-thousand veena students performed in one place and sent a report of this event to the Guinness Records Organisation. In Thiruvannamalai, veena students did a performance for Chitra Paurnami day.

Our group participated in the Chitra Kala Award Competion in Chennai organized by the Music Academy, in which we got the Group First Prize. In addition one of our students received first prize in Veena, awarded by Veena Gayaythri.

Four students gave their Arangetram performances in Bharata Natyam dance, and one student achieved the last level in Keyboard.

Outcomes

Learning music and dance needs a lot of concentration, commitment and self-discipline. Students are the first beneficiaries and then the public.

This type of programme offers the opportunity to the Auroville and village students who are not able to join such classes in the city. In the future elder students may teach new ones. Learning music together and understanding each other, helping each other brings unity among themselves.

Conclusion

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

Introduction

Environmental education is an educational methodology and a overall approach to involve the students community and the general public to maintain a sustainable and eco friendly environment. Environmental education has been applied to encourage the public to take responsible actions to bring back the earth’s balance. Today more than ever society needs high quality environmental education programs that succeed in moving values and changing behavior in the direction of sustainability and environmental conservation. The Auroville Botanical Gardens with a passion for the environment and a gift for interpreting nature to students has a nine years experience in providing quality environmental education to the students and general public of the Auroville bioregion.

Our educational activities

Our educational content for students emphasizes the conservation of Tropical Dry Evergreen Forests, wildlife protection and waste-free lifestyles. Our educational programs had a positive impact on students’ self-esteem, motivation and engagement. Though our focus was mostly on students, we also organized educational programs for teachers and Self-Help Group members. The content of training programs for teachers was designed in a way to impart environmental education to students during academics. The Self-Help Group members were trained on waste segregation and traditional medicine preparation. Our educational package guided them to equip themselves and to improve their knowledge on environmental concerns.

Programs for children

A substantial number of our education programs were organized for schools of the Auroville bioregion. They range from one-day visits to seven-days camps. Our package for students was designed for understanding the local ecosystems and their interrelationship, and developing the ability to identify and analyze information relating to environmental problems.

• **Student visits**: This year, 3863 students from 93 schools took part in the exposure visits to the Botanical Gardens, focusing mainly on the indigenous Tropical Dry Evergreen Forests. Group discussions, identifying native tree species and introducing students to the indigenous flora and fauna helped students to understand the types of ecosystem, impact of ecosystem destruction, loss of habitat, need to conserve indigenous forests. Stress was also put on protection of wildlife.

• **Awareness camps**: The main agenda of organizing awareness camps was to enthuse students to take measures for safeguarding the environment. With these programs we aim to enhance attitudes, values and skills. The following camps took place this academic year:
  1. Jan 2, 2015 – National Service Scheme (NSS) camp (26 participants)
  2. Feb 15, 2015 – NSS camp (40 participants)
  3. April 24, 2015 – Summer camp (40 participants)
• **Special programs**: In order to elevate the standards of our education programs, special programs were organized by the Botanical Gardens. These type of programs were reminders for students to stay on track. Many important environmental days were celebrated with specially designed activities including awareness cycle rallies and exposure field visits to indigenous forests.

**Teacher training programs**
In this academic year, 169 teachers from the schools of Cuddalore and Pondicherry participated in our Eco Teacher Training programs. These programs showed how to impart environmental education to students during classes. Teachers were requested to make use of local flora and fauna of the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forests and take cognizance of local environmental problems.

**Self-Help Group visits**
More than 385 members from 12 Self-Help Groups took part in exposure visits to the Botanical Gardens. As most of the members were from rural and agrarian communities, the focus was on agriculture-related activities and waste management in daily life. The main objective of our programs for the Self-Help Groups is to make them realize that they can contribute significantly towards achieving environmental sustainability.

**Outcomes**

The multi-faceted nature of environmental education is a key component of its effectiveness. The basic requirement for achieving our goal is the motivation of teachers to make environmental education a central focus; we aim to equip them with all sorts of skills and knowledge.

Our educational package for Self-Help Groups guides them to equip themselves and to improve the conditions of their family and villages. Many Self-Help Group members have started their own vermicomposting units, have set up home gardens, have started using their household wastes as manure in the gardens, and have started segregating their household waste.
The Auroville Sports Resource Center (AVSRC) had several training camps, tournaments and events in the last year. Through these activities of various sport disciplines AVSRC reached many people in Auroville and its bioregion. AVSRC would like to illustrate our activities, which underline our efforts to bring people together on a mutual interest in sports and strengthen a sports culture in the villages of the Auroville bio-region.

**AVSRC’s new members:** We are very pleased to have 2 new members that have joined our AVSRC team: 1) Lukas, a German “weltwärts” volunteer who joined AVSRC in September 2015 and will be with us for one year till August 2016 and 2) Senthil, a volleyball coach and Aurovilian from Trichi, Tamil Nadu.

**Aikayam School Sports:** Since September 2015 AVSRC’s new colleague, Senthil, helps as a head-coach in the Aikiyam School Sports Program at New Creation Sports Ground from Monday to Friday from 4pm to 5pm. Though Senthil is primarily a volleyball coach, he also trains the children in athletics and helps the other teachers - there to help with the children’s sports program - on the proper coordination of the daily school sports program.

**Ragavendra Primary School sports:** Every Friday and Wednesday from 2:30 to 3:15pm, about 45 children from Ragavendra Primary School located on the Auroville main road near Mudaliarchavady come to do their sports program at the New Creation sports ground. AVSRC received a request from the school to help set up their sports program using New Creation as the venue, and AVSRC requested Senthil to help facilitate and set up this program. For the next 3 months Senthil helped to establish a working plan for a weekly twice training program for the children.

**Edayanchavady Government Middle School sports:** AVSRC received a request from the Edayanchavady Government Middle School to help with its daily after school sports activity for the 7th and 8th class students. After meeting with the school Head Master and discussing their requirements in details, Lukas was designated to coordinate and organize the daily after school sports activities at Edayanchavady school ground and at the Adventure sports ground from 4:00 to 5:00 pm. Lukas coaches volleyball and football to the 20 male students from class 7th and 8th from Mondays through Friday.

**Survey of sports in the villages around Auroville:** Soon after his arrival in September 2015, Lukas was requested to carry out a survey of the existing sports activities and the existing sports facilities in the surrounding villages of Auroville. Along with this, Lukas was also asked to take down any request emanating from the sports clubs / teams for help to improve sports facilities in their village and sports materials. AVSRC provided Lukas with a local assistant for translation and as a guide into the villages. Together they visited 18 villages within the distance of 20 km and collected valuable information on sports in the bioregion. This was a really important step for AVSRC, because it gave us the data to analyze the sport opportunities in the villages around Auroville. This information will be carefully used to improve the village-sports where needed and thereby further help strengthen our relationship in the bioregion.

**Village volleyball training program:** Following the survey of sports in the surrounding villages and Senthil joining AVSRC in October 2015, many requests for a volleyball coach and regular training in volleyball were received from the surrounding villages. AVSRC designated Senthil with this task and
asked him to make a working plan and a coaching schedule. When this was ready, AVSRC put Senthil in charge of this village volleyball training program. He visits the villages both in the mornings and in the evenings to train the youth in volleyball. He also organizes trash cleaning sessions with all his volleyball trainees around the village sports grounds.

**Preparation for AV 50th Anniversary celebration:** Much manpower and effort went into the preparation process for Auroville’s 50th Anniversary celebration in 2018. AVSRC has proposed a number of coaching camps, tournaments and court repair work in different sports disciplines and women’s traditional games and cultural activities that we want to accomplish leading up to February 2018. AVSRC had to coordinate and lead the correspondence between AVSRC and the various anchor persons of the different sport disciplines, who closely work with us in coordinating sports events in our bio-region. We are eagerly looking forward to Auroville’s 50th Anniversary celebration activities. These sports and cultural activities we plan to coordinate, will lead to a growing participation in sports physical well-being among the villagers in the Auroville bio-region.

**Website:** AVSRC is currently working on its own website, which we want to complete by August 2016. It will give a simple overview on AVSRC and its many endeavors in sports for the rural population surrounding Auroville, a bit of its history and the team members. The website will be another milestone in our goal to encourage and promote sports for health and well-being of the individuals with an idea of Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the Human Evolution. Eventually, we wish to include a sports calendar in our website.

**Cricket:** The cricket tournament hosted by the Auroville Cricket club for the teams of the Auroville bioregion, ended very smoothly on 27th March 2016. All the matches – other than the finals – were played at Kuilapalayam cricket ground and the final match was played at the Adventure sports ground at Edayanchavadi. 18 teams participated. Kuilai Stars from Kuilapalayam village and the team from Ozhnthiapet met in the final to decide the winner. The team from Ozhnthiapet village won the final match and claimed the winner’s Trophy. Mr. Joseph and Mr. Balaji of Auroville Cricket Club handed out the trophies and the prizes to the winner and the runner-up teams.

**Table Tennis:** The Auroville Open Table Tennis tournament was organized at Dehashakthi sports ground. Mr. Suresh of Auroville and Mr. Ramakrishnan of Kuilapalayam took charge to coordinate this event in which many Auroville youngsters and some adults took part. Mr. Yaor of Auroville won the winner’s trophy and Mr. Ramakrishnan of Kuilapalayam took runner up trophy.

**Kabaddi:** The Auroville Kabaddi Club took part in the 47th Pudhucherry State Kabaddi Championship organized in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and Pudhucherry Kabaddi Association on the 18,19 & 20th of August 2015 at Indiragandhi stadium in Uppalam. 47 men teams and 8 women teams from the Union territory including Karaikal took part in it. The 3rd place was won by the Auroville Kabaddi team.

**Volleyball:** Every year, the Auroville volleyball team organizes a rural volleyball tournament for the villages of the Auroville bio-region at New Creation Sports Ground. This year the volleyball tournament took place on the 15th to 17th January 2016. A total of 28 men and boys’ teams and 4 girls’ teams participated. It is noteworthy to mention that most if not all of the girls’ team members playing in this tournament were the girls studying in Auroville schools. The Police Inspector Mr. Rajendran presided over the prize distribution ceremony and gave out the prizes to the winners and runners-up of the tournament.
Introduction

Ilaignarkal Education Centre imparts basic education to workers of Auroville and their wards hailing from the immediate neighbourhood of Auroville region. We help in bridging healthy relationships and understandings between Auroville the International City and the ancient Tamil Villages through social, cultural, economic and health educational programmes.

Activities of the year

Regular activities:

- **Regular classes**: continued from 9 a.m. to 6.30 pm at the campus. About 35 students attended classes in language, computers, yoga, cooking, and body awareness.
- **Satellite classes**: Literacy classes were held at the workplaces where many workers were ready to attend (Wellpaper, Bamboo Centre, Naturellement).
- **Our rural mobile libraries** were active in the neighbouring villages Anai Nagar, Aravindapuram, Irumbai chittoor, Morattandi and Mahaveerapuram, serving nearly 150 beneficiaries.
- **Bharati Educare**: 22 girl children were part of this programme, in which Ilaignarkal helps parents/guardians educate the girls through proper schooling and protects them from child labour and abuse. Moral support was offered by meeting the children and parents twice a month at our campus.
- **Viyala vattam**: This is a weekly circle for studying Tamil literature. Staff, students, workers and their families from Auroville neighbouring villages, friends from nearby schools and colleges, and Aurovilians aspiring to learn Tamil attended this circle regularly. Currently we are learning Tamil Bhakti Literature. Studying Tamil literature shows us that values from classical times are still present in our lives, and leads to refinement in work life, arts and crafts. Our participants enjoy discussing the highlights and sharing the rich experiences of their own lives as echoed in literature. This make the sessions interesting and valuable.

Highlights and special events:

- **Sharing day**: All our friends and families got together on 12th February 2016 to celebrate sharing day. That is the time our enlarged family members meet and share gifts, love and happiness.
- **Best Youth award**: This year we were happy to confer our Best Youth award on Ms. Arulmozhi, who serves in Yatra Multimedia centre at Kulapalayam as a photo editor, and acts in street play theatre for social causes in the Auroville bio-region. She is a native of Kottaikarai. We are proud to announce that she studied in our further learning evening programme for good number of years, which helped her achieve a degree in Computer Science from the University and gave her the confidence to do her best in the field of mass communication.
- **Summer camp**: Almost 30 children of Auroville workers participated in this year’s summer programme with the theme “Who am I”. Participants were 12 to 13 years old, girls and boys. We took them to visit the planetarium and Aranaya Forest. The children themselves organised craft work and exhibitions, which were enjoyed by the parents.
- **Festival of Evolution (10 days)**: Over the days of October 14th to 25th, nearly 500 children, parents and teachers visited Ilaignarkal for our Festival of Evolution. This festival brings awareness of Auroville’s theme of Human Evolution, explained through a traditional doll show.


(“Kolu”). It has become an annual festival in Auroville, a joyful event for all ages to learn together and express through art, music, dance and other lively skills. A group of us work on selection of new clay dolls from native potters, and created a unique display. We recorded feedback from participants and published excerpts in “Auroville Seythimadal”, which was a good way for children to share their experiences.

- Teachers’ day: On September 5th the staff of our school attended a one-day workshop with other teachers and creative writers in Thiruvannamalai. We were hosted by writer-publisher Bhava Chelladurai and his family.

- Children’s creative writing workshop in Tamil (2 days): The topic chosen for this workshop was “Water for All.” 45 children from local village schools and from Auroville outreach schools participated with songs, stories, theatre, and crafts. The workshop was guided by Dr. Siva Mathiyalagan (Trust for youth and leadership), Dr. C. Sethupathy (Tamil scholar, writer), Dr. R. Kurinjivendan (Professor), Prof. C. Arunan (writer, poet), and Dr. Velusaravanan (children's theatre expert, Puducherry University). The outcome was fairly good. Children needed training in writing and painting illustrations for stories and songs. Staying together in a camp gave them good feeling of friendship, sharing and leadership abilities. They enjoyed the Auroville atmosphere – serene and peaceful.

- Traditional Pongal Bazaar: On January 15th, Pongal day (sankaranthi), we held a bazaar outside the Solar Kitchen highlighting traditional foods crafts and arts. The bazaar was in collaboration with others including Mohanam Cultural Centre, the Aathian tribal people of Irumbai, rural handicrafts artisans and researchers, and interested Aurovilians. About 1200 people passed through the bazaar, adults and children. Besides an introduction to local arts, crafts, music and dance, a native curry made from 35 locally grown green vegetables was the star attraction along with sweet Pongal. The experience gave visitors, guests, friends and residents of Auroville a taste of the specialties of Tamil culture.

- Gala Village Heritage festival: This event held at Bamboo Land was a collaboration between Mohanam, Ilaignarkal and Tamil Heritage Centre. Artists and rural artisans got an opportunity to exhibit their products, and to evaluate and learn to remodel their products for better marketing. They established good relationships with local and state governments, NGOs and Auroville units. There were health awareness activities through integral Siddha healing, Yoga and Music therapy. There was a Kolam competition, native recipes with local grains, group games, stone lifting, etc. which gave new energy for revival of ancient agrarian life in tune with nature. Nearly 2000 people enjoyed by visiting, almost half of which were old students and beneficiaries of Ilaignarkal!

**Conclusion – for the immediate future**

We are launching new educational and training programmes with the support of sister units, to create employment opportunities for the local youth. This will empower them to open doors for local trade opportunities in a co-operative way.
Isai Ambalam School

Introduction

The mission of Isai Ambalam School is to create 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.

School statistics

- Total students enrolled: 111 (59 boys & 52 girls)
- Students in the pre-school: 33 (16 boys & 17 girls)
- Students in the primary level: 60 (35 boys & 25 girls)
- Students in the middle level: 18 (8 boys & 10 girls)
- New students enrolled: 22 (14 boys & 8 girls; 17 in pre-school and 5 in primary)
- Students graduated: 7 students completed 7th standard and joined in New Era Secondary School
- Number which left for other reasons: 16 (7 boys & 9 girls)
- Number of students remaining in the school in April 2016: 95 (50 boys & 45 girls)
- Number of full time teachers: 9 teachers

Activities of the year

We wrote an Individual Learning Programme (ILP) for each student of the school, including pre-primary and early primary students. From August, this ILP was written on a weekly basis for each student from the 3rd to the 7th standards and a printed copy of it was given to each of them on the last day of every week. In the following week, every day, the student would follow it and the teacher would provide the needed learning activities. At the end of the week the students became aware of how much and how well one has completed it. If anything could not be completed it was included in the following week’s programme. For some students separate activities had to be given to remove their learning difficulties or to reinforce their leaning strengths. Thus a certain level of personalisation occurred often for the 3rd, 4th and 5th standard students. On the one side these actions increased the students' self-awareness and self-motivation in learning; and on the other side it facilitated immensely the teaching process. By way of determining appropriate educational approaches or methods, Regis’ English Sentence Writing Formula, Trinity’s Spoken English Learning activities, problem-based projects, computer CDs and internet etc. were used. As a result of all of these the process of tracking the learning outcomes by the learners as well as teachers became easier and better than before. Both are becoming much more aware of their strong as well as weak points in their learning or teaching.

Details of the above process for the Upper Primary (6th & 7th standards), for the Lower Primary (3rd, 4th and 5th standards), and for the Pre-primary (Kindergarten and Creche) & Early Primary (1st and 2nd standards) are given below.

Upper Primary (6th & 7th standards)

Individual Learning Programme: From the beginning of the year all the 7th standard students wrote their own Individual Learning Programme (ILP) every week. Whenever they needed help they got it from the
teacher. ILP consisted of their learning content, learning strength, learning difficulties, psychological life skills and what further they wanted to learn about. For the 6th standard students the teacher wrote the ILPs for the first two terms by discussing with the students. At the beginning of the third term six students wrote their own ILPs and were able to complete them.

The students could take responsibility of their learning programme. Their awareness of their learning programme improved and they were motivated. The teacher also learnt to motivate the students. The students were able to find out by themselves whether they had completed their plan or what was needed and how it could be completed before the weekend. Every Friday they received their programme from the teacher and knew what they were going to learn for the following week.

Educational methods: The teachers used the appropriate teaching method according to the needs of the students. They used indoor games, outdoor games, group discussion, sharing among groups, story telling, puzzle games, mind mapping, pair reading, etc. They used the Phonics approach for reading, Active Learning Methodology (ALM) for science and social science, and Regis' English Sentence Writing on themes. The students did 3 projects: “Fibre to Fabric”, “Cleanliness” and “Measurement”. They used Education by Design and ALM for these projects.

Life skills: They learnt about 12 life skills like Time Management, Goal Setting, Helping Others, Attentive Listening, Collaboration etc., using TTT videos of Aparajitha Foundation. These skills motivated them to complete their ILPs. They also applied them at school as well as home. We used the process of comprehensive evaluation through formative assessment during the last term, after the students started acquiring value-based life skills.

Computers: According to the needs of the children we used computers. Students used GeoGebra (http://www.geogebra.org/), Alice programming (http://www.alice.org/) and Scratch programming (https://scratch.mit.edu/) in learning maths content. They felt happy to learn through the computer – these programmes helped them easily understand concepts and practice them. For science and social science they used Wikipedia and learnt to search for the information and acquire the knowledge.

Writing: Among 18 students 13 learnt to write essays on various topics. They learnt to write coherently. Their sentence structure has improved. Through ALM their thinking skills have improved. They are able to connect ideas with one another.

Lower Primary (3rd, 4th and 5th standards)

Individual Learning Programme: ILPs were written for all these students. In the beginning they found it difficult to follow the ILP. They were not in the same level. Some of the ILPs were common and some were completely different as they had more learning difficulties. The students felt happy on completing their plan within the week. They could do so as the plan was discussed with them and written. When it could not be completed within the week it was included in the next week’s plan. To enable them to become aware of their learning the ILP was given every Friday so that they could go through their learning plan during the week end and come to school with a clear idea of what they were going to learn for the coming week. In this process they gradually became motivated.

The ILPs helped these students to track their learning gradually. It made them aware of their learning needs.
Educational methods: The students used ABL (Activity Based Learning) cards for learning languages, maths and environmental science. To understand English sentences the bilingual approach was used for selected lessons. To learn basic grammar bilingual audio with games was used. To acquire reading skills the Phonics approach was used. To acquire general knowledge skills thematic projects were used. Through a workshop on story-telling they acquired better reading and communication skills. (For the second time in the last two years we found this workshop very effective motivator.) To acquire English writing skills in Regis' approach was used. Ten students learnt to write on themes using simple sentences. To acquire communication skills the Trinity GESE Spoken English approach was used. It helped the students to acquire the vocabulary needed for communicating on several themes of daily life. Using a mini multimedia database created by a volunteer, 3rd to 5th standard students learnt to do multiplication, division, and measurement problems quickly. Most of the math items were learnt through computer games. They were very happy to learn the concepts easier and do their exercises quickly.

Life skills: In the third term we introduced the TTT value-based life-skills programme formative evaluation. The fortnightly Tamil children's magazine Chutti Vikadan has been providing 16 pages of formative learning activities for the last 4 years – this was used as a resource. In the evaluation process the teachers created their own activities and assessment ideas to assess the learning outcomes from the life skills programme. The skills assessed included Taking Care, Avoiding Fear, Talking Boldly, Working in Collaboration, etc.

Pre-primary & Early Primary

Individual Learning Programme: ILPs for all these students were planned and written by the teachers. 1st and 2nd standard students were motivated through homework. Every day they came to the teacher and asked for their homework. They asked the teacher to give new assignments to do. Learning Programmes for Crèche and Kindergarten children contained activities for the 8 kinds of development at the pre-school level. According to their level the learning programmes were written by the teachers and implemented. Every month in each development their learning growth was observed and documented in their Individual folder.

Educational methods: For these students' cognitive development, word flashcards were used. For the other developments weekly or fortnightly thematic projects were used. To increase their vocabulary Brillkids software ([http://www.brilliantkids.in/](http://www.brilliantkids.in/)) was used. Every day they watched the words with the picture and heard the words. Through internet the teachers watched different activities for development skills and then applied the activities for their students. 12 projects were designed around 23 themes and used. A lot of Montessori activities were given for all the children through blocks activities, clay activities, drawing activities, collage work and paper folding.

Other highlights

- There were three parent-teachers meetings, with the parents of the pre-school and primary students.
- Teacher training:
  - Kavitha and Gomathi participated in the ABL workshop conducted at Vanur Block Resource Centre (BRC).
  - Gomathi and Udhayalakshmi participated in the ABL workshop conducted at Vanur BRC.
Subash conducted a half day workshop on the use of 5 steps out of our 8-step strategy in a holistic manner.

