SAIIER
Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research
Annual Report 2017-18

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to all report writers:

Aha! Facilitator Team, Aishwarya A., Aloka, Anna, Arun I., Auralice, Bhaga and LOE team, Bogi, Celine, Deoyani, Devi, Egle, Fabrice D., Francesca, Francoise, Gilles G., Grace, Hartmut, Honor, Ing-Marie, Jaya, Jean-Christophe, Jean-Yves, Jill, Jinu, Jyoti and Nandanam Kindergarten team, Kaliananda, Kalou, Kripa, Krishna and Auroville Film Festival team, Laurence, Lisbeth, Manoj, Marie, Marie-Claire, Marion, Martin G., Martin S., Mary and Transition School team, Maya, R. Meenakshi, Miriam, Nathalie, Nele, Nina, Paula C., Philippe and Thierry, Poovizhi, Pratap, Priya, Rabindra and Narendra, Rajesh and Kumar, Rosalba, Ruchi M., RV and Claire, Sabrina, Sangeetha, Sanjeev R., Saranya B., Saraswati, Saravanan, Satyavan B., Selvaraj A., Shraddhavan, Sophie and ACI team, Subash, Sudhir, Sundar, Suriyagandhi, Surya C.R., Swati, Tamar, Thambidurai, Thomas, Varadharajan, Vladimir, Yvelise, Xavier

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Report prepared by: Arun, Kristen, Prabha/AVDzines
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Overview:
The Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIER) coordinates educational activities in Auroville and undertakes educational research toward giving practical shape to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. SAIER was started in 1984 and has since been growing along with the growth of Auroville, as an umbrella body for educational activities of Auroville. It manages a yearly grant from the Government of India, with allocations for ‘capital’ (construction) and ‘general’ expenses. SAIER's sub-units include Auroville schools, Outreach schools, and diverse education and cultural-related facilities, programs and projects.

Regular activities of the SAIER administration include managing grants and donations and keeping accounts and assets, coordinating construction projects, publishing books and other resources, overall organisation, and exchanging and collaborating with others in the field of education.

Highlights of the year:
This year we welcomed Divya Kapoor as a fourth SAIER executive, joining executives Ashoke, Chali and Sanjeev A.

At the end of last year Auroville was awarded a grant of 100 lakhs from Bajaj Auto CSR funds. SAIER was chosen to administer this grant. A call was made to the Auroville community asking for project proposals, and 12 projects were chosen to receive support. Throughout this year SAIER coordinated with these projects, activating and following their work and producing quarterly reports to Bajaj. The projects were:

• Garden of Indian Culture and Heritage at Auroville Botanical Gardens
• ‘kNOw PLASTICS’ Educational Programme, by WasteLess
• STEM iSmart Classroom and Training Center
• Promotion of sports and culture in Auroville and the Bioregion, by AVSRC
• Scholarship and Education Fund
• Upcycling Studio Gallery and Permanent Exhibition at the Visitor’s Center
• Isai Ambalam School Transformation Program
• Sanitation Education in Boodheri village, by EcoPro
• Creating Awareness of Azolla Production among Adolescents and Promoting Azolla Cultivation by Farmers in the Auroville Bioregion, by Pitchandikulam Forest
• Awareness programs for a plastic-free world, by Kuilapalayam Cultural Centre
• Blue Rays Ultimate Frisbee Development Program
• Completion of Watchtower at Auroville Botanical Gardens

A “Children's book group” has been formed, the members being longtime teachers of small children, together with representatives from SAIER and Auroville Press. The group has met several times to pool its collective wisdom, ensuring beautiful and high-quality children's books being created through SAIER.

The Auroville Campus Initiative, active in Auroville for a few years, has now become SAIER's “Department of Further Learning”. This Department has been facilitating immersion programs which have brought Indian youth to Auroville, and in the coming year will begin to focus more on Auroville youth, providing a much-needed bridge between Auroville schooling and the next steps in one’s life path.
Construction projects:
The following projects were completed in 2017-18 from the Government of India (GOI) grant:
  • Auroville Archives – Administrative space, Phase 02 (157 lakhs)
  • SAIIER Staff Quarters – Block 1 (108 lakhs)
  • Auroville Archives – Administrative space, Phase 01 (86 lakhs)
  • Savitri Bhavan – Picture Gallery Extension (74 lakhs)
  • Deepanam School – ATB (Awareness Through the Body) Hall (39 lakhs)
  • Auroville Library – Extension (32 lakhs)
  • Dehashakti School of Physical Education – Covered play area, Phase 01 (17 lakhs)
  • Udavi Campus – Covered lunch space and cafeteria (11 lakhs)
  • Aikyam School – Clay classroom (7 lakhs)

The following projects are still ongoing, from the GOI grant:
  • SAIIER Staff Quarters – Block 02 (99 lakhs)
  • SAIIER Staff Quarters – Block 03 (105 lakhs)
  • SAIIER Prosperity Staff Quarters – Block 01 (100 lakhs)
  • SAIIER Staff Quarters – Wastewater treatment and electrical (66 lakhs)
  • Unity Pavilion – Toilet block (29 lakhs)
  • Aranya Forest – Classroom and kitchen, toilet (35 lakhs)
  • Kuilapalayam Cultural Centre building (26 lakhs)
  • Dehashakti School of Physical Education – Covered play area, Phase 02 (25 lakhs)
  • Kindergarten – Parking shed (15 lakhs)
  • Auroville Sports Resource Centre – Toilet block (14 lakhs)
  • Auroville Tinkering Lab building (4 lakhs)

Outcomes:
This year SAIIER provided maintenances to 250 Aurovilians working in education-related activities, and allocated funds to 58 projects proposed by members of the community. (See following reports of these projects.) SAIIER also supported the functioning of its 51 sub-units throughout the year, including approval and sponsorship of Rs. 41.15 lakh worth of equipment. Through its new and ongoing construction projects SAIIER contributed toward the physical manifestation of Auroville, in anticipation of the needs and possibilities of the future.
Projects supported in 2017-18

This year SAIIER received over 90 proposals from the community, of which 58 were chosen to receive full or partial support.

Projects of SAIIER sub-units

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Subtotal (Rs.) 20,12,797

Total (Rs.) 57,59,056
SAIER sub-units:
Auroville schools

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2. Auroville Pre-crèche.............................. –
3. Deeparman School.................................9
4. Dehashakti School of Physical Education...15
5. Future School........................................17
6. Kindergarten........................................22
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Aha! Kindergarten

Aha! Kindergarten is a school for children 3-6 years of age, following a self-directed, free-progress philosophy of learning. Inspired by the teachings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, our objective is to develop conscious inner will to grow and progress. Children naturally possess the curiosity to know and learn. This is to be nurtured consciously. It is by their free will that children have to grow up into self-determining individuals, striving consciously to blossom to full inner potential, not only in respect of academics but physically, emotionally, aesthetically and spiritually as well.

Activities and Outcomes of the year:

We have focused on being mindful of the process this year. We have made ourselves aware that the process is to be valued and enjoyed. In this manner the product or the outcomes are well taken care of.

We have looked for means to create a close partnership between facilitators and parents in order to help each child in this process of growth.

• **Workshop on Education:** On 4th and 5th November 2017 we hosted a workshop on education at the Kindergarten. The participants were parents from the community as well as guests from Chennai, Pondicherry and Kerala. The facilitators were teachers from Marudham School in Thiruvannamalai. The workshop created an opportunity to examine a lot of relevant themes in education and for the parents to have many insightful exchanges.

• **Open House:** On the 9th of December 2017 we had an open house for the children, parents and community. We had organized activities such as puppet show, music, bubbles, sand play, beads and paper crafts, henna and balloons. Fun snacks were served as well. It was well attended, and all the participants enjoyed the positive energy generated. We are pleased that it was after this open house that more parents approached Aha! with an interest to enroll their children in the school.

• **Changes to the space:** We have made several small but useful physical changes to the space. We extended the kitchen counter and storage, and fixed a mesh above the counter to guard against crow invasions. We cleared the loft space and added safety features to make it larger and more usable. We built a short barrier wall to the back porch, protecting it from sand and water, making it suitable for block play. Lastly we cleared a parking space along the side of the fence, making it easier to park along the small road.