- Subash, Sanjeev Ranganathan, Kavitha, Vijayalakshmi and Udhayalakshmi went to Nagappattinam and participated in the Annual Day Convention of Vidhyaramam Trust. Kavitha, Udayalakshmi and Subash explained the first 5 steps of the new learning process initiated in Isai Ambalam School. Sanjeev explained with the help of video clippings how computers can be used creatively. The participants were captivated by these talks.
- Subash conducted a 2-hour workshop on integral education at the Teachers' Centre.
- In September, 20 students from Babaji Vidhyashram School, Chennai came to our school as part of an exchange programme. They shared their experience and interacted with our students.
- Marina from Russia came to volunteer at our school. She helped the pre-school teachers and took a class for the 5th standard students.
- Steffii from USA took a class for the 6th and 7th standard students about the human body.
- Amrita and Swetha from Madurai Apni Shala Foundation observed the school activities.
- Swetha from Madurai taught activities based on TTT (Thalir Thiran Thittam) for the 6th and 7th standard students. She came weekly 2 days for 2 months.
- Ishan from Syria observed the ABL (Activity Based Learning) card method in order to use it in Scandinavia for the Syrian refugees.
- We celebrated Ganesha Pooja, Christmas, Deepavali and Saraswathi Pooja in the school.
- All the students went to Unity Pavilion for the Peace Day celebration.
- Primary and Upper primary students went to Udavi School for the Science Fair and Christmas Fair.
- 4 students participated in the national Judo competition at Vijawada, Andra Pradesh, and got certificates. 16 students participated in a state-level Judo competition at Vidhyashram School, Pondicherry. 9 students won the bronze medal, 4 students won the silver medal and 4 students won the gold medal.
- All the students went to Navarathri Golu Pooja at Ilaignarkal School.
- 2 students participated in the workshop of Children's Creative Writings in Tamil at Ilaignarkal School.
- Mr. Karthikeyan, headmaster of Thiruppattur Primary School in Vellore district, and Mr. Madeshwaran visited the school.
- This year a post-graduate student, Lakshmi from Chennai, came to our school for her “Innovative Internship Programme” on training teachers in alternative education. She stayed in Auroville for 6 weeks. She had interaction with teachers, students and headmaster. She observed all the classes and learnt how the learning and teaching have been organized. She got good experience about the alternative approaches.
- IIM (Indian Institute of Management), Ranchi, invited Isai Ambalam School to participate in their TEDx event in January 2016 and give a talk on our experience of using alternative educational processes for the rural students. The aim of this organisation is to spread new ideas to all over the world. So Subash and Sanjeev Ranganathan considered it as an opportunity to share with the world this process. They went there and gave a talk on “Creative Personalisation of Learning Process of Rural students”. The talk was well received.
Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre

Introduction

The village children and youths are our future, and are all gifted with a lot of talents and possibilities. Sadly, these days, many of these children end up behind their television screen, or roaming around aimlessly on the streets. By providing free time activities in a safe environment, Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre (KCC) hopes to bring a positive change in their lives.

The purpose of the project can seen as 3-fold:

- **A place for relaxation and recreation:** After a full day of school, it is most important for a child to be able to relax and set the mind free: KCC provides a safe environment in which children can put their worries aside, relax, and have joyful and memorable moments together.
- **A place to meet each other:** By creating this safe environment where everyone is welcome, the children get the chance to meet new people: in KCC, children are meeting each other and new people every day. Exchanges happen, and friendships grow.
- **A place where you can learn and discover:** Next to the recreation and new connections, the cultural centre provides chances to learn new things: by several activities, from Bharatha Naatiyam to Silambam, evening tuition and art classes, the kids can try out, learn, and discover what they like and what they are good at.

Activities of the year

Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre opens the doors every Monday to Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. At those moments, the centre provides several valuable free-time activities for the village children.

**Evening tuition**

- Monday – Saturday, 5 to 8 p.m.
- Support: Nandhini, Vally and Mahalakshmi

From June 2016 to April 2016, we provided homework tuition for every child who needed some support with their homework. Since it was sometimes difficult for the kids to find help in this, from Monday to Saturday our 3 teachers Valli, Nandhini and Mahalakshmi are there from 5 to 8 to guide them in exercises and check if they understand the topics well. Every day, around 30 students are benefiting from this activity.

**Bharathanaatiyam**

- Saturdays 6 to 8 p.m. and Sundays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m
- Support: Punitha

Every weekend, Punitha, a teacher from Kuilappalayam, provides dance classes for the children in the cultural centre. She teaches 2 basics of Bharatha Naatiya, Thattadavu, Naattadavu, Alaripoo, Thillana and Pushpaanjali. By this program, the children get the opportunity to not only discover the traditional arts of Tamil Nadu, but also to try and learn something new from them.
Silambam
- Sundays 9 to 11 a.m.
- Support: Pazhanivel from Mamallan Silambam Group, Pooranankuppam and Balu from Kuilappalayam

Every Sunday, we conducted Silambam, a Tamil traditional art class for the village students. This programme helped and guided them as a great meditation to brainstorm a lot about why they had to learn this activity and how it would help them to maintain their physical, vital and mental concentration.

Art class
- Monday – Friday (February to May 2016), 6:30 to 7:30
- Support: Laura De Jaeger, intern/volunteer

From February to May 2016, the cultural centre received a Belgium intern/volunteer, and was provided daily art exercises for the children. The program focuses on discovering different materials and ways of creating art. From painting, working with sketches, to using recycled material and different kinds of craft work, the kids discover that art is not only created by drawing with pencil on a paper, but that you can see art in so many things. The program focuses on stimulating the kids to use their creativity, thinking outside the box and to build on their self confidence.

Summer Camp 2016
- May 2th to May 6th, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

During school summer holidays, a lot of students in Auroville have opportunities to participate in camps focused on different activities. To give the same chance to the village students, we provided a five-day summer programme. In this programme, activities included lots of fun games, sports competitions, craft work, making musical instruments, free stage and trekking. We took them to Mamallapuram as a one-day trip. We also introduced a new awareness programme of the Solid Waste Management group. Along with these activities, we took the time to make a beautiful mural on the new KCC building together with the students. The summer camp turned into a big milestone for our KCC.

Independence Day programme
On Independence Day – August 15, 2015 – we conducted a one-day programme for the village students. There were many activities including indoor games competitions (e.g. chess), Kural (Tamil poems) reciting, essay writing, and speech presentations. This programme was a chance for students to show their competencies, and were engaged during the whole day. Hari (SAIER Transport Service) and Suryagandhi (Auroville Dental Centre) were invited as chief guests for the prize distributions.

Outcomes
Every day, 20 to 30 students from Kuilappalayam and nearby villages (Lakshmipuram, Bharathi Nagar) came to the cultural centre. By creating a safe environment and welcoming a lot of children of different schools, the centre offers children the chance to meet new people and create new friendships and networks. To communicate, exchange and create new friendships is an important part of every kid’s life.

Next to that, by participating at the different activities, the children discover that there are many possibilities for spending free time doing positive things: discovering, learning new skills. Every program gives the children first of all the chance to enjoy and have a nice experience together with others. The children also get the chance to improve their skills, and discover, use and develop their talents.
Out of our Dance and Silambam classes, a group of performers was formed and had opportunities to show what they learnt by performing at local events.

**Reflections**

Our centre is acting like a community gathering centre. Many different school students are able to meet each other and spend their free time with many valuable and joyful activities.

We noticed after talking about the fees, we lost a number of students who had been coming to our Cultural Centre. Since our goal to reach as many kids as possible, we are planning to find alternative ways of funding without losing our students.

We also noticed that our present place is very small for all the students. So we are thinking about arranging our new place efficiently with the needed infrastructures and materials.

We feel that we are losing the cooperation of the parents in our project. The parents play a big role in the students’ lives and so we wish to work more closely with them, for example by inviting them for a monthly meeting.

**Conclusion**

After two years of working as a sub-unit of SAIER, we feel that we are growing constantly and playing a very big role in the students’ lives. There are still ways to learn and apply to the further development, but we are looking forward to continuous support and to the positive future of our Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre.
Life Education Centre

Introduction

Life Education Centre (LEC) provides access to value-oriented education and vocational training for young village women, and aims to improve their socio-economic conditions through capacity building and personal empowerment.

Activities of the year

Art therapy: 8 month program (Krupa)

Between September 2015 and May 2016, a steady group of 6-8 women from the surrounding villages were guided in a creative process to deepen and express aspects of themselves. The curriculum included a progression of learning technical art skills, while gradually building towards telling a personal story through their art explorations. Meditation and visualization techniques were used to help create a group ritual and safe space for their expression. Beginning with color theory and mixing, the women had opportunities in each session to connect their everyday reality, memories, and dreams into their drawings and paintings. Each woman developed a storyboard with an original concept of either their life story or a story with personal significance, and are each currently finalizing their story translated onto a full-length sari (including drawing, painting and stitching).

Outcomes:

- Sense of mastery: almost all of the women involved demonstrate improved technical skill and confidence in art media.
- Original self-expression: the long-term curriculum reduced judgment, fear, and blocks to creativity, nurturing unique styles in each woman (a milestone, as generally most individuals copy each other and cannot express originally).
- Self-esteem: all women exhibit an improved sense of self, each actively engaged in an empowerment process. A couple of them have taken on role-model positions, helping demonstrate open and free expression to the other women. Each woman took on a leadership role in the group, by rotation, such that the group worked on the final pieces one at a time.
- Metaphor: several women began to develop symbols to represent people, emotions, and events in their lives – all connecting to a very important and often less-understood aspect of traditional storytelling and art-making (and art therapy).
- Emotional catharsis: several of the women bravely shared painful moments in their lives, using art processes with awareness to help release the emotions openly. They let go of the traumatic memories and reported feeling relief afterwards.
- Gender issues: all women shared the various challenges of being a young woman raised in the local Tamil culture, telling of the frustration, fear, shame, and confusion particularly surrounding their first menstruation.
- Cultural Relevance: the sari became the platform for familiarity, as well as the playful space to express resistances.
- Mindfulness: decreased anxiety and physical pain; improved concentration and imagination through meditation exercises.
- Empathy: improved patience and listening skills in hearing and connecting to each other’s stories and working collectively.
• Bonding: with the regular students especially, a particular sense of sisterhood evolved in sharing of stories (distinct from previous challenges with mixed age/ability groups at LEC), filled with encouragement, humor, support and affection.
• Sense of legacy: taking the time to carefully express their life stories in detail is an achievement to be shared.

**Cooking with Local vegetables: 6 month program (Buvanasundari)**
The intention of the classes is well known: to introduce the usage of millets and local vegetables to the students as well as to Aurovilians and guests. During this year’s program, the preparations demonstrated were traditional ones. Out of sixteen recipes taught, the dishes were divided as:
- soup,
- main course using varagu (millet) + parboiled broken rice,
- snack from banyard millet,
- side dishes using locally grown vegetables only (brinjal, cluster beans, long beans, pumpkin, green cooking banana, 3-4 varieties of gourds, coconut, spinach), and
- healthy desserts.

One of the deserts, “Thirupullani paayasam”, is given to the devotees in a famous temple near Rameswaram. The students were very fortunate to visit this temple in March, and the following week they tried out this new recipe!

**Outcomes:**
The teacher witnessed the enthusiasm, group action, and coordination among the students trying out what they learnt and most of all learning the traditional recipes. She would like to teach more to the students (even though the attendance was low) and would love that this ancient Tamil Culture is carried on to the next generations through their palate. Most of the students tried the dishes at their homes which were well received by the family members.

The main impact of these classes is that the students who attended started consuming millets (and re-acquiring their liking for millets) and now can understand the value of the millets. They also gained the skills to organize a small menu (from the recipes taught) to serve about 15 people.

The students also had ample opportunity to practice recipes needed in photo sessions for our book *Sustainable Palate.* (See separate report.)

**Study-tour: 3 day study trip to Rameswaram (Harini)**
This period of 3 days in March was a very serious pilgrimage into the richness and glory of the past of this land called India, in its southernmost tip. It was a flashback into the epoch of the Ramanayana and hence a very studied and guided experience. The entire journey was one of narrating folklore, mythology, stories, that made the experience vivid and rich. The travel lasting more than 6 hours we saw the changing landscapes, could see how water supply shortage and salt water intrusion were playing such havoc in the agriculture and lives of people. We could also see another aspect of the same Tamil Nadu: its highly rich culture, in spite of scarcity of natural resources, and the effect of the royalty of this region, living and part of the lives of the people.

We stayed at the Thayumanavar Swamigal Tapovanam, the abode of a 17th century Tamil saint. In this very quiet *tapovanam* (place of penance and meditation), where we stayed for the 3 days, we could meditate, learn about the saint, and offer our daily prayers. This experience was unique – the premises, located right in the midst of a bustling town, was so quiet and the silence made it feel that we were in an island.

We visited the famous Adi Jaganatha temple (Vishnu) featuring amongst the 108 venerated shrines, called Thirupullani; here Lord Rama is in deep contemplation – resting on a bed of grass
(darbasayanam) – about his plans to wage a war in Sri Lanka. The ancient Uttarakosamangai temple (Siva), is where Siva is said to have imparted Vedic knowledge to his consort Parvati. And inside the huge Rameswaram temple we visited different shrines and learnt about each of them. The highlight of this temple visit was chanting the “Ramanatha suprabatham” in the corridors of the temple, much to our joy and satisfaction. We had practiced this piece for more than 6 months, as part of our chanting classes in LEC and therefore chose Rameswaram as our study-tour destination.

The highest point of the island of Rameswaram is Gandamadhana Parvatham, from where, mythology says, Rama found his inspiration to cross the ocean. The temple at Dhanuskodi, the tip of the Rameswaram island, is where the temple history records Vibeeshana (the brother of Ravana) surrendering to Rama and offering his forces to wage a war against Ravana. A local village shrine, Nambunayagiamman temple, houses the presiding deity of more than half of the villages surrounding Ramanathapuram; here can be seen the sand dunes created by the ocean over the years, raising the level of the temple and its surroundings to the height of a small hillock. Dr. Abdul Kalam’s residence in Ramanathapuram has now been converted into a museum, and his grave is on the sandy shores. Devipattinam – a coastal village where there are 9 stones in the backwaters, signifying the 9 planets – is where Rama offered his prayers, before setting out to Sri Lanka. These were some of the places we visited.

Outcomes:
We reached home tired, but soaked with history, metaphor, faith, humility and a sense of awe for the vastness of this land and its richness. What made this experience extremely valuable and charged, was the presence amongst our midst of a very knowledgeable guide, as well as the preparatory 6 months of getting ready to make this trip meaningful and efficient. Stories and narratives of mythology, which were so far only part of what we had heard, could now be associated and mapped with places and that could make the connection much more deeper and poignant.

Guidance on college courses and career choices (Devi)
The discrimination against girls’ education, although still present in India, is decreasing significantly. We see this positive trend in the Auroville bioregion as well. Girls want to go to college with the dream of earning a degree, and increasingly parents are also supportive of their daughters’ endeavors. It is a good start, but they lack the guidance to understand the multitude of courses and career prospects with the result that they choose to pursue education in a field influenced by the choices of their friends or neighbors, only from a narrow set of possibilities that they are aware of like Engineering, B.Com, or nursing. The first-generation college aspirants especially are left with no support from their uneducated parents. In general, there is less awareness about choosing a field that will match their interests and affinities. In Life Education Centre, the experience of guiding a girl student wanting to enter college last year brought awareness about the fact that students completely lack guidance and support regarding higher education. Many admission processes are completely online these days and students have no idea what courses and career opportunities exist. The girls in the Auroville bioregion who wish to go to college need to be given information on college courses and career choices to enable them to make informed decisions.

This year marked the beginning of “Yen Kalvi”, literally translated to “My Education”, a project of Life Education Centre, which will help and guide students in their aspirations for higher education. The first event under the project happened on April 15, 2016 when Mr. Jayakumar, professor of Computer Science and coordinator of the placement cell at Pondicherry University, was invited to LEC to offer guidance regarding college courses and career prospects. Around 50 girls and their parents attended the event. The speaker was engaging and shared a wealth of information about educational and employment opportunities in the country today. The participants were largely unaware of these
opportunities. Yen Kalvi has hosted other sessions since then: one information session by AIAT (Auroville Institute of Applied Technology) about the different courses and corresponding career prospects in the Institute, and the other by the human resources manager from Aravind Eye Hospital regarding Nursing Assistant training.

On an ongoing basis, young women role models from the bioregion, who have successfully completed their college degrees and are working or still undergoing their higher studies, are invited to offer motivational talks with the aim of inspiring other young women from the bioregion who want to pursue college education.

Outcomes:
The Yen Kalvi event brought to light the dire need for such a program to offer guidance and support for youth in the bioregion. This was affirmed by educators in Auroville and younger-generation Aurovilians from the bioregion who had faced similar challenges when they wanted to choose their career paths – some did so successfully while most could not.

We plan to hold another Yen Kalvi event giving information about college courses and career prospects in the next academic year (2016-17). We also plan for the project to include other activities, such as visiting various departments at Pondicherry University, and inviting a bank manager to give information about educational loans.

Health and Healing series (Devi)
One part of this series of workshops aimed at bringing awareness about the human body as a whole, and the systems involved in digestion, respiration, and circulation. The other part of the workshop was experiential in learning to use sounds that energize the body systems and experiencing the relaxing, energizing, and healing properties of music through experiencing rasa.

Participants watched an educational video that showed the various body systems and their functioning. They had earlier learned about these systems through body charts that gave them a 2-D idea whereas the video gave a 3-D perspective along with some animations to explain the functions of each major system in the body. While this introduced them to the human body through a scientific approach, they were also introduced to the ancient Indian concepts of Nadi and Chakra that are associated with subtle energies in the body rather than the physical body. Students were taught to energize the seven chakras in the body through sound vibrations using seed syllables. They were also taught sound vibrations to energize internal organs through healing sounds in the Chinese energy system.

Students were explained the concept of rasa and bhava in Indian music – the word rasa means essence, bhava means expression and in Indian music (and generally in Indian art); rasa refers to the primary feeling that is evoked in a particular song or composition. Students listened to several pieces of music which had different moods, to understand that a singer or instrumentalist is able to transmit the mood through experiencing the rasa in herself and expressing what is felt. We talked about the importance of feeling the rasa while singing and listening, and how it helps to evoke deep-seated emotions within a person. Students were taught both new and familiar pieces of music to be experienced more deeply through the awareness of rasa underlying the piece.

Outcomes:
This series has always been an interesting experiment. The students took time to understand the concepts as they were very new to them. However, with consistent practice, they were able to do the exercises for energizing chakras much better. They also understood the difference between ‘just singing and listening’ and ‘singing and listening with the awareness of the rasa’, the latter requiring more attention and a deeper involvement from the whole being. Although it is certain that the workshops
only serve as an introduction, and the students are able to grasp and experience the concepts on a very basic level, it was good to see that they are motivated to learn, practice and explore more.

“Journeys / Payanangal” revisited (Devi)

“Journeys / Payanangal: Trajectories of Education and Empowerment among Young Women in the Auroville Bioregion” is a book published by Life Education Centre in 2015. It is a compilation of life stories of current and past students of the Centre. As a follow-up to the publication, an event was planned this year to bring all the participants together and read their stories from the book back to them.

The gathering was organised in January 2016 and all the participants of Payanangal were invited. A Sunday was chosen to accommodate the convenience of the women who work during the week days. The gathering was well attended by all those women who participated in the project, except for one student who could not come because she had recently had a baby. The get-together in some ways became a reunion as many were meeting their old friends. The session was intense, with reading each story in English and translating it back to them in Tamil. Everyone was interested and keen to listen. The reading provided an additional opportunity for reflection to the participants.

The pseudonyms used in the book to maintain privacy of the participants were used in the readings, but participants guessed whose story was being read and there were smiles and cheer in the room. After reading and listening to 11 out of the 12 stories, each participant was gifted with a small lunch box in appreciation of participation and also a copy of the book which they were very happy to receive. It was then time for lunch which was finely prepared by a couple of participants themselves who had come very early that day to do the cooking.

Outcomes:
The participants were happy for the opportunity and to listen to their stories. One of the participants said, “I always went to the bookshop at the Visitor’s Center to see the book but could not afford to buy one. I am happy to receive a copy now.” Another said, “I never thought I will see my story in print.” Another participant: “I was amazed at myself for having come a long way in my life given my circumstances and my family background. It was encouraging to hear my story.” The gathering and reading of the stories back to the participants brought the publication project to a meaningful closure.

Regular tailoring classes (Indirani)

Students received training in the following areas: stitching salwars and kurtas, blouses, different neck patterns, skirts, curtains, pillow covers, bags, embroidered pouches, juice bags, short tops (with or without sleeves), pants, and mosquito nets. Students were able to learn some of these easily while they found some skills hard to learn. But they were eager to get trained in skills that they were unfamiliar with, and wanted to try new items. Most had a fear that they might not cut the materials correctly and felt they need help and assistance.

Outcomes:
The students are able to cut and stitch their own and family members’ clothes. They are yet to gain confidence in independently taking orders and completing them, especially when they are faced with the challenge of dealing with unfamiliar patterns and models.

Collective Embroidery on a single sari (Indirani)

The project aimed at learning skills through doing collective embroidery work. The classes started in mid-August 2015 and were done once a week for 33 weeks. The participants had the opportunity to express their personal stories through expression of feelings. The work was very individual, based on
their unique stories and at the same time collective. The work helped the students learn to express their emotions creatively. They learned from and helped each other, shared about themselves without inhibitions, and understood others. Most women used forms from nature that indicated their closeness to nature. All participants were eager to do the work and enjoyed it. The two visiting students from Deepam who participated in this work, learned to expand their designs and forms by observing others.

**Outcomes:**
Students had the opportunity to experiment doing team work, learning from and supporting each other. Their involvement and understanding increased as they got deeper into the work. They are individually and collectively proud of their work and have a sense of accomplishment and sharing.

**Reflections**

The activities during the past year were conducted as planned and brought positive impacts for those students who participated. While the students consistently attending programs at Life Education Centre benefited, there were challenges in keeping the attendance stable. This may be due to the fact that more girls are doing their higher secondary and college education, a recent positive trend that is happening in the villages. This experience and the resulting realization that the focus of programs needs to change, to better serve the current needs of young women in the bioregion, will bring changes to the structure of programs at LEC.

One basic change that will happen is that we will classify programs under two tracks:

1. Programs under the umbrella “Yen Kalvi - My Education” that will support the needs of young women who pursue mainstream schooling and wish to pursue higher education.

2. Programs for young women who aren’t able to pursue college education but need vocational training to support themselves and their families.

Classifying the population that come to LEC can help support and cater to the individual needs of these two major groups that have emerged in the recent years. It will also bring better focus and efficiency to the programs. The basic aim of LEC – to help the young women develop conscious personalities – will continue to remain the same under both tracks. We will do considerable research and study in order to structure programs under the two tracks.

**Conclusion**

Life Education Centre has offered and continually learned from its programs and experiences of the last 25 years. The education and empowerment of young women in the bioregion continues to be crucial for the development of the individuals, families, bioregion as a whole and Auroville. With this need in mind, LEC would like to continue to offer programs that will best suit the current needs of young women in the bioregion. We are looking forward to have the new office building completed and functional from mid-July that will help us enormously to move forward.
“Sustainable Palate”
From Local Farms to Auroville Plate – A Collection of Traditional Recipes

Introduction

*Sustainable Palate* is a collection of traditional recipes from South Indian cuisine. The recipes are from a series of cooking sessions conducted in Life Education Centre, Auroville, emphasizing use of local vegetables, cooking and eating with consciousness, and sharing with the community. The book is an attempt to bring familiarity about the variety of local produce from banana stem to brahmi and the simple, traditional, nutritious dishes that can be made with these vegetables. Interesting facts about the ingredients, nutrition and medical benefits are included as well as questions and discussions that came up during the cooking sessions.

Background and process

It is not only the people from other cultures who are less familiar with the produce in and around Auroville, but unfortunately the younger generations from the local region are also increasingly becoming unfamiliar with cooking and eating locally grown vegetables and grains. To move towards food self-sufficiency in Auroville, there is a need to bring awareness to people of all cultures about locally grown vegetables and easy ways of cooking them. Secondly, local communities need to be encouraged to retain their connection to their traditional food and culture. Twelve cooking sessions were conducted in Life Education Centre (LEC) to demonstrate cooking with locally grown fresh produce.

When the first season of cooking sessions was nearing completion, the idea developed to publish the whole experience as a book in order that a wider audience could benefit.