• **Musical instruments:** We have gathered a collection of new musical instruments that the children love to explore, including harmonium, drums, xylophones, and a variety of flutes and bells. The children play the instruments, sing along, as well as dance to the music they create. They are also experimenting in creating their own small songs. It is proving to be a multi-sensory experience for them.

• **Additional educational material:** In January 2018 we added educational material including puzzles, books and toys to our resources, making it easy for the children with their mixed age groups to explore their individual interests and to find things that interest them.

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

- **Year-end Potluck:** We organized a get-together on the 20th April 2018 for the children and parents. We were led by the children in singing their songs, and the parents got to sing along as well. The parents had an occasion to share their thoughts and experiences with each other. Many parents who have spent time in the school along with their children recounted their observations and appreciation of the things that they observed, including the changes and the growth that they have experienced. This was of special value for the new parents.

  Then the children organized the dinner space, spontaneously guiding the parents on where to sit and what to do before the meal – sing songs and chant mantras. We enjoyed a variety of delicious dishes made by our wonderful parents. A perfect way to end the school year.

**Reflections:**

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

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

**Conclusion:**

We will continue to grow the opportunities for a variety of experiences with the creation of new physical spaces for the children. We hope to extend the space so that the children can immerse themselves into the activities without the need for undue interruption. We hope to create an additional structure that blends in with the present one to house activities such as block play and arts and crafts.

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

Deepanam school aspires to the principles of Integral Education as described by the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This provides the opportunity for a free progress and integral development of both teacher and student. Deepanam was started in year 2000 and is presently attended by some 50 students, increasing to around 60 next year. The school also benefits from a mixed demographic, with students coming from over 15 different countries around the world. This brings a vibrant mix of languages and cultures.

Catering to children aged 7 to 14, the students have been grouped into 3 mixed-age class groups:

- Light (7 & 8 years old)
- Peace (9 to 11 years old)
- Faith (12 to 14 years old)

As of the next academic year, a fourth group will be introduced: Grace (11 to 12 years old).

The school program offers standard academic subjects – mathematics, English, sciences, social studies and languages (Tamil, French, Sanskrit and others such as Hindi, as per request). These subjects are offered as classes throughout the year but also via cross-disciplinary project work, theatre, field trips and applied work experience.

As we aim to provide an Integral approach to learning, equal importance is given to other areas of exploration: visual arts (drawing, painting, craft, ceramics); performing arts (singing, piano, theatre, dance); physical education (daily Dehashakti sports program, Capoeira, yoga); vital education (Awareness Through the Body, communication skills, mindfulness and meditation); and nature (gardening, food growing, cooking).

Light group:

Light group children, aged 7 and 8 years work on their literacy and numeracy skills along with singing, painting, sports, gardening, Tamil, Sanskrit, craft, clay and field studies. This year’s focus was to acquire the hard skills of reading fluency, writing dexterity, playing with numbers and exploring science through experiments. The acquisition of these hard skills was complemented by the continued nurturing of soft skills, notably: discipline, concentration and positive attitude. In addition, this year, we committed to learn several peace shlokas, to sing every morning.

This year we focused on three main projects: “Light”, “Sound” and “Matrimandir”. The idea for these projects was to look at each subject through different angles, taking into account the principle of ‘from the near to the far’, allowing the children to be exposed to different learning experiences.

For the “Light” project activities included:

- Singing songs of Light
- Drawing, painting and crafts.
- Reading and writing about light
- Suryanamaskar
- Science experiments
- Sleepover trip at the Quiet Healing Center to witness the sunset and sunrise
- Drama – a school performance on light

For the “Sound” project activities included looking at:

- Exploring what is sound?
- Survey of sounds
- How the ear works
• Science experiments
• Reading and writing about sound
• Body percussion with an expert from Svaram (Auroville unit which carries out research in sound and makes musical instruments) and visit to Svaram campus
• Exploration of silence

For the “Matrimandir” project, Aurovilles 50th Birthday was a great source of activity and reflection. Activities included:
• Weekly visits to Matrimandir – observation of the physical surroundings, attention to aesthetics, discipline of silence
• Watching information video at Visitors Center
• Language development: vocabulary of the 12 qualities
• Learning to use a dictionary
• Visits to the petals
• Drawing and craft

We also had experiences with nature and life science. Beyond benefiting from our school Life Science Lab, where students are exposed to different animals (mostly reptiles, insects and fish), a wildlife expert visited our class with two non-venomous snakes. Children could handle the snakes and some of them overcame their fears and were able to hold them.

This year, we carried out a project on bees. Resident Beekeeper, Erik helped us to start a hive right beside our classroom, housing the small, local, stingless bees. We placed the hive beside the classroom garden so that the bees could benefit from the flowers planted in Light group’s bed. This project included work on ‘the Bee book’ – a fictional story which includes many facts on bees and how they work together.

Peace group:
This year, peace group included 18 students aged 9-11 years old. Students work on their numeracy and literacy through the implementation of a weekly ‘work plan’. This plan gives them the opportunity to manage their own time each week, with a certain degree of flexibility and choice. The learning is held within a set of materials which provide the progressively paced acquisition of
numeracy and literacy skills. In addition, poetry, creative writing, languages (Tamil and French), painting, clay, gardening and sports are included in the weekly schedule. Each day, the morning starts with a concentration circle and the singing of peace shlokas.

Highlights of the year included several class projects:

- **Kindness** – thanks to collaboration with parents, special focus on ‘Kindness’ (see www.kindness.org) was introduced. Activities were designed to bring greater awareness and practice in day to day life. The project helped students take action and develop a greater sense of gratitude and cooperation towards each other, building a stronger feel of community and harmony. The end of the year was celebrated in a collective act of ‘kindness’: using the concept of ‘Karma kitchen’, which involved cooking for the whole school, including parents.

- **Peace mantras** – the students learnt to chant peace mantras bringing collective focus and concentration each morning. These were shared with the school community in a performance for Sri Aurobindo’s birthday on 15th August.

- **Solar system and weather systems** – through songs, model making and a visit to the Pondicherry planetarium, students were encouraged to discover and understand the solar system and weather.

- **Weekly group reading** of Sudha Murthy’s stories was particularly appreciated by the students this year. This activity is especially beneficial for ESL (English as Second Language) students.

- **“kNOw Plastics” project** – in collaboration with Auroville unit WasteLess, students learnt about the existence of different types of plastics and the seven different resin codes to identify them. They know which plastics are better to avoid and those that are safer to use.

- **Vedanthangal bird sanctuary trip** – this was very exciting for the children as we saw many nesting water birds. Students learned how to recognise and name the local and migrating birds.

- **Soil** – this year as part of gardening, peace group students built a two small garden ‘beds’ beside their classroom with the intention to bring the garden closer to the classroom. These beds were built by actively ‘building soil’ – a process of soaking leaves in ‘amrut jal’, a mixture of cow dung, cow urine and jaggery. The young soil was then improved by planting ‘green manure’ seeds. The students created a poster to explain the process that they followed. This project was complemented with a trip to meet Bernard and Deepika at Pebble Garden.

- **Bees and flowers** – During gardening classes, where children were involved in soil improvement and food growing, the role of flowers and insects becomes clear. We started the journey with the ‘Bee Book’, which allowed the students to enter into the world of bees, through a fictional story book, read over several weeks. Resident beekeeper, Erik, helped to set up a beehive between the classroom and the garden. The students could observe the progression of the bees’ work inside the hive. They could even taste the honey! This was followed by a project on flowers where each student planted a different flowering plant in the class garden. The flowers and their qualities, as given by the Mother, were discussed with the group. Students then wrote poems about their chosen flower.

  The bee and flower project was concluded by creating ‘the bee play’ – a musical production performed at the end of year cultural program. This included the writing of a script, making of props and set, and incorporation of 3 songs on bees and flowers.

- **Earth building** – Peace group enjoyed a special visit from Isis of the Auroville Earth Institute, to explore the properties of soil and how it can be used for eco-friendly construction. The highlight of this visit was the ‘hands-on’ material and display which provided the opportunity to explore scientific concepts and methods.
• **“My hour”** – This hour is a slot given to the students during their weekly schedule, giving them an opportunity to feel responsible for their time and choices, to develop interest and skill in a specific field. Students took up different activities such as origami, mandala making, creating crosswords, Sudoku, word searches and bicycle mechanics.

• **Monthly newsletter for parents** – this year teachers and students produced a monthly newsletter for parents, communicating about school life and students work. This new initiative was very well received by parents who expressed gratitude at getting greater insight into their children’s school life.

**Faith group:**
This year Faith group included 15 students aged from 11 to 14. Beyond the standard subjects listed in the introduction, additional subjects explored this year included earth science, and history through art appreciation. The main focus of the year was on developing critical thinking skills in the sciences (biology, chemistry, physics) and Maths, doing practical work experience in Auroville and focusing on theatre productions. Following are highlights of the year:

• **History of the English Language** – The students wanted to know where does the English language come from? How did it originate and evolve? After studying the history of the English language and texts from key literary pieces (*Beowulf* and *Anglo Saxon Chronicles*, *Middle English Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*), the project culminated in a presentation to parents of the timeline of the English language.

• **Poetry** – After studying poetry from Sri Aurobindo, Kipling, Blake, Frost, Shelley and Dickinson, the students were challenged to express their own feelings and ideas in poetic form. Their work was displayed in a ‘poetry forest’ – an interactive exhibition of work spread out through the forest in the school grounds for the open house.

• **Theatre productions** – Each year we use theatre as a medium for achieving a range of learning objectives: development of class group dynamics and cooperation; engaging in problem solving and creative thinking; development of self-confidence, character and personality; awareness of culture, ethics and languages; development of artistic skill and aesthetic sense. This year, Faith group performed three plays: “Savitri”, “Blue Bird” and a Tamil play on Lord Ganesh.

  “Savitri” was based on Sri Aurobindo’s 24,000 lined poem which one of the longest epic poems in English language. The play was presented to the parents and school as an offering for Sri Aurobindo’s birthday (August 15th).

  Originally written in 1908, the ‘Blue Bird’ play questions: Are we always happy and satisfied with what we have? We adapted the script to our need for this annual play. The story tells of a girl Mytyl and her brother Tyltyl, woodcutter’s children, who are led on a magical quest through the past, present, and future, for the Blue Bird, which was to bring them happiness.

  In the Tamil play, students performed the story of Lord Ganesha.

  Every year, we notice how powerful theatre productions can be at creating a rich and multifaceted learning experience. Outcomes included:
  ▪ Shy children got the chance to shine!
  ▪ Children adopt a ‘can do’ attitude
  ▪ The importance and satisfaction gained by team work
  ▪ Improvement in articulation, fluency, projection, speaking and listening skills
  ▪ Students and teachers share a great sense of joy and accomplishment

• **Earth Science** – The curriculum focused on the function of earth’s systems. Topics covered were Earth’s interior, plate tectonics, volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, rocks and rock cycle,
energy types and its sources, and climate change. One significant project was to mark the
event of the return of NASA’s space craft Cassini, following its historical exploration of
Saturn. We watched the grand finale of Cassini diving into Saturn's rings on 15th September.
In the last term, students focused on individual projects such as ‘Reason for seasons’, The
Sun, Galaxies and its types, zodiac signs (constellations). This was concluded by individual
class presentations.

- **Art and Crafts: toy making and origami** – Brij Kul Deepak came to offer a week-long
workshop on ancient Indian toy making. Students learnt to make mobile Indian toys using
ecological materials whilst learning about their history and cultural significance. Teachers
were also excited as it brought memories of their childhoods! The week ended by making a
board game ‘Lion and Goat’ which the children have continued to play throughout the year.
Students also had the opportunity, at regular intervals throughout the year, to do small
origami projects. As Tomoko, our resident Japanese origami expert, explains, the practice of
origami allows for the development of dexterity, patience, concentration and spatial
awareness.

- **Auroville Trashion Show** – Students participated in the Auroville ‘Trashion Show’, organized
to raise awareness on ocean pollution. A team of students created their own fashion designs
using plastic trash. The students then ‘walked the ramp’ at the Trashion Show, wearing their
creations.

- **Art Appreciation** – Corinnee, a resident professional art critic, offered ‘history through art
appreciation’ classes throughout the year. Students learnt about: Greek, Roman, Middle Age,
Renaissance, Impressionism, Cubism and Surrealism. They looked at composition, technique,
seeing art through a frame. A large part of the years work looked at Indian art and in
particular the temples of Tamil Nadu. Field trips included the temples of Mamalapuram,
Tanjavoor and Chidambaram.

- **Introduction to Philosophy** – The senior Faith students benefited from a short course in the
study of ethics, thanks to visiting philosophy teacher Paul Jones. They looked at the origins of
ethics and how it has shaped modern society from the religious and humanist perspectives.
Topics focused on included human rights and the golden rule across all faiths. The concept of
ethics was explored in a practical way rather than a theoretical one, using roleplay and
games to complement understanding. This culminated in the seniors preparing an assembly
for the rest of the school as well as a display for open house.

- **Mural painting** – As part of painting class, students used projection technology to transfer
silhouettes of playful children on the walls of the painting classroom.

- **Science** – The field of chemistry was introduced by studying the history Chemistry, from the
ancient time to alchemy till modern times. Following this the main learning resource used
was a website (middleschoolchemistry.com), designed by the American Chemical Society
(ACS). This site provides guided, inquiry-based lesson plans that cover basic chemistry
concepts along with the process of scientific investigation.

- **Learning about food growing at Buddha Garden** – for one term, students spent a morning at
Auroville farm, Buddha Garden helping to plant, weed, mulch and build structures. Working
at the farm makes it clear where our food comes from, some of the issues farmers have to
deal with and the work required to bring it to our plates.

- **Faith group blog** (https://faithclass.wordpress.com/) – as a means of recording and
communicating their work and experiences to parents and the broader community, Faith
group students regularly write up about their projects in their blog.
Outcomes:
This has been a year rich in learning for all involved in the school. Experience shows that each year, Deepanam creates an environment that feels welcoming and secure, particularly for new students and those with special needs. Children who come to the school rapidly feel integrated and happy. From this place of security and joy, the students blossom and are available to learn freely.

We continued our work in the same class structure as previous years, maintaining the aspects of school life that we have found to be successful, notably keeping a regular, structured schedule whilst remaining flexible to input and new initiatives from outside. In particular, successful aspects of the school year included: welcoming visiting facilitators and volunteers, using Auroville as a campus, cross-disciplinary project work, school trips and theatre performances.

In addition, this year certain new aspects were explored: increasing communication to parents; increased training to support special needs students; and focusing on caring communication and collaboration.

Reflections:
Meaningful aspects of this year that we would like to mention have been:
• A harmonious overall atmosphere and collaboration between all the class groups;
• Increased care and compassion among students including consideration and integration for new students and those with different needs;
• Improved functioning of theatrical productions, from the technical to the artistic;
• Strong component of Tamil culture and language;
• Making a giant Christmas tree of recycled materials;
• Increased number of cross-disciplinary projects;
• Input from visiting facilitators (e.g. an Indian toy maker) and volunteers (e.g. a Steiner school teacher);
• Inspired productions from all groups for the end of year cultural program.

Challenges included catering to mixed age and ability groups, movement of guest children in and out of the class dynamics, and creating time and space for teacher training.

Conclusions:
Next year we will see an increase in the number of both students and teachers at Deepanam. We continue in our aspiration to provide a joyful and enriching learning environment for all concerned.

Teaching team discussions have allowed us to identify and enhance our strengths as well as to focus on goals to tackle challenges for next year. Specifically we want to: gain stability in admissions, enhance our tools for communicating within and beyond the school, clarify systems for assessment and monitoring, and delve deeper into the practical applications of Integral Education.
Dehashakti School of Physical Education

“... Replace the ambition to be the first by the will to do the best possible. Replace the desire for success by the yearning for progress. Replace the eagerness for fame by the aspiration for perfection. Physical education is meant to bring into the body, consciousness and control, discipline and mastery, all things necessary for a higher and better life. Keep all that in mind, practice sincerely, and you will become a good athlete...” (On Education, p.275)

This message from the Mother for the 1962 athletic competition is the groundwork from which Dehashakti sets its standards when guiding the child through physical, mental, emotional, and social development and growth. We strive to provide all fundamental skills necessary using a variety of methods while maintaining a harmonious environment. Dehashakti offers schedules of activities that vary regularly, providing continual discovery, learning and growth for all of the child’s fitness and health needs, and fostering a carefree and balanced program.