The photo-shoots for the book began in September 2015. The photo-shoot sessions required a lot of planning in terms of menus and procuring the ingredients. Each shoot took about 3 to 4 hours depending on the number of dishes, including the cooking time, presenting the food for photos, and shooting the food from different perspectives. Each session was interesting as well as exhausting. The long rainy months followed by a period of overcast skies interrupted the photo shoots for a number of months. The sessions were resumed in February when the sun blessed us again with good light. After completing all the photo shoots, the design of the book was finalized and the layout work began and design elements were tweaked as required.

Final product

*Sustainable Palate* is a 68-page book with 27 recipes using locally grown vegetables. The book has clear color photographs of ingredients for all recipes along with labels that identify them to help familiarize readers who are unfamiliar with local vegetables. The center spread includes a display of spices, grains, legumes and millets, all labeled for easy identification. The recipes have been tested and demonstrated and are explained in good detail, making them easy to follow and try out. Thus the outcomes of the book are 1) educational and 2) promoting sustainability through helping readers try traditional South Indian recipes, using local vegetables, and through emphasizing the significance of cultivating a conscious and hence sustainable palate.
Reflections

The objectives of the book were quite clear from the very beginning. Much material had to be compiled besides the recipes, and this required a lot of research to give it a good balance from the perspectives of being informational, pertaining to Tamil tradition wherever possible (and sometimes drawing similarities between ancient cultures), inspiring interest, not reproducing the oft-repeated facts, and including information about nutrition and medical benefits. The compilation also includes a good number of questions that came up during the cooking sessions and the discussions that followed, making the information pertaining to these questions valuable for a wider audience. All this information along with a few interesting and inspiring quotes complete the book and make it stand out from the usual cookbooks available in the market.

Much thought, effort and time went into the design of color photo pages. For keeping the budget small while still being able to publish a book with good quality, the number of color pages was limited (from the time of requesting funding) to 16, which required designing the positioning of color pages within the book in such a way as to make them meaningful and with as close proximity to the corresponding recipes as possible. Publishing the book in full color would have provided many more possibilities for arrangement for text and photos, which would have of course required a bigger budget.
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 avoid this gap that goes against the values advocated by Auroville. We believed that the way to make a change is through education. At earliest years of life start is the 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.

Oli School was born to fill this gap. Our objective is to offer to underprivileged populations, at the fringe of Indian society, the possibility of human and social empowerment. In fact, we believe that children have the natural capacity to build relationships and cooperate, and carry the values of peace and joy of life that can unfold in a caring school environment. And, as asserted by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but also by other educators like Maria Montessori, we also believe that education is the best way to raise consciousness. From the point of view of an educational choice, we can say OliSchool tries to combines the experience and vision of two major currents: Free progress and the Montessori pedagogy.

Activities of the year

Oli School has completed 6 years of continued work. At present we have 108 kids aged 2 to 6 years. There are 13 teachers working and/or in training at the school (Sangeetha, Anandhi, Shakthiya, Devi, Vasanthi, Shankari, Boomadevi, Geetha, Kalaiselvi, Kalairiasi, Lavanya, Vijayalakshmi and Manimozhi), 2 amas (Amudha and Kala), 1 gardener (Bala) and 1 art teacher (Ishta). 6 Aurovilians are an active part of the support group of the school (Marianne, Marie-Claire, Guy, Carlos, Palani, and Ana Garcia. Yves Fisselier is part of the support team and at the same time the main donor).

This year Oli School worked in a renewed structure and educational view. We gave continuity to Free Progress and the Montessori Method, used as a tool to practice Integral Education. At the same time we tried to integrate it into the Auroville context and local culture.

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.

During this 2015-16 year our teachers participated in:
- Holoeenergetic seminar with Marie-Claire
- Doll making workshop at Nandanam Kindergarten with Ziron
- Awareness Through the Body (ATB) workshops with Amir for Lison and Viji
- Training in the Teachers’ Center with Maya
Swimming and Life-saving Class with Clare
Learning psychomotor skills from Lison
Pre-primary teachers' training in Pondicherry for Sangeetha and Lavanya

Holoenergetics

We practice holoenergetics as a tool for team bonding, self esteem, centering, balancing, and getting rid of negativity and tiredness. A 10min video is available which presents the technique, as well as a DVD in English with details of all the exercises.

Outcomes

After having tried different activities we established a nice curriculum for our kids. Now we are focusing on its follow up and observation of the practical part. This is something that can be seen in Oli School classrooms and share within the community. The kids who leave the school at the age of 6 years old are ready to start any type of education on an elementary level.

Goals for next year

1. Have a stable teachers team.
2. Learn from the online Montessori training resources.
3. Attend other trainings happening in Auroville.
4. Properly follow up with the school curriculum.
5. Create a new platform for supporting the development of children’s gross motor skills.
6. Strengthen our fundraising. With the help of Marie-Claire, we are slowly building autonomy with small donors from France but it is taking time; we are still dependent on one big donor for half the budget which is not a healthy situation.
7. Follow up with more ATB classes for Lison and Viji and may be other teachers. Our idea is to introduce ATB at Oli through some workshops and integrate it in the psychomotor activities.
8. Receive a basic donation from parents (Rs. 100 per month).

Conclusion

Even though we are still in progress, we consider that Oli School can be shown as one of the model outreach schools in the field of Integral Education. We have now 108 kids between 2 and 6 attending the school all in the same space and despite the number, still manage to have a rather quiet and peaceful atmosphere. We try to offer to the kids a clean, harmonious and safe environment that covers their basic needs. We welcome other schools and teachers to visit our school and exchange ideas and experience.
Other sub-units
Arka

Arka is a residential centre with community focus that seeks to create an holistic environment for aging Aurovilians. It aims to help seniors sustain a healthy, balanced and harmonious lifestyle as well as to provide a space and atmosphere for one’s inner work.

This year saw a continuation of our regular activities and services (see our website arka.org.in).

There were also some developments to the centre. The most significant addition was the Lift which makes it possible for seniors to access the Multimedia Hall for a number of programmes. We painted all the buildings and continued tending our beautiful garden for which we have our own lawn mower.

We published some compilations:
- “Eternal Youth: Rays of Light from The Mother” (4th edition, 45 pages). 500 copies of this booklet were bought by the Auroville Foundation for giving to VIP’s visiting Auroville.
- “Une jeunesse éternelle: Rayons de Lumière de la Mère”, the above in French
- “Ewige Jugend: Strahlen des Lichts von Der Mutter”, the above in German
- “The purpose of life” (16 pages)
- “Introduction to the Integral Yoga” (16 pages)

We continue to provide convalescence facility to Aurovilians and work for the full year without a break.
Aurofilm

Introduction

The aim of Aurofilm is to use Cinema as a tool for education, artistic and creative research. By producing short films (documentaries and fictions) and organizing regular screenings of quality films, we wish to offer to the Auroville community a way to develop taste and discernment.

For the last three and a half decades, Aurofilm has done research on Cinema and been offering regular film screenings for Aurovilians and their Guests. In addition, we organize at least one annual thematic film festival and other film related activities such as inviting film personalities to give a conference or workshop, and from time to time we also produce documentaries and short fictions. This is done as a cultural and educational service and is wholly non commercial. Gérard C. is the founder (ca. 1981) of the service/SAIIER sub-unit, Surya is a long time collaborator (ca. 1987) and Susana joined us three years ago.

Film screenings

This past financial year, we screened 43 films. For this significant part of our work, over the years, we have defined 7-8 films categories that are (as much as possible) evenly distributed every month – all along the year. They are:

- Classic films
- Becoming Classics
- New Indian Cinema
- Cinema of the World, French Cinema
- Documentaries
- Animated and/or Children films

Films from around the world are really a window open to different space and times. They propose a lot of variety in film expression and allow the viewer to approach, history, geography, literature, arts, society, cultures, environmental and social issues. We also choose them for the great cinematic way they are produced.

Special events and projects

Apart from the film screenings, in September 2015 we received the visit of Nagraj Manjule, a Marashtrian film director we had met in the IFFI Goa 2013 after the screening of his debut film, Fandry, as we had really liked this film and wanted to invite him and present it in our Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema in Auroville. The meeting was very friendly and interesting and we took the opportunity to interview him – we made a short film of the event including some film extracts.

In the winter, Raja Gopen Biswas from Pune, a young Indian graduate from NID and artist in residence at Kala Kendra, Auroville, had approached us to present one of his original “live sand animation” on screen. It finally became possible to present it in March this year. It was a 12 minute animation with sand placed on a luminous table. Raja keeps the designs changing with his hands only, while a camera – placed over the table and connected to the video projector – records everything and projects the animated image on
the screen. It was an interesting and original animation that was organized before the screening of Shyam Benegal’s film *Ankur* and was very appreciated by the audience.

In terms of film production/realization, we made a short documentary on the 8th Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema that we organised this year (2 versions: 10 min. and 7 min.)

**Reflections**

We feel it is very important to have a regular film screening program – a quality film each week to share part of our research work, presenting it to the public in the beautiful public space that is the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Bharat Nivas. Several other venues exist in Auroville, but the audience that comes to this venue does so for the quality and difference of the programs. Other reasons for good attendance are trust in the selection, the comfort of the auditorium, the relatively good central location, safety of access, commitment from the organisers and the quality of the video support and projections (sound and image-wise) – as it happens we rarely use the 35 mm film projectors nowadays for want of celluloid films!

However we have been screening fewer films per year these past few years (an average of 65-70 titles before 2002-03, then 60 titles through 2012-13, and now 45-50 titles). This is due to our going to the International Film Festival of India more regularly, and also to the sharing of the venue with many other activities (various programming of conferences, performances and concerts that may have substantial set-up on stage) and Aurofilm having to withdraw its regular programs more often than before.

**Conclusion**

We are grateful to have provided this service for so many years and to continue in the same spirit.
Attending Goa International Film Festival of India
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 Kalabhoomi studio – for the benefit of all.

In order to do so, 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 it is therefore our primary objective in attending one of these events every year.

The 46th International Film Festival of India

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) that promotes the best in terms of Cinema, fosters the meeting of the huge film production family and organizes a film market for the film distribution. It is an eleven-day event that is now permanently set up in the capital of Goa, Panaji, just before the tourist season starts over there.

This year was the 46th edition of the IFFI and it was held from 20 to 30 November 2015. The Aurofilm team could attend six days only of the event (20th to 26th) because of budget limitations; however, that was still helpful and probably healthier for us as, being in the city and its buoyant atmosphere makes it a most demanding and tiring week!

The different festival sections included: Opening, Mid-Fest and Closing Film; 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); Documentaries; Indian Panorama with 26 films from the different states of the country; Focus on the Cinema the North-Eastern states of India; Soul of Asia with “spiritual” cinema; Window on South-Asian Cinema (with films from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal); Sketches on Screen (Animation); Retrospective: Amos Gitai (Israel); Tributes to actress Anna Karina with 3 Jean-Luc Godard films (France), and to film director Nikita Mikhalkov (Russia) with 4 of his films; Country in Focus: Spain with 7 films; and First Cut with 8 debut films from Israel, Nepal, Burma, Poland, Armenia, Bulgaria, Germany, Mauritius and Iran. A Lifetime Achievement Award was bestowed on Nikita Mikhalkov, who was present for several days.

A very important section is the Restored Classics that were brought to the public: 2001: A Space Odyssey (UK-USA, 1968), Badlands (USA, 1973), Casablanca (USA, 1942), Cloth Peddler (Azerbaijan, 1945), Rebel Without a Cause (USA, 1955), The Wizard of Oz (USA, 1939). Restoration of films means to take care of the heritage of one’s nation – as it is done for monuments, literary or musical works, works of art... One film critic said: "Every film transmits the DNA of its time." Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, curator for this section wrote: "As one of the most pervasive influences in our lives, the moving image and films in all
forms are a reflection of who we are and the time we live in, making them part of our social and cultural heritage.”

Like always, there were Master Classes conducted by noted film personalities and technicians from the world, forums, press conferences, interaction workshops (“Digital films: New Technologies and Film Making” and “Co-production & Marketing Films for Festivals”) and a seminar (“Film and Cultural Diversity”).

With our accreditation as Delegates, we could go every day early morning to the festival premises, 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 film watching program was very tight and none of us attended any press conference or forums this year. Gerard did attend a workshop on documentary filmmaking. In between all this, we stole some time for contacts (with festival organizers/DFF directors, producers, technicians, screenwriters, journalists, film students and so on), and somehow did manage to get food and eventually a little rest in the hotel room or in a nearby park during the hectic schedule of the days! This year, there was even less opportunity for us to discover the beauties and heritage of Goa!

Outcomes

For the Aurofilm team, to go and attend this film festival is a good opportunity to keep track of what happens in the area of film production from India and the world. On a practical level, to make and/or keep contacts with the DFF, NFAI and other organizations and individuals during the festival are important to introduce Auroville and ourselves, and to request the film prints or permission for our own 3-day Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema and other weekly film screenings for the community. The Auroville community ultimately benefits in being exposed to quality Indian and world cinema through the screenings we organize all along the year – whenever these films become available – and sometimes we may invite some of these resource people here. The various films we choose to watch during the festival are also for reference for our filmmaking and research work at the Auroville film institute.

Also, through our presence and outreaching effort, Auroville can be known as a place where culture and art is a major component and research and promotion of quality cinema is an important aspect. All in all, with such an exhaustive program, we really make good use of the place and time to gather contacts and material for our work all along the year.

Conclusion

Along the years we have been able to be present at this kind of 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 the Indian selection (in particular) will have in Auroville. It is also positive to see that we are getting more confidence into addressing the people we need to get acquainted with for bringing their films or their knowledge in Auroville. Many things we see and learn are used for our own events here – in terms of publicity, communication, security, invitation of guests, organization of talks, master classes and workshops.
Preparing for the festival

The preparations for the 8th Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema in Auroville started during the IFFI in Goa in November 2015, when Surya, Gerard and Susanna of the Aurofilm team went to Goa to watch many movies, select the ones to be screened at the Panorama, and make contacts with film personalities and film-related institutions. Once the movies were selected, the team got in contact with the DFF and started preparing the brochures and posters for the upcoming Panorama. As the festival came closer, the last preparations, such as buying flowers and snacks for the audience and decorating the Auditorium, were done.

This year’s Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema

This 3-day film event started on February 12th at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas. Surya inaugurated the event at 5:00 pm with an introduction, and Louisa, an enthusiastic volunteer with Aurofilm, gave the audience some background on the director Kaushik Ganguly and his Bengali movie Cinemawala (a movie about a father-son relationship against the backdrop of cinema, which focuses on the sad state of single-screen theatres in India).

After the movie ended, the audience and the Aurofilm team had a tea break before the next movie to be screened: Ottaal (The Trap), an engaging Malayalam movie about a little boy and his grandfather, his only living relative. It shows their daily lives filled with nature, simple beauty and problems; the terrible shadow of child labour is subtly brought in this otherwise very sweet film. This movie was directed by Jayaraj and shot in a small village in Kerala with non-professional actors as main characters.

On Saturday the 13th the Festival day started with the Bengali movie Kadambari, by Suman Ghosh. This period movie eloquently tells the story of Kadambari Devi, one of Rabindranath Tagore’s sisters-in-law. She was his muse from the moment she entered the Tagore household at 9 years old (with Rabindranath just a little younger), until the day she committed suicide in 1883. It is a film showing great care in aesthetic locations, sets and costumes, great music and lyrics, and superb acting (Konkona Sen Sharma shines as Kadambari from the first moment we see her as a teenager and grown-up young lady!)

After this film the audience was invited to have tea, biscuits and samosas in the foyer of the Auditorium. The Tamil movie Radiopetti was then presented by its young film director Hari Viswanath, a Chennai-based filmmaker who came at our invitation for the screening. The movie tells the story of an old man, his love for a radio set that was given to him by his father, and the difficulties he has to face. After the movie ended the director came on stage to answer questions that were asked by the audience.

The last day of the 8th Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema, February 14th, started with the English and Kui language documentary I cannot give you my forest, directed by Nandan Saxena and Kavita Bahl. It documents the lives of the Kondh women living in the Niyamgiri forest in Odisha, their knowledge and natural living together with the forest, as well as the problems they face nowadays due to deforestation and a mining company. Afterwards the documentary Benegal’s New Cinema by Iram Ghufran was screened. The movie shows the time, ethos and concerns of the New Cinema Movement in
India (1980) based on extensive interviews with Shyam Benegal and the people he worked with, such as actress Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, and playwright Girish Karnad.

After a little break the Bengali film Natoker Moto (Like a play), directed by Debesh Chatterjee was screened. By watching this movie, the audience could accompany Kheya, a famous theatre actress, housewife, daughter and extraordinarily strong woman, in her struggles during the 1950s to 1970s in Kolkata. The story is based on a real life legendary Bengali actress. Afterwards the audience was again invited to have syrup and snacks in the Foyer. The last movie screened at the festival was the Marathi movie Court by Chaitanya Tamhane, the film of a trial that unfolds in a lower court in Mumbai. It follows all the involved people through their daily lives (we see the accused old man, his lawyer, the court lawyer and the judge, witnesses...) away from the disturbing trial in a distant and objective way.

Outcomes

The festival was a 3-day-event with the intention of showcasing a good variety of films produced in contemporary Indian cinema to the Aurovilians and their guests. The film screenings and talks over the three days, as well as the publication of a brochure on the films shown, served this purpose. A short film about the event was recorded and edited in 2 versions: one of 7 minutes and one of 10 minutes long.

Reflections

This annual 3-day Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema is getting recognition and has its own success. It might have been a little difficult to establish it in the beginning, for the audience was not prepared and maybe not ready to this particular initiative; and it is possible that our selection in the first years was not always so discerning. But over the years, we have learned how to choose the films and present them in a more attractive way to the interest the audience.

Conclusion

The 8th Panorama of contemporary Indian cinema was a success for the Aurofilm team because of the numerous visitors, the smooth running and the positive feedback of the audience, which had the opportunity to watch new Indian films. The interaction with the Tamil film director was also interesting and for this young man, it was a good chance to present his production to an international audience.
Auroville Archives

Introduction

Auroville Archives is Auroville’s memory. It is a repository of all sorts of documents which together tell Auroville’s history: Audio and video recordings, photos, all sorts of written documents (books, brochures, periodicals, reports, minutes of meetings, letters, etc.). Among its most precious documents are copies of the Mother’s messages and letters on Auroville.

Activities of the year

- Construction of the RCC structure of the ground floor of the new Archives Building.
- Receiving very interesting new documents from Piero (on Matrimandir), from Alain G. (Ruud’s Matrimandir Diary), from Poppo (hundreds of photos of the early days) and from others. Were also received: soft copies of books and photos from M. Theon and from P. Richard as well as a soft copy of J. Hohlenberg’s diary of his days with Mother in Paris.
- Adding new cupboards and sorting better out all documents. Making a list of the contents of all cupboards.
- Digitizing existing documents: scanning and labeling thousands of old photos and sorting them. Scanning hundreds of pages of reports, brochures, books, letters, etc. Digitizing old audio and video tapes so that they can be played on computers.
- Posting serially (one posting a week) on Auronet research documents on Matrimandir’s early history (up to 1974) and Auroville’s early history (up to 1974). Such research documents are necessary for the publication/production of films and books on these topics. Many Aurovilians and friends of Auroville read these documents every week and are very interested to learn more on the intention behind this “intentional community” and how Mother went about guiding its development. This document is long overdue and should help dispel some confusion on how to proceed with Auroville.

Outcomes

Archives everywhere are here for future generations to know the history of a particular place. Interested parties are residents and others interested in this very unique experiment.

- A new building is being built for the Archives.
- More documents are being received and stored. More documents are being digitized.
- The beginning of Auroville’s and Matrimandir’s history is being shared with Aurovilians and friends of Auroville. The documents which are being posted serially are far more comprehensive than anything published before.

Reflections

Auroville Archives is in a transition period: from a repository of old documents; it has to become Auroville’s active memory, which means that more documents need to be digitized and made easily available online (via Auronet and/or internet). This requires digitizing documents, sorting them out and posting them in a properly structured manner on a website so that what one is looking for is easy to find.
Creating such a site is far easier said than done and requires skills which are not available in the Archives team at present. What are the most important documents? At what resolution should various photos (and other documents) be scanned? How to structure properly the website and create links...? (The more information is available, the more difficult it is to find what one is looking for. High definition cannot be shared easily via internet...)

There would be better coordination with working groups working in related fields (i.e.: Outreach Media, Auroville Radio, Auroville video producers, Auroville Statistics Initiative) if they would share the same building. Hopefully such will be the case in the future.

Looking further into the future

Discussions need to take place between the various branches of Auroville’s administration to better understand their respective needs in terms of past information. Hard and soft copies of their respective documents need to be stored in such a way that one is able to retrieve them easily online. There is also the need of an access policy to these documents: need to sort out documents by categories and to decide on who should have access to which category of documents.

Let us note that, at present, most of these working groups do not have the time and competence to file properly many of their documents (and that these documents are often not even kept in safe places – important documents do disappear whereas hard copies should be kept safely at the Archives).

As documents produced today are tomorrow’s archival material, ideally, all documents produced today should be produced according to a proper filing system. Some of these documents need to be entered in the Archives’ computers in such a way that statistics can be easily produced from them.

Conclusion

Auroville Archives is going through a very interesting transition period. Moving into the new building will provide very much needed new opportunities.
Auroville Library

About the Auroville Library

The Auroville Library, located on the crown road near the Solar Kitchen, has been in operation for over 25 years now, housing and lending out a wide selection of books. Today it contains more than 35,000 volumes in eight languages - English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, Russian and Tamil. All the books are divided up by subject matter into approximately 60 different sections, including a section especially for children. The library is using a professional computer software for cataloguing and organizing the books. The cataloguing of the books follows the international standard of the Dewey Decimal Classification.

In addition to the books, most of which have been donated over the years or purchased (using a relatively small budget which rarely allowed for more than 200 new works a year), the Library also maintains a small number of subscriptions to weekly and monthly Indian and international journals. The latter are laid out for reading in a separate area of the library.

The Library meets the needs of some 500 regular and 250 irregular book borrowers within Auroville, plus an important number of guests and some Auroville workers. On average, at present around 1,900 books are loaned out each month. The catalogue is available for browsing online at library.auroville.org.in.

Video collection

We have introduced a collection of high quality movies, mainly art and educative feature films from all over the world. These films (almost 600 already and the collection will be enlarged over the years) are all presented in high definition transfer (HD), a much better quality than the usual DVD we all know, and which will allow you 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 and propose to introduce famous classic filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa, John Ford, Satyajit Ray, 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).

Connection to the National Knowledge Network

For the coming year there is a new and unexpected development in process as we are going to be connected to the Internet through a high speed fiber optic cable. A part of the speed connection improvement, the Library will be become eligible for the National Knowledge Network (NKN). It will be also possible to get access to other international databases and programmes (UNESCO, Universities around the world, EU programs and many others).

This development may open a new age for the future of the Auroville Library. We have already ordered 2 browsing stations to start that exploration. This will be developed step by step as a lot of research need be done in order to measure and master this new tool.
Auroville Nature Camp 2015

Introduction

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

Throughout the month of May 2015, three Nature Camps were held in Kavunji, just outside of Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu. In Camp 1, 30 students attended, Camp 2 held 33 students, and Camp 3 held 29 students. Both Auroville and Outreach Schools were represented, including: Aikiyam (10 students), Udavi (10), Transition (41), TLC (6), Future School (3), NESS (5), Last School (5), Deepanam (6), Pondy (2), Home-schooling (1), and Child Development (2). In addition, 10 Auroville and Outreach teachers attended Auroville Nature Camps and were supported financially by generous funds from SAIIER.

Outcomes

Auroville Nature Camp exposed 92 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.

Reflections

Despite a skeletal AV Nature Camp Team, we again executed another successful summer with three full camps (unlike only two camps in 2014). While in 2014, we hosted 57 students, this year we had 92 in total, which is a tremendous increase! In addition, with the support of SAIIER and others, we have begun work to complete the infrastructure of the camp.

We would like to access other teaching/outdoor leadership resources within Auroville to further enhance the educational outcomes of AV Nature Camp. We don’t feel that we have much to share right now, but would like to learn about further resources in AV.
Auroville Theatre Group

Introduction

The aims of the Auroville Theatre Group are:

● 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 through theatre exchanges with Indian theatre groups.
● To offer classes, theatre workshops and productions facilitated by theatre artists from India and abroad.

Activities of the year

This year our project was a production of “The Glass Menagerie” by Tennessee Williams. It was performed on December 26, 27 and 28, 2015 at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas. In March, we took this show to Bangalore and performed for two nights at Ranga Shankara Theatre.

Reflections

This year for the first time we went on tour to perform outside of Auroville. Next time, we will surely book for a performance in Bangalore now that we know we can do it. We were very happy to have guest artists with us from Pondy and Kolkata.

Conclusion

For next year we look forward to more plays, including a new script called “Once Upon A River”.

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Centre for Research in the Performing Arts

Introduction

The Centre for Research in the Performing Arts (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/Rehearsals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 Apr</td>
<td>Piano performance by Murali</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 July</td>
<td>Guitar concerto duo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Oct</td>
<td>Dance with Ablash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Nov</td>
<td>Piano performance by Maestro</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 Dec</td>
<td>Jazz piano performance by Chris Meyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Dec</td>
<td>Piano performance by Christoph Deluze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Jan</td>
<td>Dance performance by Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Jan</td>
<td>Piano performance by Noam Sivam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Jan</td>
<td>Butoh dance performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Jan</td>
<td>Piano performance by Pushkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jan</td>
<td>Duo Kabaretele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Feb</td>
<td>“Have an ear for the Hungarian Genius”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Feb</td>
<td>Singing Mantra by Claude Brame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Feb</td>
<td>Performance Jean-Christophe Bonnafous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Mar</td>
<td>AV Schools theater performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Mar</td>
<td>AV Schools theater performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Mar</td>
<td>“The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Classes every week during the season:

• Dance with Terra
• Russian bells with Vera
• Belly Dance with Galit or Priscilla
• Flamenco Dance with Viviane
• Modern Dance with Nikita
• Bharatanatyam Dance with Neela
• Theater with Renu
• Theater with Fif
• Theater with Francesca
• Theater with Kaeridwyn
• Dance with Savitri
• Movement class with Saranya
• Salsa with Raju
• Dance with Alice Poli, then rehearsal and performance at CRIPA
• Auroville Choir and Children’s Choir rehearsal
• “Milidacious” rehearsal
• “The Glass Menagerie” rehearsal
• Piano practice and/or lessons by Alain, Nadia, Pushkar, Shakti, Nuria, Christopher, Rosa...

Workshops:

• Dance/theatre workshop with Sharanya Rao
• Butoh dance workshops
• Capoeira Festival
• Moghan personal Dev (theatre)
• “Inside-Out Acting” with Sugumar (Pondicherry)
• “Ningappa’s Dance” with Abhilash (Bangalore)
• Dance workshop with Deborah Abel (U.S.A. dance company)

Special Event: Holi Tango Festival, March 9 to March 13

Outcomes

CRIPA hosted rehearsals leading to performances attended by hundreds of Aurovilians, adults and children, volunteers, guests and guest artists. Classes attracted hundreds of students in theatre, dance and music. Workshops provided a platform for interaction between students and guest artists from Auroville, India and abroad.

CRIPA is becoming an incubator for creativity in all the Performing Arts.
Eluciole Circus

Introduction

Eluciole Circus offers training and practice in circus performance, aerial yoga, silk, trapeze, lyra, gymnastics, acrobatics, theater, dance, acro yoga, juggling, balance and concentration work, and coordination of the body.

Activities of the year

Groups of children from Auroville schools including The Learning Community, Kindergarten, Nandanam Kindergarten, and Transition School came every week for classes at Eluciole Circus. The schedule of days and timings was organized in the middle of July and carried through the whole school year.

Other classes were offered for children and young adults aged 5 to 15 throughout the week. Some workshops were also organized for children and adults over the course of the year.

This year we developed aerial yoga and it was a big success! Aerial yoga is about counteracting gravity. By relieving compression due to the pull of gravity while on the ground, the spine is elongated and the shoulders straightened. The few inches of suspension in the air releases tension on the bones and muscles, increasing flexibility. Fantastic as it may sound, one can actually practice the various poses and movements while suspended a few inches off the ground through aerial yoga.

Some of our events this year were:

- Circus students presented at the Kalabhumi Music Festival on February 20th.
- The Nandanam children performed a theatrical/circus/educational play on February 17th and 18th. We always invite some Auroville school children to these events; they love to come and see their friends doing circus performance.
- For the open house in The Learning Community we created a circus animation throughout the school with different circus skills, including the direct contact with the public. It was a beautiful learning process for all of us.
- On April 27th the Kindergarten students gave a performance.

Outcomes

Through their activities with Eluciole Circus the children develop control and discipline of the functioning of the body, towards an integral, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body. They also develop the power of concentration and the capacity of attention. They develop the beautiful qualities of confidence, trust, and self love – essential for the development of the human being.

Reflections

We work a lot on our fear, and by overcoming small and big fears we develop trust in ourselves. Working together, practicing trusting others, also brings inside us the beautiful quality of having trust in the universe. A complete surrender!
I (Kalou) want to mix some body expression (dance), some theater, even some live music and singing in our activity. This is our yoga: to express the divine in all the possibilities of the human body.

**Conclusion**

To see the evolution of each child is magic – to see them month by month progress and be able to do what they couldn't do a few months ago. I always tell them that everything is possible if we really believe it. I also encourage them to believe in themselves. Auroville is a place where children and adults have the possibility to learn all different forms of expressing the divine through art. This is why we are here, to help the children go deeper inside themselves and offer their divine part.

Our circus work energizes, transforms; it brings art, creativity, joy, balance, harmony, love, magic, happiness, Divine light.
Natural Horsemanship Program
A project of Evergreen Horses

Introduction

Evergreen Horses is the first Natural Horsemanship school in the country that offers activities both in horse and human development. The school has started actively using materials based on the Parelli program for 2 years and the main focus has been on human development, creating a safe and fun environment where the kids can express themselves as well as learn about themselves on the physical, mental and emotional levels.

Description of project

The one-year program is aimed at Auroville children for them to rediscover the best way to be around horses. This past year, we wanted to build on the success of the previous years and dive deeper into the technical aspects of Natural Horsemanship. Our main focus was on helping the young adults identify and process certain feelings and emotions that usually can be discovered while playing with horses. In other words, we provided an environment in which our students could discover various skills and an inner power that they were not confident to use or express elsewhere in our very critical human world. To complement this work, we offered classes playing with horses on the ground (with or without a line) as well as riding (bareback or with a saddle), thereby delving deeper into how to use our body language.

In the course of the year, we scheduled weekly classes from July to April. As learned in the previous year, we kept the same class structure offering two types of sessions: In the first type of session, we had practical exercises which followed the Parelli method Level 1 and 2. In these sessions, children learned about ground safety first and how to get the horse mentally and emotionally ready to learn and work together with the human. The exercises were based on the Parelli 7 Games which are games that horses play among themselves in nature. Subsequently, we used these games for a purpose (working with tasks, obstacles, gymkhanas, etc) in order to develop the children's coordination, body language, awareness of their energy and state of mind and finally develop their organisational skills, team work and ultimately leadership.

The second type of sessions was based on the theory. This year, we were lucky to have the entire educational material created by Parelli in our library. We had hours of DVD's showing, explaining and demonstrating step by step various parts of the program, making the learning process easier as the children could actually see it in action. We also learned the different values that the horse and human have and other topics related to socio-educational, natural, biological, ethological and psychological aspects.

Outcomes

We discovered that the children understood that there is so much more to do with a horse than just ride! That communication is when two or more individuals understand and share the same ideas, and as humans we have to develop the skill-set to help horses become calmer, braver, more connected and ultimately willing participants in a partnership. In the process, the horses acted as a mirror and the
children started to discover themselves both physically and emotionally, understanding how to deal with fear, frustration and anger and how to use their talent and qualities more successfully.

We have put a lot of energy into understanding how to troubleshoot problems and to give students the necessary strategies to be successful with horses by themselves without needing constant guidance. We find that promoting this kind of independence will also help them grow into adulthood, be more responsible and aware.

Reflections

We think that the most important part of this year was to really understand the direction of the whole project. Gathering a lot a feedback from our students and reflecting on how to better our activities, we came to the conclusion that we will need to give more topic-specific classes, that watching DVD material is good but unfortunately does not promote discussion within a group. In that respect, we would like to have mixed sessions between watching, discussing and sharing our experiences on different topics. Furthermore, following the good response on what we offered this year, we would like to offer topic-specific courses during the year in the hope of creating different study groups in other equestrian centres across the country.

Moreover, we would like to work predominantly with children, helping them with their leadership skills and offering activities adapted to their constant development, both for children already involved as well as an “open day” for children that are not already part of the school. We would also like to have more surrounding schools organise field-trips at the Evergreen Horses school where we can share our aims and ideals and where kids can have a different experience which they might not encounter in their busy city schedule.

Conclusion

This year, we had a lot of positive feedback, not only from our students but from different working groups in Auroville as well, including people from all over India that wrote us and participated to our activities. As pioneers in this field in India, we collected a lot of data and feedback on how to plan our schedule for next year, where more energy is needed, in which fields we may have started too soon and which parts of the curriculum need to be revised. We would like to conclude that the Evergreen Horses project is a valuable tool for the Auroville community and India as a whole, particularly when offering a learning opportunity in Natural Horsemanship to be applied in the mainstream equestrian world and as well to provide a safe environment to help younger people find their own life path in this horse-facilitated journey.
Kalabhumi Music Studio

Kalabhumi Music Studio has been active now for the last 16 years, and has functioned as the most significant space for the practice of music in Auroville. A focal point for rehearsal, teaching, and performing, the space is open and 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 and other similar 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** – Annual event includes more than 80 participants.
- **Millidacious** – The third all-Auroville musical used Kalabhumi as its rehearsal place for more than 5 months.
- **Kalabhumi Festival** – The now yearly event showcases both Auroville and international artists.
- **Jazz Vocal Concert with international visiting artists** – performed in Bharat Nivas in February.
- **AV Sisters** – Led by Shakti, Vera and Swaha, they performed numerous concerts throughout the year.
- **Tribute to Django Reinhart** – Led by guitarist Shanks, recently moved from Bombay, concert featuring music from the Gypsy Jazz era.

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.

The Kalabhumi studio team is fully involved with other music projects elsewhere (including showcases outside of Auroville), through performances, organisation, coordination of visiting artists, and setup of concerts at other venues.
Kalabhumi Open Art Studio

Introduction

Kalabhumi Open Art Studio wants to give a possibility to interested people of all ages to experience art in a well-equipped art studio atmosphere. It has been going on for the past 7 years and has continuously grown into what it is today.

There are two studios, one my own (Nele) and one for the students, connected by an open covered work area. Many people have been coming regularly for years, and there are always new people who are interested.

Description of project

Situated in Kalabhumi in the Cultural Zone, the studio is accessible on foot or by cycle from several Auroville schools. It can therefore be easily reached by the students of both Future School, where my art class is offered as an elective subject, and Transition School, where art classes based at the studio form a part of the curriculum for the oldest grade.

I offer guided classes for adults and students from the surrounding schools (Transition and Future school), and free sessions where more experienced students and artists come to work and exchange ideas.

As the project has expanded, in addition to the regular classes I also have some students who want to prepare for entrance exams for art or design, who come to work on their own when they have time and we meet regularly to discuss the work and suggest new projects.

I also offer the space for extra projects, for example the creative stage work for theater plays.

In the last year at the request of some young students (around 10 years old) a new activity was started. Because there is a lot of interest this will continue and grow next year.

Outcomes

Among many other activities in the last year the focus was mainly on three areas:

- Street art, the creation of murals, stencils and airbrush technique.
- Another class explored the work on creation of space and volume through light and dark shades, colors, shading techniques.
- A third project was the creation of the backdrop for the Auroville theater play *Millidacious*.

We started a new drawing (comics) class for interested and talented younger (10th grade) students, who like art very much and wanted to have a extra course in addition to the art in the school.

There is also one afternoon set aside for more experienced students to come and work either on their own projects, or preparing an exhibition or a portfolio for an entrance exam.
To work in a group and have the exchange of ideas both technical and ideal on the work often helps in the creative process. My role is to give encouragement and feedback and creative and technical advice.

**Reflections**

In art, intuitive creativity and the organizing mind work together to create and express in a direct manner. The idea of what beauty is becomes an inner research, and its creation is a constant new experiment, which helps to clarify ones sense of harmony and order. Therefore I am really happy to offer a place and atmosphere for people who want to explore this.

The interactive group work helps to broaden discussions and try out various possibilities to see how themes can be worked out individually. The creative process can be perceived as a mirror of inner work that is simultaneously linked to the world one lives in. This concept can successfully be worked out in our small group setting that provides feedback to the individual but is at the same time a safe space that allows for freedom of expression. The classes therefore offer the opportunity for participants to come to know one another while at the same time being provided with an interactive learning process in a supportive environment.

These courses have been an interesting learning experience both for the students and myself. The students have demonstrated progress in terms of their own artwork and have expressed their enjoyment of the classes. Creativity is an important aspect in life and art is an excellent medium through which to experiment and discover one's own capacity and expression. For myself, it is a pleasure to be able to offer the space and materials to assist and guide people to express themselves and realize their creativity.

**Conclusion**

Each year there are new additions and developments to the Open Art Studio project. A lot of people come since many years and enjoy the free space, and there is a lot of interest to participate.

Here some comments of some students of the Saturday adult group:

- “It is a space where we have the opportunity to work with other artists, to share techniques, ideas, and opinions about art. I use color I usually do not use. I bring ideas I want to explore. It is an experimental space.” - Marco
- “I am very thankful to Nele who created this space because when I come here I feel totally free to express myself. And for me it also very important to work with other people, it helps me to be creative.” - Liliane
- “It is a beautiful collective studio space where one always feels welcome to come and paint. It is also a space equipped and accommodating for larger group projects such as set building. A diverse group of people came together last year to create the sets and props for Millidacious. I had a lot of fun working together and getting to know each other better through art.” - Sabrina
Laboratory of Evolution

Introduction

The 'Laboratory of Evolution – Centre for Human Unity' (LOE-CHU) is a research and documentation centre about all manner of conscious experimentation that promotes and advances the further evolution of Humankind, both on the individual and the collective level, as foreseen and initiated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This evolution is happening at present not only in Auroville itself, but increasingly all over the planet.

Activities of the year

Library: A rich specialized library is a must for a place like the LOE-CHU, both for those in our team who do the research work and for the community and visitors. The library's regular hours are:

Monday to Friday: 9am to 12 and 2.30 to 4.30 pm
Saturday: 9 to 12am

The aim of the librarians (Kalyani and Olivier) is to focus the attention of the readers on evolution, not as Darwin saw it, but as having a spiritual meaning and purpose as per Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s vision. In this vision, evolution is the ascent of the steps manifested by the descent of involution; matter (the Divine in its becoming) and spirit (the Divine in its essence) are One. In that light, the goal at the library is to help patrons link modern discoveries (in astrophysics, physics, biology, psychology, health, etc.) with the evolutive future announced by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

This year the librarians renewed the English and French collections of books by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They also completed to some extent these collections in Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Italian, and Chinese.

Namah’s work: Namah received several groups (from 3 to 20 people) coming especially to Auroville, and presented them with an in-depth view of Auroville and of the Integral Yoga. She gave her regular workshops on Hatha Yoga and Integral Yoga in various locations, where by now she is known and keeps being invited. She also continued her current researches on Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga, focusing on Integral Psychology and the practical aspects of its applications.

For Namah’s ongoing project ‘Auroville Agenda’, she recorded and typed some more interviews of Aurovilians regarding their inner life and individual evolution before and after coming to Auroville. This project is little by little forming a more collective picture of what is happening within Auroville under the outer surface.

As a representative of the LOE-CHU, Namah participated in weekly meetings of the research group CIRHU/Lila as often as possible.

Bhaga’s work: Bhaga discovered the main causes of the illness affecting her since two years, and took it as an opportunity to put into practice the considerable theoretical as well as experiential knowledge
accumulated during her life of research into Cellular Consciousness. She was happy to then resume writing in her Research Blog and giving various workshops.

Outcomes

A great number of people, including guests of Auroville, came to our library throughout the year to get advice on reading according to their interest. It is not only a place for borrowing books, but also a place for exchange about the main lines of Integral Yoga and the aims of Auroville's.

Bhaga was interviewed by a French professional filmmaker visiting Auroville and willing to realize a film about selected aspects of the research being done in Auroville. The intended film will be made from extracts of interviews filmed with various individuals on their particular research topics.

Future direction

Kalyani and Olivier plan to organize introductions to specific themes, such as the 7 Steps of Manifestation, the 7 Ignorances, Rebirth and Other Worlds (The Life Divine), and the 10 Incarnations of Vishnu as corresponding with the steps of evolution (Letters on Yoga). These introductions will be given in the LOE-CHU library during the guest season.

They also would like to expand the library's collection of books on near-death experiences, the afterlife, and healing through consciousness, as these topics are among the most requested nowadays.

LOE-CHU has a vast scope, and we hope that other persons interested in joining our team will do so for the long-term, and can have financial support if needed.
Mitza Youth Hostel

Mitza Youth Hostel was created in 2006 to provide accommodation facilities for students who wish to stay in Auroville to fulfill their educational needs. It is a two storey building located centrally in Auroville, behind Town Hall. It offers single rooms, double rooms, common spaces and a kitchen that provides breakfast and dinner. It is an ideal accommodation for students or volunteers visiting Auroville for the first time as the mixed crowd of young people helps visitors get acquainted with the town of Auroville.

This year Mitza hosted guests from:

India (136 guests), the United States (23), France (3), Sweden (3), Germany (2), Taiwan (2), Austria (2), Denmark (1), Colombia (1), Russia (1), Portugal (1), South Africa (1) and Turkey (1).

Guests included those participating as interns, trainees and volunteers with:

- Anupama (architecture)
- Auroville Architects Association Service Trust
- Auroville Consulting
- Auroville Dental Centre
- Auroville Design Consultants
- Auroville Earth Institute
- Auroville Papers
- Auroville Radio
- Auroville Village Action Group
- Bamboo Centre
- Center for Scientific Research
- Dustudio
- Earth & Us
- EcoFemme
- EcoPro
- Future School
- Ganesh Bala Architecture
- Gundolf (architecture)
- Imago
- Isai Ambalam School
- Jaap
- Kenji (carpentry)
- L’Avenir d’Auroville
- Light Fish
- Metamorphosis
- Mia
- Minvayu
- Path
- Savi
- Sacred Groves
- Shama Dalvi (architecture)
- Sustainable Livelihood Institute
- Svaram
- Tejeswini (architecture)
- The Colors of Nature
- Upasana
- Urban
- Unlimited Tamil Nadu
- Wallpaper
- White Ant Studio

This year at the hostel 2 plate racks and 1 water cooler were installed in the dining area.
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, martial arts classes, and health treatments. Pitanga also hosts cultural programs of exhibitions, films and concerts that helps to develop other aspects of the being. Pitanga offers 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

Pitanga Cultural Centre offers a rich range of on-going activities. Our regular classes and health activities during this 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 Yoga</td>
<td>2. Psychomotor relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vinyasa Flow Yoga</td>
<td>3. Psychotherapy and Hypnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pranayama</td>
<td>4. Somatic Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dharma Vinyasa Flow</td>
<td>5. Cranio-Sacral Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Prana Vidya Hatha Yoga</td>
<td>6. Homeopathic Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hormonal Yoga</td>
<td>7. Journey to the memory of the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Naturopathy and Cupping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Natural facial treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Reconnective healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Reflexology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Releasing through Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>13. Reiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Belly dancing</td>
<td>15. Thai Yoga Massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Odissi Dance</td>
<td>16. Suction/Cupping massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>17. Experiential anatomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Pilates</td>
<td>18. Oil massage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kickboxing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Aviva exercise for women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Discover energy body</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Abdominal toning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Self-defense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Meditation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Aikido</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occasional activities held in the last year included many cultural activities, workshops, and film screenings. The exhibition space showcased the artwork of thirteen artists.

Highlights of the year included:

- **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.
• **Dance:** We were able to expand the range of dance classes in our regular schedule to include Ballet with Grace and Bellydancing with Priscilla.

• **Cultural Activities:** The year saw an increase in cultural program compared with last year, with 6 extra exhibitions, 4 extra community presentations and one extra concert.

• **Personal development:** In the area of personal development, our workers enjoyed summer English classes and Stewardship for New Emergence training. Our ammas also hosted a workshop on floral arranging where they taught techniques to the ammas and team of Unity Pavilion, thus sharing skills and supporting the premise that each one is a teacher as well as student.

**Outcomes**

The new visa legislation in India has greatly affected Pitanga’s service as it is no longer possible for someone on a tourist visa to legally volunteer in India. For over 25 years the Auroville community has enjoyed, each year, a range of activities 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 and offer diversity. It is now no longer possible for international teachers and therapists on tourist visas to offer their free service to the community. This has dramatically affected the programs offered, especially in season time.

In the summer holidays of 2015, we finished extensive improvements to the infrastructure of Pitanga which included two new parking sheds, paving of walkway, new shelving and sliding door systems in the main activities hall, and the creation of ornamental and edible gardens with irrigation systems. We also termite-proofed the entire building. The edible garden is beginning to provide fruit and vegetables that will be offered to students after class in an effort to promote well-being and increase awareness about the nutritional content of what one can easily grow. The compost area is being shared with Samasti community.

**Reflections**

The situation with the new visa regulations has significantly impacted our service and inhibited the variety of what we can offer in season; it also disappoints many old friends who have offered their skills for many years as their contribution to enriching Auroville. However, every challenge is not without an opportunity, and the Pitanga team will endeavour to reach further into the community to identify and support those who may be able to fill the gaps in the programming for the coming year.

The opportunities given to our workers to use the summer quieter months to enrich their personal development helped create an enabling environment in Pitanga that increased the confidence levels of our team and helped foster creativity and accountability. We will continue to keep their development as one 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.
Savitri Bhavan

Introduction

Savitri Bhavan was founded in November 1995, as a place to gather all kinds of materials and activities that would support a deeper understanding of Sri Aurobindo’s mantric epic *Savitri – a legend and a symbol*, which the Mother has called ‘the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision’. It was felt that since Auroville has been created to realise Sri Aurobindo’s vision of a new kind of society based on a higher consciousness it is important for us to understand what his vision is, and how to achieve the higher consciousness he expected from us. The first permanent building was opened in August 1999. Since then Savitri Bhavan has grown into an educational centre that is open to the interested general public 7 days a week throughout the year, run by a team of 14 Aurovilians and 7 employees. The aim is to foster the values on which a true human unity can be manifested, and the aims and ideals of Auroville be realised, through spiritual education based on the vision and work and writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Activities of the year

The activities of Savitri Bhavan can be grouped under four main headings: ‘Outreach Activities’, ‘Learning Materials’, ‘Research Projects’ and ‘Publications’. During 2015-16, growth was experienced in all these four areas.