The aim of Dehashakti (Dehashakti means “the full power and perfection of the body”) is to offer a comprehensive programme for physical development, providing activities that incorporate and develop movement, mobility, control, health, fitness, strength, stamina, challenge, and body skills. Emphasis is given to developing team spirit, fairness in play, the right attitude during competitions and games, and to encouraging weaker children to actively participate.

The program:
At Dehashakti the aim is introduce the students to different disciplines since each is vital to the child’s overall development.

**Athletics events for older students:**
1) 100m race, 2) 800m race, 3) 1500m race, 4) Long Jump, 5) Triple Jump, 6) Shot put, 7) Cricketball throw, 8) Training for 10km / 21km marathon, 9) Relay race, 10) 30m race, 11) Standing triple jump

**Games for older students:**

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

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

There were sessions of gymnastics for those interested especially in the last term.

**Outcomes:**
This year we tried a new format for the annual Aurolympics. In the first term was the first phase that we called the “Team Heptathlon”. It consisted of 7 events with 3 games and 4 athletics events. In the second term we had the “Team Decathlon”, which included 10 events.

These competitions were unique in the sense that they combined individual and team events in the same week, something our students are not used to. The outcome was quite positive since
motivating the kids for Athletics was easier when they knew that the games competitions would be taking place too.

Athletics has always been an area which does not evoke a lot of enthusiasm in most kids, but this year thanks to the fact the games competitions were clubbed it made the whole experience a lot more fun and interesting.

**Auroville Marathon 2018**

We also had a lot of our students participate in the Auroville Marathon for which special training sessions were organized.

We were glad to see that many took part in this wonderful event and even improved on their timings from last year.

**Inter-school Sports Meets**

This year many of our children took part in an inter-school sports meet which included swimming, football, badminton and volley-ball with a couple of schools from Pondicherry. It was the first time for many and was a great exposure to them. We hope to organize such events more often in the future.

**Reflections:**

As always the annual competitions brought out many interesting observations. It is an opportunity for the students to see for themselves the progress they have made in terms of fitness, fair-play and team-building.

Our aim is to bring about an overall development in the children; the different games, activities and competitions are means to reach this goal.

We also ended the year by conducting a self-evaluation from all the students (1st graders up to 8th graders). There were questions like ‘which were the favourite activities for them at Dehashakti sports’, ‘whether they have improved’, ‘any changes they would like to suggest’, and so on. From this we received some very encouraging comments and suggestions.

Such evaluations, we discovered, bring a better understanding and encourage interactions between the teachers and students. We would very much like to continue to find more creative approaches to conduct these interactions.

**Conclusion:**

We look forward to working with the kids the next school year, find new ways and methods to help all progress and benefit as much as possible from our program.
Future School

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

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 school program:

Future School offers a high school equivalent education to primarily Aurovillian students. This year there were 62 adolescents/young adults from 15 nationalities enrolled in the school.

We offer a wide range of subjects to our students: Languages (English, Tamil, French, German and Spanish); Mathematics; Pure Sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology); Social Sciences (History, Geography, Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Global Citizenship); Extra Curricular Subjects (Information Communication Technology, 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.

All-school activities:

- **The Circle Garden:** Growing an edible garden has long been a desired activity for the students. This year they got to actualize a vegetable garden with the help and guidance of Krishna from Solitude Farm and an enthusiastic team of volunteers. With many hands and legs involved, the work was fast and in no time there was one big circle and a smaller square garden with more than ten varieties of plants in each: banana, two varieties of salads, watermelons, spinach, beans, amaranth, tapioca, papaya, and many more. The garden has continued to flourish and has afforded a small contribution of nutritious, delicious additions to our snack table.

- **Weekly Seminars:** These have been an ongoing feature of our school for many years and are open to all students and teachers. This gives us a chance to invite interesting people to present a variety of topics, as well as gives a platform for student presentations and debates. Often, the seminar serves as a forum to introduce courses and extracurricular activities in an exploratory, interactive manner. The activities introduced then become a part of the coursework and the extracurricular offerings – as study skills, theatre and cycling did this year. Here is some of what we explored this year:
  
  *The Psychology of Cells* by Uma, a past student; *Scrabble* by Mr. Mohan Chunkath; *How to get High* by Michael Kai; *Diving off the Pondy Coast* by Jonas and Lisa; *Theatre* by Rashmi; *Mangrove Research* by Manjula; *Sharing* by past students Priya, Isa and Namu; *Zipopo Theatre* exploring the theme of *Labels* by the 9th graders; *Narmada Yatra* by Jianghao and Maheshan; *Cycling* by Sukrit and Andre; student
debates on *Capital Punishment* and on *Animal Testing in Cosmetics*.

- **Winter Gathering:** On Friday, 22nd December 2017, our last day of school before the term break, we gathered together in the evening for a celebration. We decorated our small pine tree in the dining area, installed pretty lights and came together for a biryani (veg and non-veg) dinner. The cooking class had prepared some tapioca sweets in the afternoon for our dessert, and some of the students brought cake. We followed dinner with some musical presentations – singing accompanied by guitar playing: Manisa & Jianghao, Jinah – followed by the recital of a self-created poem by Leela.

  Afterwards we played several lively games, like tail and telephone. It proved to be a convivial, upbeat evening for students and staff alike.

- **Anniversary Mural:** This year marked the fifteenth anniversary of Future School and to celebrate, we came together to create a mural. A simple design acted to guide a collaborative process in which each of us either brought tiles from home or chose some from those available at school. Once everybody had their tiles, we took turns to place them into the cement. Gradually, the mural took shape to form a colourful, welcoming panel at the entrance of the school.

- **Graduation:** This year saw the successful completion of the program by 16 students. As per tradition, on the last day of school fellow students, teachers and staff members, and parents of the graduates gathered to acknowledge the accomplishments of these students. The program consisted of songs and Rolf’s hallmark graduation speech. The now traditional powerpoint presentation with photos of each of the graduating students at different stages of their lives was, as always, most touching. Each student received the gift of their own 'Goodbye Book'. The event concluded with another tradition: the planting of a tree by the graduating class.

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

- **Field trip to Devenanthapetai:** On 21st Nov 2017, the yearly school trip was to Devenanthapetai, a beautiful location in the Gingee hills and a favourite haunt of the hiking and trekking groups of AV. Forty-one of us started early, had breakfast along the way and carried our lunch with us. The initial trek was a steep: 600 to 700 meters, which was a bit of a test for many of the students and staff whose fitness might have been lacking; but once we were over this section it was smooth sailing from there onwards.

  We climbed a large granite boulder to visit the Durga temple that was situated on the top. Up there we were rewarded with a 360 degree panoramic view of the Gingee hills.

  We had lunch in a beautiful setting surrounded by thick forest and endemic flora and fauna. Some of us chose to have a small kip in that peaceful and dreamy location.

  Soon after it was time to head back, so we all slowly made our way down. Overall it was a wonderful trip and the sheer beauty of the place is well worth the effort of climbing up and down.
Workshops and extra-curricular activities:

- **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 Auroville 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.

- **Solar Workshop**: On 9th and 10th December we hosted a Solar Workshop to which students of Last School and Udavi School were also invited. The two-day weekend event covered some basic theory and a lot of hands-on exploration covering Basics of Electricity, Solar Energy Fundamentals, Designing your own Solar Installation and Operation and Maintenance. The workshop was conducted by Srini Srinivasan who has experience in the renewables industry and serves on the Environmental Initiatives Committee of the city of Los Altos Hills, California, advising the Governing Council on matters of energy and environment. Sunlit Future collaborated for the workshop, and the students found the hands-on experience both engaging and informative as well enjoyable.