Outreach

The number of regular weekly classes and other activities on offer increased from 10 to 16, while at the same time there was a noticeable increase of attendance for many of them. Three of these classes are held in Tamil. In addition, 20 workshops and orientation sessions were held for groups, and 19 groups of students, totalling 581 in all, were received. 6 performances took place, 8 exhibitions and 3 guest lectures, as well as the one month University of Human Unity programme hosted from 14 January 2016 to 20 February 2016, consisting of 30 talks and a musical performance. *(For more information about Outreach, Learning Materials and Research Projects see separate report: Savitri Bhavan Research Activities.)*

Learning Materials

Under this heading Savitri Bhavan maintains 5 collections of materials for the support of students and researchers. While all of these were maintained, expanded and used throughout the year, the Huta D. Hindocha collection of paintings and related materials deserves special mention. As usual, paintings from the *Meditations on Savitri* series prepared by Huta under the guidance of the Mother were on display in the Picture Gallery throughout the year. In addition to the regular conservation work, which was enhanced during this period by the valuable participation of Newcomer Maggie Point, another volunteer, Ruben Berlanga, worked on cleaning the Mother’s original audio recordings of her recitations from *Savitri* and comments on some passages. Tatiana Tasheva assisted in the preparation of two books by Huta for publication: a second edition of an old favourite – *Victory of the Truth*, and a new one, which Huta was working on at the time of her passing in 2011 – *My Savitri Work with the Mother*. Meanwhile Dhanalakshmi, who edits our Tamil journal *Prarthana*, did a careful revision of the Tamil translation of Huta’s much-loved compilation of letters send to her by the Mother – *White Roses*; the next time that this book is reprinted, her emendations will be included. She also translated into Tamil and prepared for
publication Huta’s book *Mother You Said So*... which contains Huta’s notes of talks to her by the Mother, corrected and approved by the Mother herself. It is anticipated that all these four books will be published by Huta’s Havyavahana Trust in the course of 2016. Apart from all this, an exhibition of 45 visionary paintings by Huta, dating from 1956, when the Mother first started to teach her oil-painting, up to 1983, were exhibited at Savitri Bhavan from February 14 to March 3 2016, along with the titles given to them by the Mother and her comments on them.

Research Projects
Seven main research projects were carried on during the course of the year. One unusual example was the line by line comparison carried out between Sri Aurobindo’s first known draft of *Savitri* which dates from the autumn of 1916 and the final version which he left us with his passing in 1950. Sri Aurobindo is known to have worked on the poem intensively over the intervening years. The aim of this research project was to compare the two versions for differences and correspondences. The findings of this study have been published in two instalments in the Bhavan’s journal *Invocation*, in the issues no. 43 of November 2015 and no. 44 of April 2016. In addition to these seven main projects, requests for compilations from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the specific topics of Death, Suicide, and the significance of Birthdays were received; these were responded to by Martin S. Other compilations and a suggested reading list were prepared for Dr. Marie-Helene Gorisse, who is leading a course on Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy at the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University, sponsored by the Sri Aurobindo Trust of London. Assistance was also given to a young research scholar from Bengal for her project on *Savitri* sponsored by the University Grants Commission.

Publications
While the Bhavan’s regular twice-yearly journals in English and Tamil, *Invocation* and *Prarthana* were prepared and brought out as usual in April, August and November 2015 and February 2016, it was gratifying to be able to also publish another book in February 2016. This is the second volume of the *English of Savitri* series, based on the weekly class of the same name, which covers Book Three of the poem, The Book of the Divine Mother, and consists of extensively revised and enlarged transcripts of study sessions held from December 2012 to June 2013. Like the first volume in the series, this too was published both as a hard bound book and as an e-book. (See separate report: *Savitri Bhavan Publications.*)

Construction
A highlight of this year was the launching of the long-planned “Sangam Hall”, almost the last element of the Savitri Bhavan Master Plan awaiting completion. Like the rest of the complex, the design has been prepared by our architect Helmut, and is being carried out under the supervision of Vijay. It consists of a circular air-conditioned hall, accessible from ground floor and first floor levels, with seating for at least 200 people. It is intended to house the regular *Savitri* study gatherings which are the core activity of Savitri Bhavan, as well as OM Choir sessions and guest presentations and lectures, such as the annual Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lectures. Multimedia facilities will also be provided. A ‘first-brick’ ceremony was held on November 24, 2015 – the 20th anniversary of the Founding of Savitri Bhavan itself by Dr. Nirodbaran in 1995. Construction was started in December and is proceeding at a good pace. Phase 1 (raw structure) is expected to be complete by November 2016, to be followed by Phase 2 (finishing works) in 2017. (See separate report: *Construction of the Savitri Bhavan Sangham Hall.*)
Outcomes

Through all these activities and events, awareness of the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and of the aims and ideals of Auroville has spread not only amongst Aurovilians and students of Auroville and Outreach schools, but also amongst the general public, including those who visited the Bhavan during the year and viewed the two semi-permanent exhibitions on display in the circulation areas: *Sri Aurobindo – a life-sketch in photographs*, and *Glimpses of the Mother*, as well as those received the publications of Savitri Bhavan all over India and in at least 45 countries around the world.

Conclusion

We look forward to an ever-growing continuation of this process over the coming years, with gratitude to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and all the well-wishers and supporters who are giving their assistance in many ways.
Construction of the Savitri Bhavan Sangam Hall

Introduction

The Sangam Hall has been an element of the Master Plan of the Savitri Bhavan complex since it was created in 1996. One by one the various elements have been realised, and this one was launched with a ‘first brick’ ceremony on November 24th 2015 – the 20th anniversary of the Foundation Ceremony performed by Dr. Nirodbaran in 1995. Actual construction work was started in December 2015 and is proceeding well. The raw structure is scheduled for completion by November 2016, after which a further 12 months has been allowed for finishing works. This construction is being funded entirely by donations from well-wishers.

Description of project

Like the rest of the complex, the design has been prepared by our architect Helmut, and is being carried out under the supervision of Vijay. It consists of a circular air-conditioned hall, accessible from ground floor and first floor levels, with seating for at least 200 people. It is intended to house the regular Savitri study gatherings which are the core activity of Savitri Bhavan, as well as OM Choir sessions and guest presentations and lectures, such as the annual Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lectures. Multimedia facilities will also be provided.

Outcomes

At the time of writing, in mid-April 2016, the walls and internal masonry of the Hall are in place, and work has been started on the roof.

Reflections

Completion of this project will provide an essential element of the Savitri Bhavan complex, which has been wished for and envisaged from the beginning. The good progress being made with the construction work is due to the excellent collaboration between Vijay and Helmut, built up over the years since realisation of the Master Plan was begun in December 1998, and one element after another was brought into existence.

Conclusion

It is expected that the First Phase of construction (raw structure) will be completed on schedule by December 2016, and that through the goodwill of many donors, it will be possible to continue with the Second Phase (finishing works) to be completed by December 2017.
Savitri Bhavan Publications

Introduction

Savitri Bhavan publishes two journals of Study Notes on Savitri. Prarthana, in Tamil, targets individuals and centres around the State who are eager to learn and understand more about Sri Aurobindo’s mantric epic. Invocation, in English, has a faithful and growing world-wide readership. In addition this year we were again able to publish a hard-cover book, the second part of the ‘English of Savitri’ series, following up on the first volume published in 2014-15.

Description of project

This year as usual two issues of Prarthana appeared: no. 24 in August 2015 and no. 25 in February 2016. Each contained 56 pages, with both original and translated articles relating to Savitri as well as some news and photos of the activities of Savitri Bhavan, and was edited by Dhanalakshmi. Two issues of Invocation appeared in April and November 2015. Consisting of 64 pages, these were edited by Shraddhavan. 1000 copies of each were printed for distribution to addresses in 45 countries, as well as all over India.

Both journals were also made available in soft copy, both as e-mail attachments on request, and on the Savitri Bhavan website.

The English of Savitri 2 – Book Three, The Book of the Divine Mother came out in February 2016. Based on transcripts of the regular ‘English of Savitri’ classes held weekly at Savitri Bhavan from December 2012 to June 2013, the book provides a sentence by sentence examination of the four cantos of Book Three of Sri Aurobindo’s poem for the assistance of students and lovers of the epic. It was made available both as a hard-bound book of 276 pages, and as an e-publication.

While publication of the journal issues was supported by GOI grants, the book was financed by the sales proceeds of the earlier volume in the series.

Conclusion

It is planned to continue regular publication of the journal issues for the foreseeable future, and to prepare a further volume of the English of Savitri series for publication in early 2017.
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: Outreach Activities, Learning Materials, and Research Projects. Each of these aspects contributes to the central purpose, focussing principally on Sri Aurobindo’s epic poem Savitri – a legend and a symbol, which the Mother has referred to as “the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s Vision”, but also on his major philosophical work The Life Divine and other writings, as well as the Mother’s Entretiens and her Agenda.

Research Projects

During 2015-16, seven main research projects were undertaken. Five of these relate to Savitri, the other two to the Mother’s teachings, as follows:

- **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. About 35 people met on Sunday mornings from 10:30 am to noon for a detailed reading and study of the poem. It is gratifying that 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. In the first session of April 2015 the reading of Book Five, The Book of Love was completed. The following week Book Six, The Book of Fate, was taken up, and in July, Book Seven, The Book of Yoga, which occupied the group up to the beginning of February 2016. Reading of Book Eight, and the first Canto of Book Nine occupied the sessions up to the end of March 2016.

- **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, as well as other Savitri-related materials. The list of all known Savitri-related materials available has been maintained up to 31 March 2016.

- **My Savitri Work with the Mother, by Huta:** Huta was the artist chosen by the Mother to illustrate selected passages from Savitri. At the time of her passing in 2011, Huta was collecting material for a book on her 18-year long collaboration with the Mother. During 2015-16, this valuable material has been carefully edited and made ready for publication in book form.

- **The Earliest Known Draft of Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri:** The earliest-known version of Sri Aurobindo’s mantric epic dates from the autumn of 1916, while the final version dates from just a few days before he left his body in 1950. Sri Aurobindo is known to have worked on the poem.
intensively over the intervening years. The aim of this research project was to make a line by line comparison of the two versions for differences and correspondences. The findings of this study have been published in two instalments in the Bhavan’s journal *Invocation*, in issues no. 43 of November 2015 and no. 44 of April 2016.

- **The English of Savitri 2: Book Three of Savitri – The Book of the Divine Mother**: From April to December 2015, transcripts of classes held at Savitri Bhavan from December 2012 to June 2013 on this section of Sri Aurobindo’s epic were intensively revised and expanded, then prepared for publication in book form. The resulting volume was released on February 19, 2016, as the second in the English of Savitri series.

- **The Spiritual Significances of Flowers**: Apart from these Savitri-related projects, two more ongoing studies were pursued in the course of the year. The first is connected with 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 2015-16, for the second year running, a photograph of one such flower was chosen each month for publication as the ‘Flower of the Month’ on the Savitri Bhavan website, 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.

- **La Science de Vivre**: French newcomer Beatrice Baldacchino has taken up this study of the Mother’s *Entretiens*. During 2015-16 she carefully went through Volume Three of the Mother’s Collected Works, which contains the talks given by the Mother to a group of Ashramites from 1929-31, and noted down the passages which contain the Mother’s advice on various aspects of ‘How to Live’. She 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 collected could form the basis for two sets or series of compilations for the assistance of seekers as well as young people. Beatrice intends to continue her study with further volumes of the *Entretiens*.

### Learning Materials

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. The Bhavan maintains five distinct collections of Learning Materials:

- **The Reading Room Collection**: this is a reference collection of book and non-book materials created 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 9 to 5 daily Monday to Saturday throughout the year. During 2015-16, 155 new volumes were added to the collection, while 8 journals of 60 issues were received and perused for Savitri-related articles to be added to the bibliographical list mentioned above.

- **The Digital Library** 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 computer access by individuals. The collection was steadily added to throughout the year, and utilised by interested visitors and Aurovilians.

- **The Huta D. Hindocha Collection**: the core of this unique collection is the series of 472 oil paintings created by the Mother with her young disciple Huta from 1961 to 1967, illustrating
selected passages from Sri Aurobindo’s epic, and named by the Mother *Meditations on Savitri*, which were entrusted to Savitri Bhavan by the artist in 2001 along with a mass of related materials. During the year of 2015-16, 2 exhibitions of paintings from this series where held, as well as one of 45 Visionary Paintings made by Huta during her 18-year collaboration by the Mother, with the titles and comments on them given by the Mother. Conservation work was continued on the many documents and additional paintings which make up the collection, and assistance was given to the Havyavahana Trust – established by Huta to publish the treasures which she received from the Mother – in preparing four books by Huta for publication.

- **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 publications, or as otherwise required. This will be Savitri Bhavan’s point of contact with the National Knowledge Network, to which we hope to be connected in the course of 2016.

- **The Audio-visual Archive** is an extensive collection of music and film recordings for use by individuals and groups, managed by Margrit Mala.

**The House of Mother’s Agenda**, housed at Savitri Bhavan since 2006, is another collection of Learning Materials housed at Savitri Bhavan and run by Gangalakshmi.

**Outreach**

The on-going Outreach Activities of Savitri Bhavan continued throughout the year, with 15 weekly classes and courses and a weekly film-show, as well as a monthly Full Moon Gathering, all open to the interested general public. In addition special events such as 3 guest lectures, 6 musical offerings and performances of various kinds, 2 special film shows and 8 exhibitions were held. 28 Workshops and Orientation Sessions were offered to visiting groups, and 19 visits of student groups were received, 14 of architecture students, and 5 from other educational institutions. From January 14 to February 20 the University of Human Unity also held 14 sessions at Savitri Bhavan. Throughout the year, the Information Desk, open from 9-5 daily except Sundays, responded to queries about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and Auroville, and received a wide variety of visitors, many of whom wrote appreciative comments in the Visitors’ Book.

**Regular classes and courses, mostly of 1 hour each:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Led by</th>
<th>Timings</th>
<th>Number of sessions</th>
<th>Average participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Savitri Study Circle</td>
<td>Shraddhavan</td>
<td>Sundays 10:30-12:00</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integral Yoga in Savitri (Apr. - Sept. 2015)</td>
<td>Dr. Ananda Reddy</td>
<td>Mondays 5-6pm</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isha Upanishad (Sept. 2015 - Mar. 2016)</td>
<td>Dr. Ananda Reddy</td>
<td>Mondays 5-6pm</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga and the Evolution of Man</td>
<td>Dr. Jai Singh</td>
<td>Tues. Thurs. Sat. 3-4pm on request</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OM Choir</td>
<td>Narad</td>
<td>Tues. 5:45-7:30pm</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let us learn Savitri together in Tamil (from Jan. 2016 onwards)

Buvana and Sudarshen

a) Tuesdays 5-6pm
b) Saturdays 5-6pm

Let us learn Savitri together in Tamil (from Jan. 2016 onwards)

Buvana and Sudarshen

a) Tuesdays 5-6pm
b) Saturdays 5-6pm

Mother’s recorded talks

Gangalakshmi

Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays 4-5pm

Reading The Life Divine

Shraddhavan

Wed. 5.30-6.30pm

The English of Savitri

Shraddhavan

Thurs. 4-5pm

Satsang

Ashesh Joshi

Saturdays 5-6:30pm

Meditation on Hymns to Mystic Fire (from May 2015)

Nishtha

Fr. 5:30-6:30pm

Sanskrit Hymns chanting

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7-8 am

Integral Yoga Sharing Circle (from July 11, 2015)

Manoj P.

Saturdays 3-5 pm

Film shows

Margrit

Mondays 6:30 pm

Introduction to Integral Yoga Workshops

Ashesh Joshi

Tuesdays 9-12:30

Other Outreach events hosted at Savitri Bhavan:

1. WORKSHOPS (10)
   - April 15, October 15, November 23 and December 16: four programmes for Newcomers organized by the Entry Service
   - May 2: Spoken English by Alice
   - May 25: Introduction to Integral Yoga by Ashesh, filmed by NDTV for World Yoga Day
   - May 30: Integral Healing by Dr. Geeta Auropremi
   - June 21: World Yoga Day Celebrations: Integral Yoga by Ashesh with asanas by Monica
   - August 29: Smart Water Management by Vikram Devatha, Auroville Consulting
   - October 1: Guided Meditation by JV
   - October 12: Introduction to Integral Yoga by Ashesh for Nandanam Kindergarten teachers
   - November 23, February 1, February 17 and March 21: four programmes for volunteers organized by Savi
   - February 22: Guided Meditation for Human Unity by JV
   - February 7: Mudra Chi by Anandi
   - March 6: Mudra Chi by Anandi

2. ORIENTATION SESSIONS for visiting groups (22)

3. PRESENTATIONS AND LECTURES (3 + 30)
   - October 22: Buddhist Building Traditions for sustainable living in the ancient city of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka - presentation and lecture by Dr. Satyajit Ghosh
   - February 19: Surrenderin Savitri - The 6th Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture, given by Mr. Jamshed Mavalwalla
   - February 28: The Day of the Lord: February 29, 1956, by Dr. Alok Pandey
   - January 14 to February 20: University of Human Unity Programme: 30 sessions
     - Six lectures on The Philosophy of Consciousness – Hegel and Sri Aurobindo by Rod Hemsell
     - Six presentations on The Goddess Saraswati in the Rg Veda by Nishtha Mueller
Six presentations on *Savitri and the philosophy of consciousness* by Vladimir Yatsenko
Six lectures on *The Integral Paradigm of Knowledge* by Rod Hemsell
Six presentations on *The Being of Music* by Ladislav Brozman

5. EXHIBITIONS (6)
- April: *Meditations on Savitri, Books 8 to 12* in the Picture Gallery
- April - May: *Transformation* by Adil Writer
- April onwards: *Sri Aurobindo: a Life-Sketch in Photographs*
- July 1 onwards: *Meditations on Savitri, Book 1, The Book of Beginnings* in the Picture Gallery
- August 1 onwards: *Glimpses of the Mother* – photos and texts in the Hall
- January 18-31: *From Some Invisible Fire* – paintings by Priti Ghosh in the Hall
- February 15 to March 3: *Adventures of a Soul and other Visionary Paintings* by Huta
- March 7 onwards: Paintings by Roza Tuh

6. MUSICAL OFFERINGS (3)
- January 21: Performance by Kees van Boxtel on Bansuri, Soundarya Seraphina on Veena with Jan on guitar
- February 27: Solo violin performance by Ladislav Brozman
- March 24: *Bhakti Poetry, Music and Dance* with Gordon Korstange playing South Indian Flute, Joel Eisenkramer on Hindustani Slide Guitar and Dancer Madhumita Padnaik

7. OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS (10)
- August 17: *Love and Death*, a film by Manohar of paintings by Priti Gosh inspired by passages from Sri Aurobindo’s poem of the same name, read by Cristof Pitoeff with music by Sunil.
- September 29: Visit of 7 MLAs from Odisha Assembly, guided by Devasmita.
- November 24: First brick ceremony to inaugurate construction of the Sangam Hall, a long-planned addition to the Savitri Bhavan complex.
- January 17: Opening of the exhibition *From Some Invisible Fire* in the presence of the artist Priti Ghosh and friends.
- February 14: Opening of the exhibition *Adventures of the Soul and other Visionary Paintings* by Huta, with a private view for trustees of the Havyahana Trust.
- February 21: The Mother’s Birthday was celebrating by a showing of the film *The One whom we adore as the Mother*.
- February 28: Auroville’s Birthday was celebrated with a mime performance by Drupal based on Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Silence is All”.
- February 29: The Mother’s Chair was placed in the Hall for silent concentration on the Golden Day of the Lord.
- February 29: *Douze Prières et Méditations de la Mère*: on the same day in the evening Céline Devaux presented a dramatised recitation in French of 23 prayers of the Mother.
- March 30: This performance was repeated to commemorate the Mother’s first arrival in Pondicherry and meeting with Sri Aurobindo.

8. VISITS OF STUDENT GROUPS (18)

In total 581 students visited Savitri Bhavan in groups during the year.

Estimated total number of beneficiaries of Savitri Bhavan’s organised Outreach Activities in 2015-16: at least 2000. (This does not include casual visitors who have had the opportunity to view the exhibitions on display and the information materials provided in the entrance area.)

**Conclusion**

This on-going and ever expanding programme of activities is made possible by the dedicated efforts of a team of 14 Aurovilians and 7 employees, supported by Aurovillian, Newcomer and visiting volunteers from time to time as needed. The goodwill and support of increasing numbers of participants in the various activities on offer contribute to the liveliness of this centre of spiritual education in the service of human unity.
Scholarship and Educational Fund

Introduction

The Scholarship and Educational Fund (SEF) was established in 2008 to provide financial assistance to Aurovilians seeking educational opportunities outside of Auroville, including O and A level exam fees. 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 2015-2016 financial year (April 2015-March 2016), 61 loans were disbursed to 39 Aurovilians (some received more than 1 installment).

Outcomes

39 Aurovilians received financial assistance to pursue educational opportunities. Of these 39, 26 pursued college or university level studies, with 2 travelling abroad to study and 24 pursuing opportunities in India. 13 students received assistance to complete O and A level exams at Future School.

Reflections

- SEF grants loans primarily on a financial need basis. Academic merit is also considered, but as a secondary measure. The group is learning that it is often difficult to gauge financial need – particularly in the Auroville context. This is something that has to be looked at.
- A large proportion of applicants this last year were granted some amount of what they requested. Very few applicants were rejected entirely, and no applicant received the full amount requested. The SEF team is considering how this furthers its goals, and whether another approach wouldn't work better - for example, by granting funds to fewer applicants, each to a more complete extent.
- With the Project Coordination Group (PCG) funding channel now exhausted, SEF will have to explore new fundraising channels if it is to maintain the current level of funding.

Conclusion

The SEF helped many Auroville youth pursue educational opportunities this last year, and since it was established. The team will look at some of its policies and processes in the coming months in order to improve their functioning and the way that they provide this assistance, with the goal of helping in as significant a manner as possible.
Unity Pavilion

Introduction

The Unity Pavilion hosts 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 producing of materials related to the research. Our aim is to provide a space for activities, research and development in alignment with the ideals of Auroville. It includes all aspects life and society.

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). Many smaller or ad hoc community working groups and individuals also are hosted here, as well as large community-related workshops such as Stewardship for New Emergence workshops and the Auroville Retreat.

Activities of the year

Hosting events
There has been a flow of activities and events, with the peak season being January to mid-April. This February we had 60 events in 29 days. Highlights have been the Selection process for WC and AVC, the Stewardship for New Emergence workshops, the ongoing research on values in relation to organizational change, the Co-creation workshops, cultural events in relation with the International Zone such as the full-day Korean event, the work with creating awareness amongst Auroville employees in collaboration with Thamarai and Wasteless, the interaction around the Peace Tables of Auroville, New York and Moscow on 25 February, and the explorations of the twelve qualities and the flowers and their messages in a series of 12 Yoga Nidra workshops. These are some among many of this year's harvest.

Research
The Unity Pavilion has a focus on research into 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.

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 to close a working session 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.

Unity Pavilion office
The Unity Pavilion office building hosts Savi, the Africa House office, Unity Pavilion research work, Auroville International, and the International Zone office. The Unity Pavilion offers the International Zone a platform for different purposes: office space, meeting space, and outdoor spaces for exhibitions and cultural events, workshops, fund-raising dinners, etc. The Unity Pavilion also interacts with student groups and universities both through Inside India and directly.
Outcomes

A very large number of people from very diverse backgrounds have been actively interacting and sharing. The Unity Pavilion is an active agent in the ongoing shift of our functioning as an organization, towards unity, collaboration and participation and alignment of our ideals and our actions.