- “**Future Scribbles**”: Future Scribbles, the monthly student newsletter, was taken forward in the first term. It continued to serve as a platform for both school and community news, and for reflection on topical world events. Future Scribbles has provided 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. It provides everybody with an opportunity to share and stay informed. While this newsletter was successfully nurtured over the last three years, the editorial team elected to take a hiatus during the second term, and plan for the thread to be picked up next year by a newly constituted team, with fresh blood.

- **Theatre**: In the words of one of the student participants: “When we joined this class we were asked to speculate on what we wanted to get from theatre and some answers included: overcoming emotional difficulties, learning to confidently perform and express, learning how to be emotionally balanced, developing self-confidence, and becoming better at handling our ‘upsets’. Since we have begun the class in January, we have worked on how to disconnect from an emotion that is controlling us, how to create an emotion (at will) and manage to stay in control of it, rescripting conversations, reducing the impact of bad memories, rapport building and mirroring exercises, as well as listening to spoken and unspoken words. These four months have made us more confident in our expression and enabled us to better handle conflict situations.”

- **Cycling**: Sukrit and Andre of Aurovelo introduced and proposed ‘cycle camping trips’ to the students in a seminar. Several students enthusiastically took on the challenge. The requirement was training hard under the ever more intensifying sun.

  On the first Wednesday the students learnt how to diagnose the wellbeing of their cycles and to make sure that they were in good condition for the training ahead. The students were presented with a number of punctured tyres and taught to fix them under time pressure. This skill proved to be very handy in the next session, when the students embarked on their first long distance cycle ride. They accidentally took one of the hardest routes through Hermitage’s Canyon, sandy cashew fields, narrow casuarina groves and thorny bush. We are very proud of our brave cyclists who did 38km – with many punctures – in hot weather and on off-road tracks.
Course spotlights:

- **English - Mythology Project:** This year the 9th grade class took on an exploration of mythology which culminated in a collaboration with Auroville Radio. After exploring the power of myth, the students each chose a story that had special resonance for them – either a story from their own cultural background, or one with themes that they particularly enjoyed. They got to perfect these stories and to record them at the radio as well as to edit their own stories for broadcast. Facilitated by Swati, Loretta, Andrea and Miriam, the students got to work on many skills: grammar, organization, diction and performance. This is an experience they hope to build on in the future.

- **Analogue Photography:** Future school has a darkroom, which is used by the Analogue Photography Students. The students learn to use film cameras and use film to capture their photographs. They then use traditional process using chemicals to develop the negatives and use an enlarger in the darkroom to enlarge and develop their images. They also create Pinhole Camera photos and photograms. Students this age are new to analogue photography as most of them were born in the digital era. Some of them get to see and handle a film camera for the first time. The idea that they have to spend time to process and develop the image as opposed to being able to see it instantaneously is novel to them. They find the whole process fascinating and are really taking to it and some of them are good at it.

  They are working towards creating a body of work that is of good quality so that we can exhibit their work. So look out for this exhibition in the months after the holidays.

- **A-level Art:** There were 4 students working towards their A-level exams in Art & Design. One student chose Photography as her medium, while another student chose Fine Art (Drawing & Painting). The two remaining students chose to do double exams in both Photography and Fine Art.

  This is the first set of students attempting A-level Art exams in the history of Future School. They have all worked hard and and in a prolonged way to satisfy their assessment criteria.

  The qualification has two components. The student chooses the theme for their study in component 1. They also have an essay to complete as part of this component. Edexcel / Pearson sets the theme for component 2 and the culmination of this study is a 15 hour exam where they complete their final piece.

  All their work is assessed/marked by their teacher/examiner and the whole lot is then sent to Edexcel, England for moderation.

  As this is the first group to work towards this qualification, it is going to be a litmus test for the state of our Art Education. We wish our students the best in this endeavor.

- **Physics Laboratory:** Last year our school received a grant for organizing a Physics Laboratory. Our science teachers Sergei and Evgenia ordered a full list of equipment for it. This year we created a new space in a new room, converted by combining two old storerooms. Now it is fully functional and the Physics classes are running there, accompanied by timely demonstrations in the subject.

- **Study Skills:** Study skills is an elective that was implemented in Future School during the last term of the school year. This elective, designed and taught by Manas Chakrabarthy was introduced to the Future School students at their weekly seminar, where those interested signed up and began the class shortly after. This class aims to teach students how to acquire certain skills which will allow them to improve their grades, feel better prepared for further studies and, to help students find their passion for learning.

  Attitudes developed in this extracurricular such as self-belief, self-regulation and reflection, serve as stepping stones to reach the final goal of reaching a ‘growth mindset’, where students feel that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and
hard work. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.

All of this is patiently worked on by Manas and his students through individual diagnosis and coaching.

- **Sociology:** This year we also introduced a new elective, Sociology. This course investigated sociology as a discipline over time, reviewing the first sociologists, such as Rousseau, Marx, and Weber, moving towards more modern topics, such as Cultural Studies (the study of art, popular culture, and representation). All along the course, focus was given to identity politics (race, class, and gender) to show how power structures and individual agency interact to create the world we know today. Students were also asked to read, review, and discuss articles from all over the world and a thesis written about Auroville. The course was well-received by students, and allowed for them to explore the social sciences from a new angle.

**Reflections on this year:**

We tried to create more tools for the students for reflection and self discovery, providing a wider platform for self-experience and self-expression by extending our educational program, for example through Sociology, gardening and study skills courses, as well as through our efforts to involve the students more in the decision making process in school.

As regards our second goal from last year – to establish more regularity, self-discipline, and more engagement in school – we experienced a highly individualised student body and most responded well to our efforts.

**Goals for next year:**

We would like to create opportunities to reflect on the circumstance that places us in Auroville. We would like to refresh or reintroduce connections based on Sri Aurobindo in our interactions with students and in our classes.

We are aware that this cannot be done by speaking or teaching alone, but by a collective effort and living example.
Kindergarten

Photo Exhibition of the Kindergarten, 1985–2018:
In January, probably caught by the 50th Anniversary mood, the Kindergarten teachers came up with the idea of making a photo exhibition and a collective model of Auroville. We decided to use the entrance hall for this purpose. The photos were displayed on coloured paper and hung on the walls. Those of the earliest times were only in black and white. We also set up low tables on which we placed our collection of 15-20 albums.

In addition, in the centre of this hall we then created a model of Auroville (not to scale) with a beautiful Matrimandir in the middle. The Matrimandir was made out of a clay pot decorated with large golden sequins. The roads were painted on the floor in brown. There were trees made of clay and sticks with paper leaves which were placed in the Green Belt, and there was green vegetation created out of sprouted mustard and moong seeds. In between in their respective communities were houses made by the children out of tetra packs and other recycled materials. Each home was indicated by a flag with the child's name. The entire city was outlined by a painted white circle.

The exhibition was opened to the public by February and remained till mid March. The children loved to show each other their houses in their respective communities. Visitors, mostly ex-students and parent came to remember their history at the Kindergarten. Many people took photos. We also put up a chart for comments.

12 Colors and 12 Qualities:
During the same period, in anticipation of Mother's birthday, one class of mostly 5-year-olds focussed on the aspects represented by the colours of the Mother’s symbol. For instance when red was the topic of the day the children came dressed in red. Red represents courage, so they were told a tale about courage. The children were also asked to paint some red hibiscus.

The next time, they made orange by adding yellow to the red, and the children collected orange flowers. Orange represents progress.
Another day the display board was decorated with photos of yellow objects such as sunflowers. This colour represents aspiration. In this way they worked on all the 12 qualities of the Mother’s symbol which are:
- Sincerity
- Humility
- Gratitude
- Perseverance
- Aspiration
- Receptivity
- Progress
- Courage
- Goodness
- Generosity
- Equality
- Peace

**Reflections from a teacher trainee:**
We had an intern, Tatiana from Brazil (wholeeducation.blog), who spent 90 days with the Blue Group. She created a beautiful small book for us in which she wrote her reflections:

> **What have I learned from Auroville Kindergarten?...**

**Balance.**
The child’s soul is aiming for the freedom to explore and create the world as well as for the boundaries to feel safe and at home in it. Only by the balance between limit and space, guidance and liberty, can a child flourish in her potential.