Reflections

It is very inspiring and encouraging to see our aspiration consolidating, to see that unity and unity in diversity is where we really are, making the invisible visible.

We learn as we go along. The situations are never really the same, so we need to stay inclusive and open.

Conclusion

We hope to have some more collaborators on the practical level of running the Unity Pavilion and facilitating its activities. That would free Shivaya and myself (Jaya) to focus more on research and fund raising. The staff we have now are hardworking and very committed, but sometimes the workload was ongoing for weeks and asked too much from all of us, without break, and there is also need for rest and social interaction; people have families, children, etc. that also need time and attention.
Independent projects
Audio-visuals on Auroville & Website for Newcomers

Introduction

“Aspiration”, the one-week program for Newcomers, needed (and still needs) to create audio-visuals on various aspects of the life of Auroville. These videos will be screened during the sessions and also published online on a dedicated website.

Description of project

Our aim was to release a first version of the website as well as realise and screen new video documents within this year (2015-16). We were aware that the scope of this project is such, that it will request more than a year to be fulfilled, considering the level of perfection we’re pursuing. In order not to postpone the outcome for too long, we were planning to publish and screen the content as we progress, thus accepting not to be as complete as we would like to be right away. By this approach we not only improve the program for newcomers on the short run; it will also be a way to receive immediate feedback thus having more opportunities to fine-tune and complete the content in each field.

Outcomes

Various interviews (about land, farming, unending education, governance, etc.) and events (like the Joy of Learning sessions on water management, food and mobility in Auroville) were recorded and edited. So far the dedicated website for Newcomers has not been realized, but the videos were shown during the sessions and are available on line on Vimeo. Newcomers and others have started to benefit from these productions and many more can be made with the material that has been shot and stored.

Reflections

We are happy with the amount of footage that is available now (almost 4TB out of 6TB capacity) and that is being stored on the “4-Bay drive” that could be purchased thanks the support from SAIIER. Also we are grateful for the participation of many Aurovillians, who gave their time. More work has to be done, in filming as well as editing. And also the website still needs to be finished. All in all the goals were rather ambitious, especially concerning the limited number of people involved.

Apart from ongoing projects that we have already mentioned we are presently working on a comprehensive presentation of AVAG activities which will be released in September 2016; we have also been asked to video document the International Zone of Auroville; these are some aspects of Auroville unfolding which are worthy of a deeper understanding.

Conclusion

In our utilization of this equipment, we feel we are faithful to our initial demand and we are expecting to use it on a long-term basis. One thing to be noted though is that this piece of equipment is a small part of what is needed to record and edit these educational materials for Newcomers and for everyone in need of better understanding of Auroville life. Fortunately, we have been able to get the trust of other parties as well and find the complementary funding to assume all the necessary expenses. It is of great significance that SAIIER is part of this effort. Thank you.
Auroville Film Festival 2015

Introduction

The Auroville Film Festival (AVFF) acts as a showcase for films made by Aurovilians, films made about Auroville, films made by students of Auroville and and films made by residents of the bioregion. The AVFF's other aim is to bring quality international films that develop the theme of human unity.

Description of project

The Auroville Film Festival consisted of 5 days and 6 nights of almost continuous films back-to-back. It took place from October 2nd to 7th, 2015. Included in the program were round-table discussions about the human unity films, and music and dance performances. The festival space included art installations and a food court serving cheap international food. The AVFF organizing team consisted of Marco Feira, Krishna, Christoph, Sasi, Tom, Tlaloc, Christine, and Laxmanan.

A total of 149 films were screened: 47 films by Aurovilians (10h 33m), 30 films about Auroville (11h 45m), 17 films by students (1h 48m), and 55 films in our Human Unity category (43h 34m).

Our selection group for the international category of films that develop the theme of Human Unity watched more than 200 submitted films in the preceding one and a half years. This year for the first time we partnered with the online platform www.clickforfestivals.com and received more than 120 submissions through it out of which 15 were selected. We received 250 submissions through our website, filmfestival.auroville.org.

Outcomes

- Local filmmakers were able to have a showcase for their work.
- The Town Hall administrative area was transformed into a cultural hub.
- Aurovillians were treated to a week of different films from all over the world, music concerts and opportunities to meet over delicious affordable food.

Reflections

The most meaningful aspect of the project was to be able to use the AVFF as a way to reach out to the local community and also to the residents of the immediate bioregion, wider India and the world.

The round-table discussions that we piloted in 2015, we would like to organize and publicize more, so they are much more attended.

Conclusion

The AVFF wants to remain a completely commercial-free project where people can come and see films for free. We want to create an environment that is inviting and inspiring. The support we receive from SAIIER and others allows us to continue the AVFF in this vein.
Auroville Rainbow Child

Introduction

The aim of Auroville Rainbow Child is to offer to Auroville children opportunities to discover themselves and acquire new skills additional to a formal school education.

Description of project

Regular classes of Yoga, Energetic games, Arts and Crafts for children were held in Pitanga on Saturdays. Around 25 children from different schools and kindergartens participated regularly, aged from 5 to 12. The classes were facilitated by Gala.

This year in the Yoga and Energetic games classes, we mostly focused on the 4 main universal elements: Water, Fire, Earth and Wind. Through playing games and with the help of meditation and pranayama techniques, students learned how to connect with each element and feel benefit of each element. For example Water gives the feeling of flexibility; Fire the element of truth; Earth element gives them grounding and Wind gives them the feeling of acceptance. After doing the activities the students shared with the group their self-experience by discussing and drawing what they felt. We felt this experience was successful and had a positive outcome on every student in a different personal way.

Outcomes

Children of different ages, from different schools, and with different health specifics (such as asthma, hearing difficulty, speech difficulty) improved their ability to integrate in this life to be able to communicate and socialize with other people.

The Yoga classes this year were over-full; sometimes there were more kids wanting to participate than could fit into the yoga room in Pitanga hall.

From the beginning of our program and through all these years we have worked with children from different Auroville schools and kindergartens and with a mix of ages. We have noticed that children come with different education base levels, and even though they work with us only once a week we see progress in their skills and see how they change. Some start to have more calm and balanced behaviour, and with that they show deep interest in our 'work' together and that they want more classes.

Reflections

We came to understand that some children’s hyperactivity and bad mood in the class depended on their personal emotions, and after analysing this year’s work we realised the necessity of deep work with emotions. We will do this next year by using Pantam theatre activities and also working with colours to express emotions.

There have been more home-schooled children joining us in the last few years, and for them a once-a-week class is not enough. We would like to remark that if we have the chance to give more classes, like 3 times a week, there will be much more progress.
Auroville Singing Festival

Introduction

The purpose of the Auroville Singing Festival is for the community to participate in singing and enjoy feeling human unity together. Singing is one of best ways to sublimate the individual human being.

This year's Singing Festival

This year's Festival took place on October 9th and 10th, 2015. Performances were given at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Bharat Nivas.

Specifically encouraged were songs composed by the participants, those with deep lyrics and those which touch the inner heart. Promotion targeted youngsters. The outcome was the spontaneous participation of over 150 people; they made teams and choirs to present their songs. Some of the participants collaborated and exchanged a talent and skill on the same stage.

Reflections

Through this experience participants grow in understanding of what is specifically important for performances in Auroville. Here there are many different nationalities and cultural identities and gaps of communication. But singing on the stage together is removing the difficulties.

The organizers were overworked this year, and we see that it might be necessary to invite others (musicians and bands, sound engineer) from outside to help with this event.

Conclusion

The Singing Festival is a beautiful spectacle without any barrier of generation, race, or culture. We will keep working to improve this offering to the community.
Child Protection Service

Introduction

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 is exercised by us from grass-roots onwards, and aims at protecting our children by creating awareness from young age onwards.

This year we held our programme in the government schools, with four part-time staff, and in the future we are planning to go to non-government schools.

Activities of the year

We promote this education with youths (both genders) and with working women in Auroville.

Every year we reach 175 students in 4 government schools and 3 Auroville outreach schools. We start the class by sharing with the students about human anatomy, and 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.

With children from 8 to 12 years we follow our own method, which is to give a topic and have the students draw pictures and explain their work in groups. The topic can be Protection, Parts of the body (mainly Reproductive System), Child Rights, Abuse, Domestic Violence, Child Labour, and Prevention on Child Abuse.

With children from 10 to 18 years we follow the ‘Unicef’ books and information from the internet. We also use the story-telling method with children aged 6 to 14 years.

This year four staff members joined our team and gave our classes in their village schools.

Outcomes

We distributed posters on child safety (awareness information) to Auroville schools and Auroville outreach schools and to Government schools.

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.
- Learn the functions of the reproductive organs (for both genders).
- Widows must re-marry.
- We should not treat the children like slaves.
- In all aspects give equal rights to both genders.
English as a Second Language (ESL) welcome group for Newcomer children

Introduction

Many Newcomer children arrive in Auroville with little or no English and this hampers their ability to integrate and access the English medium delivery of Auroville Schools.

Description of project

This project aimed to run an intensive ‘Welcome’ course for one week, with follow-up workshops in collaboration with the schools, to give these students a grounding in English as well as to provide information for the receiving schools as to the level of English of the new arrivals.

Marion and Chali initially proposed this project to schools and the Entry Service who received the idea with interest. When the books arrived and the course was structured Marion informed the School Board and Entry Service that the course was available by arrangement.

Outcomes

At the time of writing this report, there have been no requests for this course to run. However, the course remains available and can be ready to go when requested. Nevertheless, the course is being used in the following ways:

- The “Let’s Go” books have been used to demonstrate to Aikiyam School the way in which a language course is constructed: curriculum, syllabus, activities and interactive learning techniques covering the four essential skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. As a consequence of this Shankar, the principal of Aikiyam, is working with the Tamil language department at the school to restructure the Tamil course to bring it in line with these modern and essential methods of teaching a language.
- The teachers at Aikiyam have further studied the progressive, scaffolded curriculum of “Let’s Go” in preparation for the beginning of the second phase of the project which began with “Fantastic Phonics”. This ESL project will be begin in the next academic year and will be delivered alongside Fantastic Phonics.
- There is a move among teachers and interested people at the Teachers’ Centre to begin a ‘school’ for the children of Pre-Newcomers and Newcomers, and this ESL course will certainly be an important part of that initiative. At the moment discussions about the shape of this initiative are ongoing.

Reflections

In the circumstances, the steps to construct and deliver this project were followed correctly but the outcome was not as expected.

Conclusion

The course is ready to run. The existence of the “Let’s Go” materials has heightened the awareness of the necessity to deliver English not just as a subject, but as a dynamic method of communication, and this is already having an impact in Aikiyam School.
Lilith Fashion School 2016 Graduating Show

On Jan 23, 2016, Lilith Fashion School presented the final works of all students that had completed the school’s three-year Fashion Design program, in a 60-minute, live, on-stage multimedia fashion & theatre performance. Due to high demand for tickets, the event was performed twice on the performance day, at 6.00pm and at 8.00pm. The event consisted of an audiovisual performance in Bharat Nivas, featuring models wearing the final garment collections designed and created by the school’s graduating students for the show.

The activity was an output of the school’s Fashion Communications Department and was designed to encourage the graduating students to and create and produce an high-quality, public presentation of their work.

The activity aimed to encourage the students to:

a) design and create a thematic fashion garment range to deadline; and
b) design and create an event that presented their range for public viewing.

The students began concept and design work on the show garments 12 months before the performance date and began concept and design work on the performance six months before the performance date.

The overarching concept that informed the work was 'architecture', and specifically within this, the architecture of the Taj Mahal and the work of Spanish architect, Antoni Gaudi. Informed by this conceptual field, aided and guided by the School’s Communications Department, the students assembled a series of dynamic audio-synched montages that were projected on stage-mounted projection surfaces to contextualise and reinforce the thematic content of the students’ work. The montages were assembled and synchronised so as to simultaneously project the architectural element/s that inspired the on-stage garment as the model wearing the garment appeared in stage.

The public performance was the culminating product of a field of study created and conducted from within the Auroville community, made available to all members of the community and their guests. An estimated 800 audience members attended the two performances. The performance itself represented the collaboration of various fields of expertise from within the community including lighting design, video mapping and projection work, theatre and stage work, choreography, original musical composition, fashion design, tailoring skills and garment construction.

The project was a learning experience for staff and students alike. Many aspects of the show were new to all involved and presented some steep learning curves. As a result of this process, the project, rather than assembling a list of the impossible, if anything, opened doorways to entirely new levels of performance and event.
Measuring Wholesome Progress
Pilot on Farming & Food

Background

This project is part of the wider initiative of AuroStat (Auroville Statistical Initiative), which aims at providing sound data management practices to Auroville. The broad aim of AuroStat is to develop indicators for a holistic evaluation of Auroville’s development. It is envisioned that various levels of indicators are developed: at the unit/activity level, at the sector wise and at thematic levels and proxy-indicators for intangible values. A proposal for developing the first strategic framework for the indicators for multiple sectors of Auroville (food, education & learning, economy) was submitted to SAIIER in May 2015. After feedback from SAIIER board this proposal was scaled down in terms of scope and budget and finally focused on the Auroville Farming sector viz. research and development of a framework for data collection, management and computing system for the farms.

Objectives

The objectives of the revised proposal were:

- Research on food indicators through online research and participatory sessions with stakeholders
- Data collection for demand and supply side management of food/crops
- Computing of indicators for the food sector
- Branding and identity design for AuroStat

Description of project

Need identification

Several meetings with the Farm Group and sub-groups (Vegetable, Grain, Diary and Animal husbandry) as well as with committed individual farmers were held in order to identify their needs in data management and crop planning. Farmers expressed the need for an increased information exchange between themselves, in order to coordinate crop planning and to avoid eventual surplus production of particular crops due to lack of communication. The need for increased visibility regarding the demand per crop item was expressed, as this will assist with crop planning and enable farmers to better respond to changing demand. Additionally, farmers expressed the need for regular data collection and recording, as this will support the process for obtaining organic certification. These findings were incorporated in the wire frames that were developed, and were presented to the Farm Group for feedback and approval.

We also meet with Foodlink (the distribution hub for the Auroville farms) and with some food distribution units and restaurants such as Solar Kitchen, Pour Tous Distribution Center (PTDC), Pour Tous (PTPS), Naturellement, Tanto and Visitors Centre in order to identify their information needs relating to the supply from Auroville farms. Most of them shared data on their monthly food purchases for the last year, and many agreed that data may be exported on a regular basis from their accounting or database systems, in order to get an overall picture of their purchases. This feedback has been incorporated in the wire frame developed and will be given as a brief to the programming team.
Research and development of indicators for the food sector

Indicators and reporting requirements were researched and defined in close collaboration with the farmers and with Foodlink. The proposed set of indicators was developed applying an internationally recognized framework developed by Tanahasi, on the concept of universal access (viz. availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality).

Algorithms for forecasting of crop produce as well as performance indicators were also developed. These will be built into the website for automatic computation.

Table 1 Indicators for Food Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Covered in IT platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>Organic food Available</td>
<td>% Of organic produce available on total sales/procurement</td>
<td>Distributors, food processors, food link</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Source of Organic Food Available</td>
<td>% Of AV and non-AV organic produce</td>
<td>Distributors, food processors, food link</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Auroville produced food available</td>
<td>% Of AV and non-AV produce (local produce available)</td>
<td>Distributors, food processors, food link</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>Financially Accessible</td>
<td>% Of Aurovilians not able to afford organic food</td>
<td>Via annual survey</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physically Accessible</td>
<td>% Of distributors in Auroville distributing Auroville organic food</td>
<td>Food Link</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% Of food processors/restaurants procuring AV organic food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>Acceptance of locally produced organic food</td>
<td>% Of AV wanting to have organic, locally produced food</td>
<td>Via annual survey</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>% Of Farms and Food establishments having organic certification</td>
<td>% Of farmers organically certified</td>
<td>Farm Group</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>% Of producers organically certified</td>
<td>Food Establishments</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainable resource management</td>
<td>Water usage</td>
<td>Farm Group</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Energy usage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Source of seeds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Source of feedstock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dignity of Labour</td>
<td>Fare wages</td>
<td></td>
<td>Farm Group, food distributors, establishments etc.</td>
<td>No (to be included in phase 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eating together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wireframe for an online website application

Based on the indicators and the data needs of the farmers, the team developed a wireframe prototype of a website application for the farmers. The website will allow for data entry of planting and harvest, using a standard computer or mobile device. The data gets entered into a web database, and reports are generated in real time. These reports give a detailed overview of the demand and supply patterns taking all data that has been entered by the farms and food establishments. Features of the website application include:

- Forecasting of produce
- Farm diary for monitoring of individual farm plots and crop batches
- Indicator of demand per crop item based on last year’s sales/purchases at various food outlets
- Weather related data (rainfall, humidity)
- Display of financial data (income and expense by predefined categories)
- Price comparison of Auroville and non-Auroville produce
- Monitoring of soil, water and energy input
- Monitoring of granary (input, wastage, output)
- Monitoring for organic certified or not certified produce
- Regular notifications via email or SMS to stakeholders

The final wireframe was presented during a farm group meeting and has approved by the farmers. Further funds (phase 2 of the project proposal) will be required for completion of the website.

Matching of data sets of various stakeholders

Each of Auroville’s food processing and distributing units are using their own unique categorization and nomenclature system for food and crop items, which makes comparison of data from various sources cumbersome. A template was developed to match the multiple nomenclature systems and to integrate them into a coherent system.

Visual identity for AuroStat

The logo and visual identify for AuroStat was completed. This will serve as a design guideline for all future initiatives under AuroStat.

Future plans

Phase 2 of this project will entail the following:

- Programming of all components of the application as specified by the wire-frame
- Finalization of notification system and messages for the application
- Integration of existing and future databases of food distributors and processors
- Establishing an inventory for all fruit and dairy farms in Auroville
- User Interface testing of the website application
- Launch of application for all stakeholder groups
- Mobilize further food processing units to participate
- Train farmers to use the software
- Design data collection system to complete Community Level Indicators
Introduction

In many ways the report for this musical production could be very similar to the report we submitted for the musical production we did in March 2013, “Sorcery at Sea”. Many of the elements we experienced during that production were repeated with this next generation of children. We had all the same elements such as the large group of Aurovilians working together in cooperative collaboration, the unique experience of creating something original from scratch, the skill sharing and transfer from different generations of Aurovilians, and the complex social interactions that occur when a production such as this is directed from within the group itself rather than from a singular authority. (All of these are described in some detail in the previous report.) With this in mind, this report will contain the basic facts regarding the production which are lifted and updated from the prior report, and a number of new reflections based on the differences in this production compared to the previous one.

Production of the musical

The work for this production began in December 2014, when the core team of Matt, Clare, Mukta, Swaha and Paul came together, and it continued for the next nine months when, finally, from September 24th for four consecutive nights, 60 Aurovilians (46 kids and 14 adults) from the ages of 7 to 64, performed a musical that was written and composed in Auroville.

In addition to the performers on stage, the Youth Choir was also involved in the performance with an additional 14 kids singing in the majority of the songs, along with a live band of five Auroville musicians. A backstage crew of 40 people supported the performance during those four days; creating the sets, operating the lights, mixing the sound, applying the make-up, dressing the performers, and providing the food and drinks needed to sustain the group. So at the end of the day we had over 150 people involved in the production.

For the previous 12 weeks this group had become a small community within the larger community of Auroville. They worked with each other day in and day out, as the production came together, from the initial auditions, drama rehearsals, song practice, dance rehearsals, set building and painting to costume design and creation.

For the previous nine months a much smaller group had been meeting to develop the story, write the script, compose the tunes and write the lyrics.

From the very beginning, it was a collaborative effort with ideas coming from more than one individual and entering into the collective pool from where they evolved into the final script and music. As the date of the performance drew nearer and the circle widened, more ideas came and attached themselves to that which was already existing, with the final product presenting itself to the large community as the performance. The performance was watched by four full houses in Bharat Nivas, around 2400 people.
New and unique experiences from “Millidacious”

The intention from the start was to improve on the previous work that we have accomplished; to create a production that was more innovative, more involved and more challenging than anything we had worked on together before.

Dance: The most specific additional element this time was the introduction of dance routines into the performance. We had a dynamic dance choreographer in Elodie, and she created four of the five dances that were performed in the show. The fifth one, the town cats’ dance, was entirely choreographed by Jesse. For all of the dances we had dedicated groups of children and adults who learnt the dances from scratch over a period of two months; rehearsals of the three different groups happened twice a week. Many of the children had no previous experience of dance, and thus for them it was again a unique experience.

Music: Musically, this time the original score, composed by Matt, was more complex and was based on two specific genres of music: Rock & Roll and Jazz. This gave the production a distinctive identity. The band was larger and more complex than in the previous shows, and required much more rehearsal as there was no room for mistakes as whole dance routines were based on the music.

Costumes and make-up: The costumes, designed and created by Jyotis, were spectacular, something that no one would have envisaged at the beginning of the production. It brought the energy of the show to new heights in the last week of rehearsal as everyone saw the work, details and creativity that Jyotis and her team had poured into the costumes. Additionally, the make-up for all of the characters was something that no one had experienced before.

Small group dynamics within the larger group: Due to the scale of the production, a lot of the work was carried out in smaller groups. Compared to our previous productions, many pieces of the musical were practiced independently, and then incorporated into the musical in the final weeks. This led to deep working relationships in smaller groups, which all came together to contribute to the dynamic of the final performances.

Outcomes

The feedback from the community was instantaneous, with many people echoing an appreciation of the collaborative spirit and general goodwill amongst the performers and production team. The new level of production quality that we achieved gave everyone involved a real experience of quality, created entirely from within the community. Being involved in a group that needs discipline and professionalism to create a performance gives a great lesson in life, showing that some small inconveniences are worth enduring so that the collective can create something beautiful and joyful.

Events like this create such social cohesion within the community as a whole; interpersonal relations are strengthened, and in some cases old individual conflicts are resolved simply due to proximity and surrender to the goodwill of the larger group process.

The end product is also important as the community at large comes together to see the production, and appreciates the talent and creativity within the community. And it has long-term repercussions, as the confidence created in these performances carries forward into other group processes where cooperation and trust are required.
Mira Cultural Group

Introduction

Mira Cultural Group offers classes in Indian classical dance, classical vocal music, playing the Veena instrument, and folk dance. The classes take place on Saturdays at the SAWCHU building at Bharat Nivas.

Activities of the year

Dance: There are in all 21 children who learned basic Bharatnatiyam and 6 advanced children who went through two programs. The children learning classical dance were ready to perform on Tamil New Year 2015, and on International Woman's Day, March 8th. 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. The dance performance photos were published on Auronet.

Carnatic vocal music: Two Carnatic music classes were offered: one for ladies and another for children. 31 children participated and 7 ladies. Some children were too young and could not sit more than 15 minutes, so these children came only two or three months. The women and children learned Carnatic songs about different gods, like Shiva, Ganesha, and Krishna, and about the Mother. They happily sang in their puja place and Saraswati Puja time. They also performed in the Auroville Singing Festival. The Bharata Matha songs included one kid dressed up as Bharata Matha. One child sang eight songs at the Kuilapalayam temple festival; the villagers asked her “where did you learn all these devotional songs?” and she proudly told them “in Auroville and Mira Cultural Group!”

Veena: Earlier in the year there were several Veena students, but now only two have time to continue with the classes.

Folk dance: Folk dance was included in the summer program in 2015. Ten children were interested to learn folk and contemporary dance. A few months ago six girls stopped, because they were too busy with other extracurricular activities. The students performed for 2 hours in the International Women's Day festival.

Outcomes

17 Auroville children, 14 bioregion children, 5 Auroville ladies, 2 bioregion ladies, and 1 Auroville special care child benefited from these classes and gave numerous performances (see above).