**Pause.**
A child needs a pause between every movement. The small pauses are gifts to help her understand the flow of life, adjust her energy to the next movement, listen to the always present silence and not to be lost in her ungoverned body impulses. Before starting, one should always pause.

**Self-expression.**
A child is an open channel to creative energy, but she needs space and stimulus to learn how to express it in this world’s material languages. Every opportunity to share her own stories, dreams, images and movements are precious moments to establish the connections between mind and matter, divine and human energy.

**Cycle.**
The nature of life is a nature of cycles. A child must not be prevented from experiencing the cyclic rhythm of time from an early age. The cycles of days, weeks and years must be presented to the child and experienced by her with joy and emphasis, as a glimpse of human nature total Truth.

**Delicacy.**
The child is highly sensible to her surroundings and can be easily affected by the energy of the organization of material things around her. The loving preparation of the environment, the delicate decorations, the beauty of the natural elements and the perfect organization of the materials, are all relevant influences that benefit the blooming of the inner balance of a centered child.

**Truth.**
Above all a child should always feel safe and open to tell the truth, despite of the social acceptance of her behavior. The truth is an open gate for the healthy blossom of values and character, that must never be shuttered. An environment free from judgment, criticism, scolding and reactions is the fertile soil for the sustenance of the truth.
Last School

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

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

The program:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Activities of the year:

We had 40 full-time students during the year. In addition, courses were offered to young Aurovilians and adults on Indian Culture and Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. Moreover, the Art Center is being used by students who are part of other Auroville schools’ programs.

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

• We start every day with an assembly in a concentrated silence.
• Art workshops take place at the start of each semester, in which everyone, students and teachers, work intensively together for 5 to 10 days, concluding with a presentation and display of the work. In addition this year glasswork was offered by Robert L’Heureux at his workshop.
• As in previous years, some students also participated in different intensive cultural programs happening in Auroville such as the Ultimate Frisbee tournament, tango and capoeira festivals, and fire juggling performances. There were as well various field trips.
• Projects for the community at large were taken up by several students in film editing and art: such as documentaries, short films and decorative installation projects.
• Some students concluded their 5-year program by working several months on an art installation, “Mirage”, set up in the premises of the school.

**Reflections on this year:**
This year saw an important influx of new students, and for them it has been year of settling in and learning how to better center themselves as a basis for further development in the coming years.

The older students were quite autonomous in the choice of their program and extended themselves into various out of school activities in Auroville.

With the increase of the number of students, the question posed itself as to how to keep the same quality of individual followup of the students. However, we noticed a real progress in their capacity to hold a quiet and concentrated atmosphere.
The vision of Lilaloka (“the universe of Play”, in Sanskrit) is to be a Self-Learning and Resource Centre for the Child. Lilaloka offers various activities based on self-discovery and spontaneous self-learning through Play, which allow the child to reveal himself as an individual and amongst others, without competition or judgement.

Lilaloka is open to all children, schooled or not, having difficulties or not, beyond all categorizations and allowing mixes of ages. The team of Lilaloka wants to work in collaboration with schools and parents, considering each child as an evolving being.

This year, a first room dedicated to activities has been completed (24 m² indoors + 40 m² terrace). This room will be fully functional for the next academic year and will allow us to offer more activities in better conditions. Our main focus went on conducting activities on the premises, building up a team of part-time facilitators, and initiating a concrete collaboration with the schools and Marion for children with specific needs in order to see how Lilaloka can participate in catering for the support needed in this field. Fundraising, communication, project coordination keep representing a big part of the work.

Areas of work in 2016–2017:

1. Completing Lilaloka ‘Room 3’ and landscaping the campus
2. Team-building and sharing ways of working within the vision of Lilaloka
3. Fundraising and communication
4. Working with the children who benefit from Lilaloka’s activities, including homeschoolers, children who can only partly follow the schedule of the existing schools, long-term guests, and parents who joined in the sessions as participants.
5. Making contacts with the education community in Auroville to get better insight into which areas Lilaloka can be supportive and collaborative with the existing systems.

Activities of the year:

1. Completing Lilaloka ‘Room 3’ and landscaping the campus

   The room was completed on 6th of March 2018: electrical connection, cement flooring, lime plastering, windows and doors. The total cost of this project was Rs. 3,521,529. A completion certificate was issued.

   This room cum terrace can host a group of 12 children. It is used for collective and individual activities and allows us to conduct at least 2 activities on the compound at the same time, with clear delimited spaces for a smoother organization.

   For the management of the garden and ongoing cleaning of the space, we employed a gardener for 5 days a week from September 2017 onwards. We are now able to conduct more activities in the garden, as it gets cleaned and set up. The gardener, the caretaker together with the children built a new entrance gate out of bamboo. The children fully participated from cutting the bamboo to transporting it to constructing the gate.

   For next year, as short-term goals we plan 1) to get the water pipe to the entrance of the room, so that we have an easy access to water, 2) to get a permanent electrical connection as the existing one is only temporary.

2. Team and functioning of Lilaloka

Management of Lilaloka:

- This year, while Rajan left the team in a harmonious way in order to dedicate himself fully to
his own project, we recruited two new persons: 1) **Jegan**, who now works one third of the time with us, as a care-taker (administration, helper for Anna during Nature’s Theater sessions, workers’ management); 2) **Mani** who works 5 days a week as a gardener. We are very happy with the team, as it is an efficient and down to earth team which allows us to run Lilaloka more smoothly. Our aim for next year is to be able to employ Jegan half of the time.

- Accounting-wise, we stopped working with Mukti accounting in October 2017, as **Kasturi**, a friend of the project offered to do this work for us for free. She also manages better the accounts and this has reduced our expenditures.

**Team of facilitators:**

- **Anna** offered 4 half days of Nature’s Theatre, and coordinates with the support of **Yvelise** the joining and conducting of activities by new facilitators. We integrated each person in a very step-by-step way, in order to build up on a strong foundation, aligned with the vision of Lilaloka.
- Out of the work of starting to building up a team of facilitators, a start of collaboration with the schools, and collaboration with Marion for children with special needs, what emerged was a need for a new full-time team member. The perfect solution presented itself: **Marianne**, one of the founders of Lilaloka, approached us in order to join the team again, both for activities with children and management of Lilaloka. As the workload is consistently increasing, it really comes at the right time for us. We sent a request for a maintenance from City Services to HRT and BCC, as this is the condition for Marianne to be able to work with us. Her role will be: 1) Coordinating activities, children registration, parents contribution, and contacts with the schools, assisted by Anna; 2) Supporting Yvelise with the administration, fundraising, communication; 3) Offering individual sessions for children who need special attention through relaxing shiatsu massage and tuition for learning disorders (which she was trained in while at Transition School); 4) Establishing a database of resources for children with specific needs available within Lilaloka, in Auroville at large, and later in wider India (this will be done in close coordination with Marion).
- 3 new part-time facilitators started to offer activities at Lilaloka: **Jitta** offers 2 sessions per week of discovering medicinal plants. She will offer 3 half days next year. **Megan** offers 2 half days as a support to Anna on Monday and Tuesday, as well as one half day of self-discovery through play. Next year, she will offer an activity named “rock and water” which she was trained in. Altogether, she will offer 3 to 4 sessions per week. **Marianne** offers half a day of relaxing shiatsu massage for children who need it. Next year, she plans to offer more time and possibilities (see above point).
- **Emanuele**, artist and cartoonist, offers half a day of presence in Lilaloka. During this time, he illustrates *Savitri* for and with children. Children who are interested join him, in a very spontaneous way. Emanuele is not a facilitator per se but offers his skills, presence and passion for/knowledge about *Savitri*.
- **Sarah**, who is a pre-newcomer living in Sadhana Forest, has started to offer volunteering work and will keep on doing so next year for 2 mornings a week. She will be a helper especially taking care of individual children who have a need for special attention, during times of collective activities.
- **Ishta**, who has been offering Land Art in various outreach schools and centres, will start to offer half day of Land Art at Lilaloka from July 2018 onward.