Reflections

When the children get bored in class they frankly tell the teacher to give a break. They go for play 5 minutes, then they come happily back to attend the class.

We face difficulty to get a teacher who has special ability to teach something well without calculating the number of students and the duration of the class. We would be happy to find teachers who work out of love for the subject and the students and not primarily for money. It would be perfect if the teachers were connected to Auroville or the Ashram.
Orientation to Auroville Workshop
A project of Mira Cultural Group

Introduction

The aim of this workshop is for participants to learn about the values and aim of Auroville. This knowledge is not only for joining Auroville - it is to get to know Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and to study 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 and not only to develop individually.

Description of project

Aurovilian and Newcomer women attend this orientation to Auroville workshop, given once monthly on Saturdays at SAWCHU or Mitra. The classes are conducted in Tamil only; participants can 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. Then we go for some time through peoples’ experiences after studying The Mother’s works. This year we took “Sri Aurobindo in Alipur Jail” and “Quality of Generosity”. Our teacher refers to the books and shares with us a lot of stories of The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and Her vision of Auroville. Especially we read “White Roses” by Huta and “The Mother”, “Prison Tales” and “Light on the Path” by Sri Aurobindo (see Footnote 1).

We also go through the explanation of the twelve psychological perfections as given by The Mother. This time we specially concentrated on ‘Generosity’ (see Footnote 2).

Outcomes

We are conducting these kind of classes once a month and it gives us quite some experiences and knowledge of Auroville. Many of us are benefiting from 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 transfer into a better appreciation and identification with their being, learning and working in Auroville.

Footnote 1: Sri Aurobindo’s experience in Alipur Jail

In 1908 and 1909, while Sri Aurobindo was an under trial prisoner in the Alipur Jail, he had the constant vision of the omnipresent Godhead: “I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not a tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms..."
of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover.... I looked at the prisoners in the jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers, and as I looked at them I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies.”

In the jail Sri Aurobindo spent much of his time reading the Gita and Upanishads, meditating and practising yoga. Even in the courtroom he remained absorbed in meditation, attending little to the trial and hardly listening to the evidence. During this period his view of life was radically changed; he had originally taken up yoga with the idea of acquiring spiritual force and energy and divine guidance for his political work. But now his inner spiritual life and realisation, which was continually increasing in magnitude and universality, assumed a larger place and took him up entirely, His work became a part and result of it, far exceeding in its scope the service and liberation of the country; it fixed itself in an aim, previously only glimpsed, which was world-wide in its bearing and concerned with the whole future of humanity.

Sri Aurobindo’s yoga and spiritual philosophy are founded on four great realisations. Two of these he had realised in full before his coming to Pondicherry in 1910. The first, the realisation of the silent, spaceless and timeless Brahman, he had gained under the guidance of the Maharashtrian Yogi Lele in 1908. The feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world which at first attended this realisation disappeared after the second realisation, which was gained in the Alipur Jail in 1908 or 1909, the realisation of the cosmic consciousness and the vision of the Divine, as all beings and as all that is. In his meditations in the jail Sri Aurobindo was already on his way to the other two realisations — that of the supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading to the Supermind.

Footnote 2: Generosity

Green is the colour connected with Generosity. Green expresses vital strength; energy, generosity, self-giving; the emotional life-force; the emotional vital; the emotions.

“Generosity is to find one’s own satisfaction in the satisfaction of others.”

- The Mother

“I shall not speak here of material generosity which naturally consists in giving others what one has. But even this virtue is not very widespread, for as soon as one becomes rich one thinks more often of keeping one’s wealth than by giving it away. The more men possess, the less are they generous.

I want to speak of moral generosity. To feel happy, for example, when a comrade is successful. An act of courage, of unselfishness, a fine sacrifice have a beauty in them which gives you joy. It may be said that moral generosity consists in being able to recognise the true worth and superiority of others.”

- The Mother

“There is not one of you who will dare to tell me that it makes no difference when the psychic is there, when one feels better within oneself, when one is full of light, hope, goodwill, generosity, compassion for the world, and sees life as a field of action, progress, realisation. Doesn’t it make a difference from the days when one is upset, grumbling, when everything seems ugly, unpleasant, wicked, when one loves nobody, wants to break everything, gets angry, feels quite uneasy, without strength, without energy, without any joy? That makes a difference, doesn’t it?”

- The Mother
Research in Education for Sustainable Waste Management

Introduction

In our bioregion and in India as a whole there is increasing evidence of a need for improved waste management. The way we use and discard items is quickly destroying the earth and damaging our health more than most people realise. Unfortunately, change to the way waste is managed in India is very slow and the quantity of waste generated each day is increasing, compounding this problem.

The aim of this research project was to explore innovative ways to introduce education for sustainable management in school curricula, thereby planting the seed for improved waste management systems in the future leaders of India. WasteLess (the team of Maya M., Kaya S., Ribhu and Chandrah), working together with both Auroville and Outreach schools through the Teachers' Center at SAIIER, aimed to research, develop and test 10 hands-on practical activities targeting solid waste management based on the existing Garbology educational activities. These activities were to be the result of a high participatory input from the teachers, through conversations on integral education and brainstorming sessions, with particular focus on integrating the activities into their class curriculum. These activities are to be made available in both Tamil and English and shared via hardcopy and online for wider use across the country.

Description of project

We found the existing Garbology material developed by WasteLess, although broad in content, has not been widely implemented in the Auroville and Outreach schools. The quantity of research, sheer number of activities created and the manner in which activities are organised, discouraged teachers from picking up the materials easily. The activities also require quite some preparation from teachers. The outreach schools found concepts which link to pollution, climate change, and consumption quite complex especially as the entire curriculum is written in English. The teachers we spoke to are very interested in incorporating education on sustainable waste management into their class schedules, however they requested support in training, simplified materials and more hands on assistance from the WasteLess team. Working with Auroville and its outreach schools through the Teachers' Center, WasteLess researched and developed 10 hands-on practical activities based on the existing Garbology activities, and tested these in both Auroville and Outreach schools. We aimed at a high participatory approach, involving teachers in feedback and brainstorming sessions as well as in conducting the activities.

The research project consisted of an introduction & participatory planning phase, activity development & testing period, and final evaluation, report & sharing phase.

Introduction & participatory planning phase

This phase of the project involved 2 interactive sessions with teachers at the Teachers' Center. The project was introduced during a ‘Conversation on Integral Education’ session. Interested teachers were invited to share their ideas on how the project activity phases could be planned. Details such as how to effectively contact and involve teachers in the project, the ideal duration of the activities, the level of support required from teachers, the methods of providing feedback, the criteria in developing the materials and which aspects of waste to target were discussed. The methods used for this phase
included creative brainstorming sessions and open discussions with the interested teachers during these interactive sessions. Using this valuable information and feedback, WasteLess then held several internal team discussions to analyse the main findings and recommendations that could be used to adapt the current Garbology activities and adjust the approach for developing new activities.

First “Conversation on Integral Education” session: August 4th 2015

14 teachers as well as individuals interested in education for sustainable waste management attended this interactive session on education for a sustainable future. A presentation was given on 'Education for a Sustainable Future', covering the issues surrounding waste and its management, the WasteLess approach, and the different educational materials & games we have developed at WasteLess. We then focused on the new SAIIER research project to introduce education on waste in Auroville & outreach schools. The idea was to have a participatory approach, working together with teachers in testing the activities, getting feedback and adapting the activities and tracking social impact of these activities. The floor was opened to questions and discussion, which brought about different ideas.

The outcome of this first session highlighted the general concern about the waste situation in the surrounding villages and a need to work on improving waste management and have an effective and regular waste collection and processing service. This need ties in closely with the TDC’s Regional Development Plan in solid waste management, the initiatives from the Eco Service and the wider Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative nation wide.

We noticed that the majority of people who attended wanted us to focus on systems intervention and waste collection. This further strengthened the importance of our focus – not only dealing with the problem once it is created, i.e. waste collection and cleanups, but rather placing emphasis on dealing with the sources of the problem; understanding systems, conscious consumerism, composting, separating valuable materials and selling them to a scrap dealer, and overall reducing the production of waste. This is part of WasteLess’ underlying values of closing the tap on waste (reducing waste) rather than mopping up (collection systems, waste clean ups).

The concerns raised during this meeting emphasised our interest in focusing on the future generation. Adults generally tend to look towards solving the issue once it is created; children, however, become readily inspired to make the changes themselves and at their home to stop the problem before it is created. It is clear that one single person or single organisation such as WasteLess cannot solve the problem of waste; but instead there is a need for the whole population to value a better service and want to bring about the change. Building the value for proper systems in a democracy is the best long-term solution. That is why we are focusing on children in education. We want them to look at waste from different angles – consumerism, natural resources, systems, as well as production. We hope that then the solutions will be more sustainable. It also became very clear from the meeting that we needed a follow up session to find out not only about the problems around waste, but what topics under the broader waste category teachers wanted to focus on, and how we could best contact and interact with teachers to get more of them involved in this project.

Second “Conversation on Integral Education” session: October 10th 2015

10 teachers from Auroville and Outreach schools attended the second session on education for sustainable waste management. A short introduction was given to teachers, followed by two brainstorming sessions. The first brainstorming session’s aim was to find out what topics teachers were interested in focusing on when it comes to solid waste management into their curricula. The main key areas of interest from teachers included a large variety ranging from learning about different plastics, packaging, waste generation, where does waste go, lifecycle of products, recycling techniques, what can students do, what happens if we don’t manage waste, Eco Service hands-on experience, to following the whole process from waste generation to disposal, history of consumerism, and what
options/alternatives are there. These broader areas of interest guided our selection of activities that we then tested in the different schools.

The second brainstorming session focused on how we could involve more teachers in this project. Teacher’s participation and involvement was key for this project, as ultimately the aim was to develop activities that were teacher friendly and easy to use so that they are implemented more widely in school curricula. This session highlighted the teachers’ need for more assistance from the WasteLess team in the schools. Having one teacher in each school as the main anchor point or contact point between WasteLess and the schools could be useful to facilitate regular feedback from teachers to WasteLess. It was also stated that the different activities should match the passion/subjects of the different teachers, therefore having a wider range of activities that can fit in a variety of subjects is important. They also felt that in the future having one day in the school calendar dedicated to Solid Waste Management, or implementing Garbology classes within the school curriculum would be effective. For ways of contacting teachers, holding group sessions would be the best way to contact teachers, generally after school hours on weekends as teachers have busy schedules. The session ended with a summary of the next steps for developing this project and the teachers were asked to share this project with other teachers who they think might be interested.

Activity development & testing phase
The activity development and testing phase of the project took place from January to March 2016, matching the Auroville schools’ calendar. Following the two interactive sessions, interested teachers were contacted to test specific activities within their school curricula. 10 key activities were selected based on their interests, with the aim to test each activity in as wide a range of ages and schools as possible to get the most concrete and relevant feedback. The following schools and grades took part in this activity development and testing phase of the activities:

- Transition School: Grades 1, 5, and 6
- TLC: Age range 11 – 13
- Aikiyam School: Grades 6, 7

In this phase each individual activity was developed, presented, tested, and conducted by interested teachers with the assistance of WasteLess, and feedback collected. WasteLess’ role throughout was to provide assistance in conducting the lessons, monitoring, and gathering feedback from teachers, students, and members of the team. The research was conducted and tested based on ‘agile development’ or the Japanese KanBan system. In this method, the approach for each activity remains flexible and can be adjusted. Based on all the feedback received changes to the activity were made.

The aim was to make materials more teacher and student friendly, at the appropriate level for varying age groups and schools, and to improve the effectiveness and attractiveness of the materials in conveying information. Focus on learning and continuous improvement for each activity was adopted so that the materials created, tested, and produced matched the requirements of teachers. WasteLess collected data by means of classroom observations and direct feedback from teachers at the end of each activity lesson. The main criteria looked at during classroom observations included level of language, vocabulary, format and layout, length and duration of the activity, teaching style, classroom dynamics such as number of students, as well as the level and depth of the content. This information helped us to adjust the approach, evaluate the success of each activity developed and identify areas needing improvement.
Final evaluation, report & sharing phase
Following the testing of activities in classes, WasteLess had several internal team discussions to analyse and incorporate the feedback. During the month of March till April, the main feedback and recommendations were integrated into the 10 activities. This involved a period of content development and modifications, designing illustrations, developing the layout and design, and proofreading and translation of the activities into Tamil. The activities are in the process of development and will be available by end of May. The sharing with all Auroville and Outreach schools, the Teachers' Center, online (in the Education Portal and WasteLess website) along with hard copies will take place in June and July 2016. Interested members in our network of schools and NGO’s involved in sustainable waste management will be sent the materials in hard and soft copy. Please see attached two sample activities that have been developed, ‘Introduction to solid waste’ and ‘How long does trash last?’

Outcomes

One major outcome of this project was the development of the following 10 activities on sustainable waste management in English and Tamil. The final versions will be developed by end of May 2016.

Ten educational Garbology activities:

- **Introduction to Solid Waste** – the first interactive lesson in Garbology introducing the topic of waste to students. This is a synthesis of the most important aspects of waste management from our extensive Garbology theme introduction chapters and is suitable for all educational approaches.
- **How Long Does Trash Last?** – learn about the different disposal methods of waste and how long it takes different materials to break down in a landfill.
- **Map my Soft Drink** – learn how you get your favourite soft drink and understand how the way it is packed has an impact on waste, use of natural resources and pollution.
- **Waste Relay Race** – compete with your classmates to separate waste as fast as possible and learn that separating your waste in the correct bin means more waste can be recycled.
- **Garbology Nidra** – imagine an ideal world without waste while diving into deep meditation practicing an interestingly adapted Awareness Through the Body activity.
- **Spot the Batteries** – spot the batteries and colour in the drawing so you can learn how to save the environment from pollution.
- **Less Packaging** – put your skills to test and find out more about different food items and their packaging.
- **Timeline of Stuff** – explore the history and some interesting facts and use your creativity to create your timeline to understand how organic matter, paper, glass, metal and plastic have taken such an important place in our lives.
- **Follow the Bottle** – follow the story of the plastic bottle and find out how it travels and what happens to it once you have finished using it.
- **Litter Clean Up** – become active and clean up a littered area around your school. Be the change you want to see and inspire other students in your school.

In addition to the activities, we aimed for the 2 interactive sessions held at the Teachers' Center to have inspired teachers to use the materials in their schools and to provide us with continuous feedback. The Teachers' Center has benefited from new materials on sustainable waste management.

The direct beneficiaries of this project will be the teachers and students from Auroville and Outreach schools that participated in the project. Having conducted the research in two Auroville schools and one
Outreach school has directly impacted 90 students, and 8 teachers. Once the activities are shared with our network it could potentially reach over 20,000 students who already use Garbology 101. Students have gained valuable knowledge and hands-on practice to better understand how we think, make, and dispose of our waste and have become empowered to bring about systemic changes in both their school and home environment.

In addition to the students and teachers benefiting, WasteLess as an organisation developing educational materials, has gained valuable insight into creating educational materials, which are tailored to the needs of teachers and students alike.

Indirect beneficiaries include the waste management services in Auroville and the TDC’s Regional Development Plan in solid waste management in six of our surrounding villages. Education has enhanced the value of these services and motivated participation in source separation, recycling and composting. Since the writing of this project proposal, the TDC project has encountered numerous setbacks. The service provided by the Panchayat, source separation, and household participation are the major bottlenecks to the success of the project. The educational activities help to ‘build demand’ for improved systems and to encourage participation. It’s a long-term approach to the solution and regular interaction with all schools is important.

Reflections

The most valuable aspect of this project was visibly seeing how the interactive learning environment inspired change in the way students think about, make, and dispose of their waste. The students’ interest and enthusiasm in the subject of solid waste management was clearly evident throughout the testing period. After each session, students’ feedback showed how they wanted to bring about change. In addition, the participatory approach used throughout the project development phase was particularly useful in supporting teachers as it allowed us to tailor the activities specifically to their needs.

Both students and teachers were very enthusiastic about members of the WasteLess team conducting lessons. The presence of new faces and content experts excited the students and made this experience rewarding. The fact that hands-on assistance was provided to teachers and tailored to their needs enabled them to feel more comfortable with the materials and new subject matter. This was a valuable lesson as we had started the project with the intent to conduct fewer lessons. The impact of our presence in the schools was very positive and each teacher we worked with requested us to continue this work with regular engagement.

A difficulty faced by us was to fit the testing period of the activities in the school calendar (taking into account school holidays, and varying term dates). Outreach schools have different holidays from Auroville schools; we were able to test fewer activities and only one Outreach school had time. Ideally, scheduling activities at the start of the term, or planning in advance for the following term would have been useful for both the teachers and us. Teachers generally plan their programme for the term well in advance. Early scheduling would eliminate issues of finding time later on in an already full schedule, and would enable us to target more schools.

Our team, the students and the teachers were excited by this research project. The subject is new and the global challenges in waste management are only increasing. The research conducted to create these activities is completely new and it is incredibly motivating to test this new form of education for social
impact in Auroville with its diverse educational approaches. We enjoyed this project immensely and we would like to focus more of our time to further explore, research and share our findings. In the future, we would like to dedicate more team members to this project. We would very much like to continue this project, to further test the existing activities as well as new activities, thereby making Garbology a key subject within the school curricula.

Conclusion

We see education in sustainable waste management as a very important topic to teach children, because they are the future generation who will inherit this planet.

We would like to continue this project next year, with the aim to spread to a wider group of students, including more outreach schools as well as targeting all the Auroville schools. Teachers have requested for Garbology to be scheduled as a regular class in their yearly curriculum and we feel it is a necessary education for children. In order for us to cover all the schools and provide hands-on assistance as well as research and documentation, we will need to dedicate more members of the team to this work.

The waste that is produced in India is increasing every day and it is having consequences on the environment and our health. Increasing education will empower people to demand massive improvements in waste collection and disposal services. Most importantly, successfully raising awareness will have the biggest impact on reducing the exponential growth of waste production. Children are becoming the biggest consumers of tomorrow and they will inherit the mess we are creating today. Children are curious and have a close connection to nature and their direct environment. This relationship offers hope and opportunity. If provided with the knowledge, tools, and skills, our next generation will feel empowered and able to make better-informed decisions, which in turn will have a positive and tangible effect on the future.
Scenes from Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*

**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. The broader idea behind this project is to bring Sri Aurobindo’s words to a large public.

**Description of project**

The performance itself was based on a selection of 4 moments of the poem: Aswapati’s invocation of the Divine Mother and her answer to him; the meeting between Savitri and Satyavan; the meeting with Narad; and the Dialogue with Death. We also made a version of Savitri’s story to be narrated during the performance, between scenes.

The performance was conceived to happen at the fountain near the Banyan Tree at Matrimandir Gardens. For this purpose a platform was created that was put in the middle of the fountain, where some actions would happen.

**Outcomes**

“Scenes from Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri*” was performed on August 16th and 17th, 2015.

A Vedic fire was lit and maintained by a group of people who chanted Vedic hymns around the fire throughout the performance. The whole atmosphere was an attempt to evoke ancient times. Lights were reduced to a minimum, to keep the sense of forest dwellings and hermitages of ancient times. Musicians played live music, with violin, strings and percussion.

**Reflections**

The whole work went smoothly and harmoniously. Our rehearsals had been in the open, around the small amphitheatre by the fountain at Matrimandir Gardens. 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 stopped by, sat with us and saw the work taking shape. Some just came in to listen to the verses from *Savitri*, attracted by it. We had a sense of sharing our work from the very beginning.

Another beautiful and meaningful moment was at the very end of the play, when the whole audience kept quiet, and a deep silence held us together for several minutes, in a spontaneous collective concentration. This happened at both performances. This atmosphere of concentration was kept all through the exiting of the public.

**Conclusion**

I (Aryamani) believe this was a beginning; working with the poem *Savitri* is a challenge that may keep us occupied for some time. I am looking forward to continuing this research.
“Snakes of Auroville & Pondicherry”

Introduction

This publication is a handbook on the common snakes found in the Auroville region, which can help Aurovilians learn to identify the snakes that are commonly seen around. It includes color photographs and other identification tips helpful for anyone using it.

My (Rajeev) aim with this project was to raise awareness and respect for Auroville’s wildlife and snakes in particular. Some people kill snakes without hesitation, and it is important to help them change their understanding by educating them that the majority of snakes are harmless to humans, and that snakes are very useful to us as the most effective rodent eaters.

Description of project

Over the years I have been involved in rescuing snakes and educating people specially on snakes. When people find snakes in their homes they often panic. Killing a snake is not the best option.

Working with students in Auroville has brought a lot of improvements, as children naturally respect wild creatures and readily discover the joy and wonder in learning about them.

With all this effort of educating students and adults it was time for me to put together a handbook that is simple and comprehensible for all to use. Over the past several years I have been photographing snakes rescued from Auroville, and slowly built up a good collection. This has made it possible for the booklet to now be put together.

Tixon at AVDzines helped to create the design and layout. We worked closely together on this project.

Outcomes

1000 copies were printed of “Snakes of Auroville and Pondicherry”, a softcover book with 56 color pages. It includes the 20 most common species of snakes in our region. Each species has a color photograph and text about the snake. The book also includes additional information on:

- Look alikes: some venomous and non-venomous snakes look similar, and these are compared so that people may not confuse between them.
- Snake senses and physiology.
- What to do in case of a snake bite.

Several copies of the book will be given to each of the Auroville schools and Outreach schools, and I am planning to give presentations about snakes, also introducing the book, to schools who are interested.
Sopanam – Parts of Being

Introduction

This project saw the completion of the first 30-minute part of a 60-minute video presentation about the various ‘parts of being’ as described by Sri Aurobindo. Presented is their characteristic nature, method of purification and manner of transformation. This is part of an ongoing series of videos by Sopanam (team Hemant S. and Manoj) which presents Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga from an overall basic framework to the details.

Currently there are no video presentations about the parts of being available for people joining Auroville or for the Integral Yoga community worldwide. We use cinematic motion graphics, instead of lecture videos, so that it is easy for people to understand fundamental concepts in an easy way in short time.

Description of project

The parts we present cinematically in this video project are: Physical, Lower vital, Central vital, Higher vital, Physical mind, Vital mind, Mind proper, Psychic, and Spiritual, along with Surface consciousness, Subconscient, Subliminal and Superconscient.

The process of making these videos involve the following:

- Research and script writing
- Voice-over dub for creating timed motion graphics
- Visualisation, 3D motion graphics models and sets (ongoing)
- Gathering photos and live footage as required
- Rendering (ongoing)
- Music composition and recording
- Editing, compositing, mixing, reviewing, correcting (ongoing)
- Final music and voice-over recording (ongoing)
- Final master and production (not yet done)

This project began in December 2014 and work was done through March 2016. Our revising of the script and some technical delays in producing visuals has set us back by 6 months. We have completed 30 minutes of 60 minutes video up till now. Since this is part of a larger project, only in relation with all other parts this part can be properly completed in the third phase.

Conclusion

Project funding was for 18 months and has ended March 2016. At present we have finalised five chapters. Four more are remaining to be done.
Stewardship for New Emergence

Background

Stewardship for New Emergence is a leadership workshop designed to empower individuals and transform organizations 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 all the world 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 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 will not allowed).

Objectives

**Stage 1 Program:** The objective was to build integral stewardship capacities in Aurovilians and associates. This workshop series provided tools to the participants that will better enable them to design and implement project that will have a sustainable impact in Auroville and in the world at large. It offered the opportunity for established and/or budding leaders to explore issues that can transform organizations.