3. **Fundraising and communication**

- We kept our Facebook page up-to-date with events and pictures, as well as our program of activities on the website.
- We started to send out regular newsletters (October 2017, February 2018) online through MailChimp.
• We created a page for Nature’s Theater activity under AVYA website, as we find it is a practical tool for Auroville children to know what activities are available.
• Introducing and sharing the vision and aims of Lilaloka with various individuals has been ongoing.
• We submitted a project to SAIIER (Rs. 74,400) in order to receive help to run Nature’s Theatre and we received Rs. 31,100. We were very grateful and happy about this. This request for funds led us to meet with the School Board, with Mary from Transition School, and with the SAIIER Board, which acknowledged the need for a project like Lilaloka in Auroville.
• One individual has started to donate to Lilaloka regularly around Rs. 2,000 per month.
• We received a few small donations from parents of long-term guest children.
• We were donated a printer by Shona which greatly helps the administrative work.
• Total amount raised in 2017–2018: Rs. 85,000.

What we still need to fundraise:
- To complete the building: 50 Lakhs Rs.
- For educational equipment: 20 Lakhs Rs.
- For running costs: 4 Lakhs Rs. per year ideally including maintenance of Marianne.

4. Working with children and making contacts with the education community in Auroville
• We regularly received mixed-aged groups of children (from 3 to 12 children per session) comprised of home-schooled children, children needing a few months break from school, long-term guests’ children (25% approx.), and a few children from Kindergarten in the afternoon.
• We started to offer sessions for children from Transition School in need of special attention. We are working on increasing our capacity to receive these children in terms of facilitators, and in collaboration with Marion from the supportive learning group.
• Transformation Kindergarten sent a group to Lilaloka every Wednesday morning for Nature’s Theater and discovering medicinal plants.
• Anna offered 4 sessions of training in Nature’s Theater for teachers of Oli School.
• We had parents as participants who came from a very academic background and have very creative children. They asked to stay to open their creative channel and fill themselves with ideas, techniques and material to be able to enjoy creating at home.
• We re-introduced ourselves to the School Board, as well as SAIIER Board, in order to clarify the roles and objectives of Lilaloka.
• We had 2 meetings with parents of the children who came to Lilaloka.

Outcomes and objectives for the coming year:
We have been able to offer regularly 5 half days of activities to around 20 children (some came to all the programs, some only to 1 or 2). We now have a better overview of the needs and possibilities, and we will be able to offer 12 sessions of the various activities per week for regular groups. We constituted a team of facilitators for next year, and prepared the program so that we can start in July and announce it in time.
We wish to continue to build on the collaboration with the schools and Marion in regards to children who need special attention. There are several requests of facilitators who would like to join next school year; we will continue adding new activities and new facilitators. This year we dedicated time and effort to find ways of collaborating with schools and SAIIER, and we are happy about the direction it is taking.
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 also try to balance between group activities, where the children learn to coordinate with their friends and develop social qualities, and individual activities where they have the freedom to do things in their own way.

In Nandanam we have four classes for children: Jalam for 2+ years old, Prithvi for 3+, Vayu for 4+ and Agni for 5+. While activities in each class are organized in an age-appropriate manner, there is a general flow that runs through all the classes successively. This holds the threads together and helps children transit from one class to the other smoothly and grow progressively.

The general program:
A typical day in Nandanam starts in the morning with about an hour or forty-five minutes of free play. During this time children can engage in any activity corner in the class either individually or in small groups. The corners roughly are: craft corner, play dough corner, puzzles and games corner, reading corner and building blocks corner and sand pit for younger children. During this hour, space and materials are also available for pretend play and symbolic play that children really love to engage in. At this time in the craft corner we propose new craft activity every day that children can explore with a facilitator, in small groups.

This is followed by circle time, where all the children and teachers of the class gather together to sing songs, have group conversations, talk about the plan of the day and play games. The circle games are for developing the five senses or for introducing and revising concepts like shapes, colors, numbers, letters etc. After that the class mostly goes outdoors to engage together in a physical activity.

This is followed by snack and recess, during which all the children of Nandanam play freely together. After the recess children go back to their respective classes for relaxation and story time which, is then be followed by a proposed group activity. The morning often ends again with some time for free play, then we have a closing circle where we gather together once more before going for lunch. After lunch they go home.

The regular activities children do during the year in Nandanam are: craft activities, exploring sand and water, symbolic play and pretend play, board games, puzzles, collective story times and exploring books corner, circle time games, activities for physical development, Awareness Through the Body (ATB), Play of Painting, “Write Dance”, building blocks, and swimming. We also have a ‘Children’s Corner’ where the children do activities related to Montessori and Waldorf approach. Bi-monthly field trip to units and farms, weekly visits to Matrimandir are also organized. Circus classes are held for the older children.

An all-school project: Celebrating Auroville’s 50th Anniversary
This year being the 50th anniversary of Auroville, over the last few months the entire community has been celebrating it in different forms. Although every year we celebrate Auroville’s birthday in school, this year we chose to take it up as a three-week project to allow children too to be part of this historical moment that somehow marks their lives. Class teachers planned different activities in their classes according to the age groups of the children.
• **Prithivi group (4+)**: While doing this project the children and the class teachers sang a song every day, through which each one had a turn to speak about himself: the name, country and language of the person. As weeks passed and they delved deeper into this project, children were able to become clearer about where they come from, which community they live in (in Auroville) and what binds them together.

With various materials in the class, children made several puppets – themselves, their family members and their friends. This again helped them become more aware of themselves and their friends.

Children also made models of their houses, which were placed on the big map of Auroville that was created covering almost the entire main hall of the school. We sprouted lots of seeds in order to create vegetation for the green belts and gardens of the map.

• **Vayu Group (5+) and Agni Group (6+)**: With support of the children’s book “Tell me, my friend, what is this Auroville?” that we read out to the children, we talked about Auroville, its beginnings – who, how and when; its purpose – the inner reason for Auroville’s existence and how Auroville has developed over the years.

One teacher (born and brought up in Auroville) with the support of her photo diary, talked about growing up in Auroville during the early years. Another teacher (grown up in the Pondicherry Ashram) talked about visiting Auroville regularly during the early years, and specially witnessing the laying of the foundation stone of Matrimandir.

A teacher who has just joint Auroville shared what brought her here. Willing parents were invited to talk about their experience in Auroville – how they came, what they do and what keeps them here.

We went to the Visitors’ Center to see the permanent exhibition on Auroville and Matrimandir, which has photos of some historical moments that we had talked about. We also saw a short video of the making of Matrimandir. The whole trip was very stimulating, and children were full of questions trying to understand better everything they saw around them. We also visited some other public buildings and Pavilions, to give them the sense of the larger community.

• **Potluck lunch with parents**: During the weeks of this project we had often talked about Auroville’s aspiration for Human Unity and how people from different parts of the world had come here in Auroville to attempt it. We thought, if children could see how in their school itself this diversity exists, and how we are growing together as a family, this would become more concrete to them. Thus came up the idea of a potluck lunch with all the parents. Parents were invited to cook a dish from their home country and if possible wear their traditional clothes. We wrote the name of the country and placed its flag next to each dish. Parents were delighted to serve food to the children as we teachers help them explore each dish. Through the potluck parents too connected the world of their children at school and contributed to their learning. The bonding between Nandanam family – children, teachers and parents was experienced by all.

**Highlights of the year – Prithvi Group (3+):**

• **Butterfly project**: There is a season in the year when the garden of Nandanam is full of butterflies. It is then that children get all excited about the butterflies. They catch caterpillars, gently put in the jars, try to feed and take care of them. They are eager to see them to turn into butterflies. This year was no exception, so we decided to focus on the life cycle of butterflies during that period. We started with storytelling, puppet shows and discussions during circle time. We went for walks in nature to observe this amazing natural phenomenon. We sang songs and made caterpillars and butterflies with various craft materials.