**Stage 2 Program | Manifesting Transformational Results:** To deepen understanding of stewardship principles for participants that completed a full Stage 1 program. The focus is applying the tools leaned to concrete projects in order to better deliver results by looking at gaps and limitations enhance ability to handle triggers, get clarity about accountability and responsibility, explore trust and practice being assertive to progress in projects and community involvement. Planning and designing of the project and its implementation has to be anchored in the greatest impact that needs to be inclusive and work for all.

**Practitioner Coach Program:** To train practitioner coaches that in future can facilitate training programs.

Outputs

The following table lists the number of participants for each of the program outputs of Stewardship for New Emergence:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>No of Participants</th>
<th>Program Dates</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>12-14 December 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Session 2</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12-14 February 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Session 3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8-10 April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Session 1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3-4 April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Practitioner Coaches</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2 April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation Groups</td>
<td>~15</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>The following translation groups are working: Tamil, Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, Russian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Translation</td>
<td></td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>Most of the hand outs have been translated into Tamil, translation during the Workshop from Tamil into English was provided, Subtitles for the movie Storey of Stuff has been completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outcomes/Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Unit/People</th>
<th>Comment/Description</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection Process for Working Groups</td>
<td>Jaya and Helena with support of extended team</td>
<td>Integrating tools into the working group proposal and facilitation of the selection process.</td>
<td>½ day assessment session for AVC, WC organization and facilitation of the selection process in Dec. 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Work</td>
<td>Jaya, Helena &amp; Uma</td>
<td>Organizing events and starting initiatives to shift culture based on 12 values as given by The Mother and agreements for ideals that underline Auroville’s existence.</td>
<td>1-day forgiveness workshop with African youth. Start up of Sourcing our Oneness initiative that works on building relationships between all organizations working for Sri Aurobindo’s vision. 3 big events organized so far.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem Land</td>
<td>Aura Auro Design</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurostat</td>
<td>Statistical Office Initiative (Vikram, Martin, Manoj)</td>
<td>Development of holistic progress indicators for Auroville.</td>
<td>Frame for indicators developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3H Summer School</td>
<td>Auroville Green Practices</td>
<td>A 3-week residential program for students of architecture and design. This has been designed and implemented using Stewardship for New Emergence tools.</td>
<td>3 programs completed, one in planning. “50 students trained, 3 temporary structures donated to Auroville (Sacred Groves, Visitors Centre, African Pavilion Groups), post-program mentoring of students ongoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Auroville</td>
<td>Auroville Green Practices</td>
<td>2-week residential program for high school students on urban farming and ecological stewardship using Stewardship for New Emergence tools.</td>
<td>1 program completed, 1 program in planning, 14 students trained. 2 urban farms designed and implemented (Citadines and Pitanga).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program for Responsible Energy Management</td>
<td>Auroville Green Practices</td>
<td>2-week program for on Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. In partnership with Charleton University, USA. Program design using Stewardship for New Emergence tools.</td>
<td>1 program confirmed for December 2016 - 20 students expected. 1 kw Solar PV system to be donated to Tibetan Pavilion. Energy Efficiency intervention sponsored for Tibetan Pavilion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting for Sustainable Development Course at IIM Indore</td>
<td>Auroville Consulting</td>
<td>10-credit course on Sustainable Development at IIM Indore for Postgraduate students.</td>
<td>1 program successfully completed. Future program in planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents Assembly Service</td>
<td>Slava and Inge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell for Stewardship for New Emergence</td>
<td>Helena and Bridget</td>
<td>To consolidate results achieved so far, support participants and foster capacity development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-natural well-being and cleaning products with probiotics</td>
<td>MGEcoduties / Margarita &amp; Guidelma</td>
<td>Stewardship for New Emergence tools have greatly impacted the way we do environmental rehabilitation into the waste water streams, within Auroville, Puducherry and slowly within India.</td>
<td>So far, out of 1600 members of PTDC, more than 75% have tried our products. Next steps will be Puducherry via Ashram consumers. Near future and with AVAG (Paalam), the program will be extended to the Auroville surrounding villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing farmers’ chemical inputs to ecological inputs within India</td>
<td>MGEcoduties / Margarita &amp; Guidelma, in partnership with SCD Probiotics Technology in USA and TATA Rallis India</td>
<td>MGEcoduties become the exclusive partner of SCD Probiotics Technology in India for TATA Rallis projects, not only by guiding and monitoring the trials with TATA Rallis scientists and farmers involved on probiotics trials, but also producing the ecological farmers’ inputs.</td>
<td>The program will be disseminated to all farmers associated with the TATA Rallis program, changing chemical inputs to ecological inputs. We are currently monitoring 2 states: Maharastra and Andra Pradesh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Way Forward**

In order to consolidate our efforts and to ensure results a service under SAILER named ‘Cell for Stewardship for New Emergence’ has been formed. The purpose of this cell is to coordinate future Stewardship for New Emergence program in Auroville, the bioregion, India and elsewhere in the world and to support ongoing initiatives. The cell will ensure quality of future Practitioner Coaches and will coordinate future translation efforts and will start documenting projects and results of these projects.
Swadharma Semester Programme

Introduction

The lifelong learning infrastructure in Auroville for adults is still in great need for further development in most of its domains. The creation of a semester program can be considered as a bold step in the area of research in further learning that will have a direct impact on our understanding of the same as inspired by Auroville. Moreover the direct exchange with outside students and learning institutes will engender greater accessibility of the Auroville learning experience and will offer multiple gateways for Auroville students to further develop their personal and professional capacities. In addition, a quality semester programme provides an attractive and alternative route for outside experts and students to efficiently contribute to and participate in the Auroville experiment.

In the past, programmes of this type have been offered by outside institutes and organizations and were therefore relying on external demand parameters with educational and administrative structures matching their needs. This regularly transmutes Auroville into a secondary or even nominal beneficiary with limited opportunities to adhere to its own identity and quality standards.

The work undertaken by the Auroville Campus Initiative (ACI) therefore focused on creating a program framework that is fully immersed in the entrepreneurial and research-based trait of the community and further aimed to tap into the markedly diversified, experiential and interdisciplinary educational setting of Auroville.

Description of project

To facilitate the administrative (e.g. logistics, health & safety considerations, market and financial aspects) but also the academic planning process, it was decided that the first (pilot) program will be created with design parameters targeting predominantly the Indian student body, age group 18 to 28.

To maintain the required flexibility in the curricula development the first programme was developed without adjusting to or being guided by recognized accreditation schemes. This also eliminated restrictions with regard to faculty and assessment procedures and would further allows students from different walks of life to join the program.

Great care was taken to ensure that subsequent programmes based on the same framework can easily be geared towards international students. It was also anticipated that the programme would be equally rewarding for Auroville students who wish to continue their learning experience in Auroville according to their aptitudes and interests. Up to 20% of the available participant registrations will be offered to Aurovilians for free or for a nominal contribution. Since the semester programme strongly embraces a student-centered approach, the number of students will be limited to 20. This also takes individual student mentorship and a strong focus on group dynamics into considerations.

It has to be emphasized that this program aims to be accessible for a wide audience with varying backgrounds. This also required the budget to be as low as reasonably possible. This constraint had to be considered throughout the program design.
The program will be launched under the name SWADHARMA - the soul of action. It is a 14 week program and the launch date is set for August 1st 2016. Promotion of the program and admission process commenced on April 1st, 2016.

The program as planned

Pedagogy
Swadharma semester programme follows a pedagogy deeply rooted in exploring and discovering one’s true potential. Its objective is to help the learner to come in touch with the inherent evolutionary force of their being through a series of simultaneous inner and outer explorations. The awakening and growth of the being is the fundamental condition for the unfolding of Swadharma, the work governed by one’s own nature. Only when this unfolding happens, an individual can act in the world with harmony and delight, expressing the highest possibility of one’s life’s creative purpose.

To facilitate the emergence of Swadharma, the learning process will be:
- Self-referential - finding the inner guide
- Self-directed - choices based on inner guidance
- Experiential - learning by doing
- Immersive - residential, full time
- Integral - touching all parts, holistic

Learning Objectives
Swadharma semester has been designed as a multidisciplinary foundation programme. It provides the learner with knowledge and skills to develop themselves further in any field of work that one may get drawn into.

The learning objective of the Swadharma semester is intended to be two fold:
1. **The inner development** is envisioned to help the student to identify one’s inner nature and true calling by developing self-awareness and self-mastery.
2. **The outer expression** and manifestation requires generic knowledge and skills to actively and creatively engage with the world around to manifest one’s dreams. To facilitate this the programme has been envisioned to provide the skills of design thinking, communication, collaboration, leadership, global citizenship, and sustainable living.

Project-based experiential learning
The Swadharma programme has been designed as a project-based learning process in which the students will be working on real-life projects in Auroville. This is to ensure that knowledge is tested in challenging real life situations where all other capacities are brought out and exercised in an immersive and integral experience of the whole being. The students will be engaging in three projects of increasing complexity to give outer expression to their inner possibility. This is the testing ground to validate one’s insights and immerse deeply into the journey of self-discovery and self-creation.

Some General Practices
During the course students will be trained in the following practices to enrich and support their learning journey: mindfulness, meditation & concentration, journal writing, gratitude practice, appreciation practice, Awareness Through the Body, Pranayama, Hatha Yoga, cycling/running etc., movie screenings as per context, student presentations, and sharing circles.
Organizational and Logistic Consideration

Tasks completed:
Despite keeping the organizational structure as simple as possible, the administrative and logistic tasks for the SWADHARMA program are still considerable:
- The overall budget had to be detailed while considering a wide range of financial parameters ranging from the remuneration of all faculty, admin and resource persons to contributions for venues, accommodation, food and transportation.
- Accommodations has been secured and the application process finalized. For this purpose the conditions for participation had to be defined and application forms, student contracts and general guidelines created. Students will be selected after reviewing their application and direct interaction via Skype.
- For the promotion of the program, a web-site was created which provides the information of the program and allows for online application, www.swadharma.auroville.org. In addition, a promotional brochure was designed and is available for download on the website and distributed through various channels.

Ongoing and upcoming tasks:
- The weekly schedule is being detailed including the exact timings for the individual sessions.
- Projects are being identified that match the underlying pedagogy and learning objectives of the SWADHARMA program. On the human resources level, particularly mentors for the different projects are being identified.
- Other tasks that still have to be tackled are revolving around program assessment, including students assessment tools, and general feedback mechanisms for all human resources involved and the program as a whole.

Reflections
The development of the overall structure of the program with its underlying learning objectives and the chosen pedagogy was a great learning experience for all involved. It was particularly interesting to see the many different viewpoints and insights that exist in our community with regard to approach, content, and delivery of such a program. In light of this it should be emphasized that this is a pilot for a foundational program which in itself does not claim to be superior of other approaches nor solely representative of all aspects that integral education in Auroville entails. Nonetheless, the program as developed is a solid starting point which will provide ample information for analysis and assessment and thus will enable further explorations and new avenues, including related or follow-up programs of varying duration and for various audiences.

The SWADHARMA program can thus be seen as a step forward for Auroville in realizing its potential as a university of the future.

Conclusion
The program is scheduled to be launched on August 1st, 2016. With the SWADHARMA program aiming to respond to the need for an education for our times it is of great relevance to learn about the readiness of the Indian Youth to embark on the educational journey offered.
“The Treasure of the Flame Island”
A short story without words

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to convey through illustrated short stories, with the help of Papui and Something Else and their friends, the secret “Air of Auroville”.

Description of project

“The Treasure of the Flame Island” is one part of a larger project originally conceived as a series of 6 short illustrated stories, written and illustrated by Emanuele. It is the fourth story, now considered the last in the series. The 4 stories are:

- “Butterfly of Light”
- “My First Sunbeam”
- “The Golden Thread”
- “The Treasure of the Flame Island”

Outcomes

4 slide shows with sound tracks were created for the 4 stories. Two layout books in two different sizes were created for “The Treasure of the Flame Island”.

Reflections

It was a delight to convey the secret Air of Auroville. The process followed is perfect as it is; it takes the right time and way of being expressed. It would be lovely to print them all in the end, considering the feedback coming from the many people who have seen the slide shows of the 4 stories.
“The Voyage of the Caterpillar”

Introduction

There are many beautiful story books in the world for small children. But there are very few that in a simple, joyful and beautiful manner invite children to understand and feel that there is no end to the journey of self discovery and the discovery of the world; and that when one truly and sincerely aspires for something the Universe helps us realize and manifest it. The purpose of this project was to create such a book for small children that they may enjoy and get inspired by.

Description of project

I (Jyoti Khare) have been working with small children of kindergarten age group for over fifteen years. I often make up my own stories for them. Most of them get lost in time as I don’t have a habit of writing them down. For some reason I had a strong urge to illustrate this story, so after working on it for almost two years the book was finally released on 2nd April 2016.

Outcomes

A beautiful story book was created, and for the occasion of the book release the children of Nandanam Kindergarten presented a puppet show of the story to all those invited for the occasion. With some help from the facilitators they set up the whole puppet show and did all related craft work themselves. They enjoyed it immensely and were very happy with the outcome. Every child in Nandanam knows the story now, they have explored the pictures and enjoyed the book in all its detail.

The book is selling very well so it means that the response is good. The feedback received by children, parents, teachers and other members of the community is very positive.

It was a great pleasure for me to create this book and I learnt a lot from it, improving both my artistic and writing skills.

Reflections

The most meaningful thing for me about this project is to see the way they children receive the book. So many of them came and still come to talk to me about it and share their observations. I can see that they have really got the spirit of the book. Similarly, as adults approach me to congratulate me for the book, I see the child in them smiling through their eyes.

Conclusion

I am neither a professional writer nor an illustrator. As I love working with children I only aspire to create beautiful things for their growth and learning. I am grateful to SAIIER for creating a platform for such research and publications. I would like to go deeper in this exploration and based on the direct inspiration received from the children, perhaps come up with other books in the near future.
Udavi School vegetable garden project

Introduction

This activity, which started in July 2015, was a collaboration between Udavi School and FoodLink/Farm Group. It was a pilot project for schools under SAIIER as the Teachers’ Center of SAIIER is interested in promoting such educational activities for their relevance to local issues and to a basic necessity, food.

Objectives

The overall aim of the project was to educate young children in organic agriculture issues by:

- Ensuring food security by providing children with knowledge and skills to grow food
- Ensuring that education pertains to local issues
- Making vegetable gardens at a school to inspire others to do the same
- Making links between farmers and consumers

Description of project

It was agreed that 20 children from Grade 6 of Udavi School, which has Sudhir as the class teacher, and 20 children of Grade 9 with Dominique as their teacher, would participate. Sudhir agreed to take responsibility for the project in Udavi School. The children would first come to Buddha Garden to see how food was grown there. On the basis of that knowledge they would then set up two vegetable beds in the school. They would carry out all the work necessary to grow the food both in the summer rains and the cool period. This practical work would be supported by work in the classroom integrated into their existing time-tabled subjects.

The steps were:

1. First the students came to Buddha Garden to look around the farm and find out how we grow food there.
2. We agreed that every Monday afternoon from 3:15 to 3:45pm we would work in the Udavi School garden. Priya went on most Mondays, sometimes with Rajan (who works in Buddha Garden) and Spiros (a long term volunteer). The children came for a short time on other days to carry out regular maintenance work such as watering and weeding.
3. With great energy the students built the first raised bed using granite pillars that were lying around in the school.
4. They then prepared the soil, put compost on the bed and covered it with a mulch of leaves. For this first bed we used compost from Buddha Garden. They planted the beds using seedlings from the nursery in Buddha Garden.
5. Students put sticks up for the beans. They watered and weeded regularly and hey presto eventually there was a harvest of a few vegetables. Since this was the first harvest these were few in number, but all the students were very proud of them.
6. While the plants were growing everyone helped with making a compost heap using leaves from the school, weeds from the bed, Gliricidia (a nitrogen-fixing plant) and EM (Effective Micro-organisms) from Buddha Garden. Unfortunately the heap got more or less washed away in the very heavy monsoon.
7. A new bed was started in January of 2016 and a range of cool-weather vegetables planted. This second harvest of beans got badly attacked by aphids to the extent that the majority of the plants died. The students felt very disappointed about this but it was explained that this often happens when you first make a vegetable bed and in doing so disturb the existing balance of insects in the area. Such a disturbance often provides a window for pests to proliferate and this continues until a new balance is established. The beds were prepared once again as before, and planted with different cool-weather plants which provided another small harvest.

8. Just before the school’s Open Day, Priya gave a talk about what had been completed in the project. Two posters were produced to show what had been learnt.

Reflections

- Generally the students were very enthusiastic and enjoyed this way of learning. They participated in all the work and we tried not to have a demarcation between boys’ and girls’ activities. Generally they worked well together, due in no small measure to Sudhir’s influence.
- There wasn’t enough food produced for students to explore how it could be used. It would be really good to have a larger area for food growing so that the students can then cook what is grown. This would, however, require that more time is available for students to do the work. As they have an already very crowded schedule this might be difficult to achieve. Even for this small project there were times, such as when students had to practice for a theatre performance or a sports day, when it was impossible for them to come to the garden.
- There was a disconnection between the practical and theoretical work. This was particularly acute when we had the pest problem with the beans. Although we talked about what could and should have been done, the opportunity was lost to learn about pest control in general and to address their feelings of disappointment about what had happened.

The future

Buddha Garden intends to expand this project in the future. The Udavi students are keen to continue and it will be good if we can have them back next year with a new group of novice food growers. If this is done then the area under cultivation will need to be expanded which would be very difficult in the present location. Discussions are ongoing with two other schools which are interested in having a vegetable garden. A challenge is finding someone in each school willing to take responsibility for the project. It is not possible for Priya to do this unless she gives up farming and becomes some kind of roving gardener.

For the future, Buddha Garden would like to integrate the practical and theoretical aspects of food growing more closely. The team is looking at the possibility of creating a workbook for students, a flip chart that can be used for teaching purposes in the vegetable garden, and a teachers’ manual. The idea is to create something that can then be offered, maybe as a download, to other schools that would like to try something similar and do some of their own food growing.
“Under a magic silver sky”

This project was to record a series of songs written by Jivatman and share them in Auroville and abroad. “Under a magic silver sky” became the name of this album. Participants in the project were Jivatman and Swaha (vocalists) and Holger (arranger).

The recording consisted of 15 original songs in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish:

1. Like a simple flower
2. Lonesome road
3. Un dia (One day)
4. When the wind passes by
5. Who is leading the dance?
6. Feu
7. Priere pour ceux qui veulent servir le divin
8. Eternos Lacos (Eternal bonds)
9. Nu (Naked)
10. The time is now
11. Ballad of the elusive monster
12. Berceuse
13. Dance, my heart
14. Softly blows the wind
15. Cinema celeste (Celestial cinema)

The recording started in October 2015 and finished one month later. The outcome of the recording (the CD itself) was ready – after all the other works involved in the production – only in January 2016. The title given was “Under a magic silver sky” in reference to one of the songs of the album.

Once finalized, the new album of songs was announced in Auroville and made available locally and through the Auroville Online Store. A copy of the CD is also now in the Music Library of Auroville, available to anyone who wants to listen to it.

The songs were also presented in a live concert at Unity Pavilion on January 31st, 2016, with the participation of Jivatman, Swaha, Holger and Nadaprem.

Reflections

It was meaningful for me to work together with such good musicians as Holger and Swaha (for the recording of the songs) and also with Nadaprem, who graciously joined us for the concert. I think the CD came out very well and I received good reviews about it. I’m happy with it as it is.
White Peacock
Ceramic studio

Introduction

White Peacock ceramic studio offers guided classes as well as ‘open space’ activities for all age groups – from 3 to 120 years. It is a possibility for Aurovilians to explore the unique, responsive material and the altogether magic process of the ceramic media. We exist for inspired amateurs and children; we focus on the process and research.

Activities of the year

This year White Peacock held regular classes, occasional workshops, and a week-long camp, and participated in Auroville festivals and exhibitions in the spirit of unending education and openness for the new creative ideas.

Anna and Saraswati are the teachers (Anna is working with adults while Saraswati is mostly focused on children), with the help of Helena (inspiration on organization) and Fedor (technical support – kilns servicing, exploration of the most effective ways of firing). Santosh is the pottery wheel assistant.

We had two volunteers working with us throughout the school year. With their help we could accommodate up to 25 people at once, and it enabled us to have a pottery wheel corner where everybody could take turns, with the assistance of Santosh, trying their hand with the most popular way of making vessels.

Our regular classes were:

- Adults: 2 times a week, with 7-10 participants
- TLC school: 2 times a week, with 5-7 participants
- Sunday class: up to 25 people

Special events of the past year included:

- Inauguration of the new White Peacock building, with craft activities (about 150 people)
- The second International Auroville Potter’s Market, where we conducted a clay corner for everybody (on a non-commercial basis), in which about 90 people participated. Our stall attracted a lot of attention from people who would love to learn ceramics.
- We held a one-week camp in February during Auroville week) when we spent every morning with clay activities. We had two field trips – one to Golden Bridge Pottery in Pondicherry and one to Sri Ma, at the end of the program. Meeting often and for longer time allowed us to go deeper into the slip-printing technique. The atmosphere was different from the usual class – everybody felt a part of a family.
- In May 2016 Anna conducted a two-week workshop for two ladies from the Delhi Ashram to help them to start a clay class for children there. As well as the skills they brought home a set of nearly 20 samples.
- We held a one-week workshop for Tibetan students visiting Auroville (10 people participated).
We also had some other ongoing activities:

- Supporting the Kindergarten clay class (ongoing). Every Friday the elder group of Kindergarten children (6-7 years old) come to White Peacock for a clay class. The class is facilitated by their own teacher, but our team member (Anna) provides the class with the materials and the fresh idea presented as a sample.
- Consulting representatives of educational institutions on how to start a clay workshop (by request). Recently we received a call for a meeting from a person who wishes to start a clay club cum education center for the local children in a rural area in the very southern part of Tamil Nadu. We encouraged him to start with the one-week course at White Peacock to get the basic skills and ideas for the beginning of the new venture.

Reflections

- We explored lots of 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 international masters to enrich our teaching and learning process.
- This year brought us a new building (classroom cum firing room), accomplished with the help of many people. This gave us the awareness that the service we provide is needed and appreciated. The construction also taught us how to raise funds.
- While working on the landscape of our plot, we invited the students to participate in mosaic path creating. This became the most memorable moment of the year. Each student – child or adult – had a chance to animate a piece of the path with the pieces of stone and ceramics.
- In the Sunday class we moved deeper towards a student-to-student sharing mode alongside the teacher-student communication. That allowed us to slowly transform the ‘class’ model into all-levels interaction and collaboration. We came to the beautiful moment when the elder students with their skills were able to assist the new younger students. This frees a lot of teacher’s time and raises the community spirit, as well as gives the elder students more confidence.

Goals for next year

1. To explore further the endless possibilities of clay work and to increase the number of classes offered to schoolchildren.
2. To put up an exhibition at White Peacock in mid-October, showcasing the best works of every child made during last school year and the beginning of the new year.
3. To make a 6-day holiday camp (either in September or during Auroville week) with 10-12 children and adults non-stop exploring the ways of communicating through clay: hand building and wheel throwing as well as surface decoration techniques, field trips and introduction to all methods and experiences available.
4. To participate in third annual Auroville Potters Market (end of January 2017). Apart from being our main fund raising event, the Festival gives us 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.
5. To involve more people in teaching, including volunteers, interns, and guest artists while they are visiting Auroville.
6. To implement the Raku firing method into our range of possibilities. We need to set up some new equipment, but the knowledge and interest is already there. In January 2016, Saraswati attended a 5-day workshop with Jane Malvici (UK) in Auroville in order to gain knowledge in Raku firing.