• Other short projects we took up this year in similar manner were: farm animals, birds, flowers, colours, shapes & sizes.
Highlights of the year – Vayu Group (4+):

- **Wild Animals project**: This year in Vayu group we took up a two month project on wild animals and their habitation, as some of the children were very passionate about it. We started with telling stories of wild animals, reading up about them and asking children to share whatever they knew about different animals. We talked about different climates of the earth, touching upon some geography. Gradually the focus moved to forest animals, sea animals, desert animals and arctic animals. We spent about a week with each type. We had discussions and watched documentaries; we took field trips to the Pichandikulam forest; visited an aquarium in Pondicherry and went to a big and rich cactus garden in Auroville Botanical Gardens. We created landscapes in the classrooms, and made animals through craft individually and in small groups.

- **‘The Rainbow Deer’ play**: Together with the children we also created a story which they called ‘The Rainbow Deer’. The story was about a magical deer that had the power to go to any part of the world – the forests, the deserts, the arctic and even the oceans. Thus he had friends everywhere and he visited them regularly. One day he saw a rainbow and wanted to visit it but had no power to do that; so he was very sad and was nowhere to be found. All the animals came together to look for him and noticing his sadness they created an ‘animal ladder’ for him; so he could climb up over them and visit the rainbow.

  We worked on this story for about 3 weeks. Children selected their roles, helped prepare all the decors and sets for the stage. All the craft work they had done over the past weeks was used for it. Each child prepared whatever accessory (ears, tail, nose etc…) he required for the costume. They actively participated in setting up the backdrop, and day by day saw the play come alive in front of their eyes. During most of the craft work we provided various material, gave them a basic guideline and left them free to explore and express things in their own way; supporting them wherever really required.

  Most importantly it was an ‘unscripted play’ which means children knew the story but the dialogue was not fixed. This created a very interesting space for improvisation. Every day the story had a different variation and children had to come up with their own dialogues. It was amazing to see how at times they adopted and flowed with whatever unfolded and at times someone was upset because things had changed. We allowed them to process all this between them, with us mainly watching over and occasionally intervening.

  Finally the day came when we were ready to put up the show for other classes and parents. It was a lot of risk taking because nobody knew which variation would come out and how the budding actors would react to it, especially as it was the first public performance of their life.

  They enjoyed the performance very much and today, four months after still talk about it with a legitimate pride and joy.

  In the beginning of the year we found that some children were still very sensitive in their emotions and often had difficulty expressing themselves, following the group and opening up to others. Through the play they opened up a lot and learnt to trust others and become free with them. They learnt to take responsibility. Through the play they learnt to express their emotions and relax and enjoy.

Highlights of the year – Agni group (5+):

In Agni group, we focused mainly on creating a learning atmosphere where each child could find his/her own area of interest and express his/her uniqueness in work, and grow integrally.

Keeping this aim in our hearts, we started the year with the aspiration to learn and grow together. After the children found their orientation in the new spaces, from the third week of school, we took up the first project.

- **Transport project**: We started with discussion, story-telling, games and a sharing about their
favorite vehicles. Each child brought a photograph of their favorite vehicle and shared it with others.

The children got some practical experience by visiting various units. At Auroville Transport Service they enjoyed cleaning the bus with water and going under it. They got to know the names of different parts of the bus and how to start it. It was exciting for them to see the machinery which makes the bus run.

We then walked to “Cycle Repair Service” where children learnt how to take care of a cycle, oil it and how to fix a puncture.

Next, we took them to the Pondicherry Railway Station. It was amazing for them to see a real train, railway tracks and the area around the station. Children went inside an empty train, climbed up the berths and played a lot inside the compartments.

Then we went to the Botanical Garden almost next door where there is a toy train. There they had an entirely different atmosphere; they enjoyed sitting in the moving toy train, seeing the outside scenery and passing through a tunnel. A most exciting and memorable day, indeed!

Children made their favorite vehicles using skills of stitching, cutting, pasting and utilizing waste bottles and waste boxes. The activity of making a train using paper cartons, colouring and painting the train and playing with it around the corridor was a joyful experience for them. They stitched their favorite vehicles on their bags.

- **Animals project:** In the second term, we took up the Animals project. Children joyfully engaged themselves in activities such as drawing, painting, cutting & coloring, making masks and clay models of their favorite animals.

  We visited Baraka and Dehashakti. There, children learnt how to clean, feed and take care of the horses. They could also experience riding a horse, which they enjoyed a lot.

  The children showed a great interest in making sounds of different animals and acting like them. Sensing this, we provided them with different animal costumes. This led them to express the behavior of a particular animal very vividly. They also presented this ‘role play’ to their parents and the children of other classes.

  The above activity led them to create a jungle and a farm in the classroom. There, they made their own stories while playing with the toy animals. A forest scene was drawn on two big sheets of paper, with many wild animals in it. Together and in turns, very carefully they stitched along the outline of the drawn animals, which later they colored with pencils and through collage filled with seeds, barks and other natural materials.

  The projects Transport and Animals were presented to the parents by the children and were displayed for the Open House.

- **Science Toys project:** In the third term, the children did different science experiments and explored sinking and floating, oil & water, magnet & iron. They observed the reaction of vinegar and baking soda as an eruption of lava in a volcano. They also learned how to make different science toys with various materials – balloons, bottles, wire, paper etc... and named them Rocket, Boat, Water-tap, Flute and Trumpet. They also made a shooting rocket, flying disc, rainbow snake and blooming flowers. They put up a science stall for other children, explained what they had made, how it worked and taught them how to make their own science-toys.

**Conclusion:**

The year was a very smooth and balanced journey together, where the children had space to explore and learn according to their own nature. As facilitators, we feel that the field trips added much value to the learning experience and we will focus more on it. Our prime emphasis in the future will be to focus on needs of the group as well as the individual child, and to be creative and flexible in determining strategies to meet theses needs.
Teachers’ Center

The aim of the Teachers’ Center is to encourage the development and implementation of Integral education in Auroville. At the Teachers’ Center we work to identify and respond to the needs in the field of education in Auroville through collaboration, networking, research and innovation, teacher training, advisory services, courses, and maintaining a teachers’ resource center. We function as a service all year long.

Activities of the year:

- The Teachers’ Center team continued fostering professional development through mentoring, advising, and offering workshops and courses at Udavi School, Aikiyam School, Deepanam School, Transition School, Nandanam Kindergarten, The Learning Community (TLC) and Kindergarten.
- We tried to improve our connection to the different schools by asking them what they intended to concentrate on this year. We got answers from Transition, Aikiyam, Nandanam, Udavi, Deepanam and Transition. We searched for appropriate books and purchased them to support teachers and the advisory team. The requests covered the following subjects: How to teach math; introducing leadership to students; teaching with creativity; how to build a culturally responsive classroom; the importance of free play and physical activities in Kindergarten; how to teach social studies in an interesting manner.
- We continued to archive photos related to education in Auroville, and this will be ongoing.
- The books belonging to the older Resource Library in Transition have been moved to the Teacher’s Center. A new bookshelf was purchased to store the books. Entering, categorizing and labeling of the books is ongoing.
- The Teachers’ Center has offered for the third year a course in communication skills for parents. This is based on Thomas Gordon’s model of “Parent Effectiveness Training” which is rooted in the work of humanist psychologist Carl Rogers. The certifying course consists of 8 sessions of 3 hours and runs over several weeks. Participants learn a clear and practical framework to help them understand and address problems that arise in the family context. Based on the situation, the parents learn to apply specific skills to help their child or themselves to work towards finding solutions.
- The Teachers’ Center offered a Supportive Learning course. Seven teachers from Auroville schools (Transition, Deepanam, Deepam, Aikiyam) benefited from the course which dealt with general and specific aspects of identifying and working with pupils in need of supportive learning. Two additional teachers joined who had followed the course last year and were practicing in school but felt the need to refresh their knowledge base. Course contributors included Heidi Watts, Marion Meakin, Stacy Freidlander, Jerry Beusen, Sigrid Lindemann and Angelika, Principal of Deepam School. Aspects of the course were child development, developmental yardsticks in the early school years, developmental aspects of children’s drawings, working with learning difficulties and disabilities, positive discipline and trauma. Some workshops are held over, to be run at the Teachers’ Center next year for a wider audience. Participants also benefited from the growing library of books dealing with various aspects of supportive learning/special needs.
- We also have been in contact with Swadharma, the program of the Auroville Campus Initiative. We had some informative sessions for their students.
- From Heidi Watts: The Teachers’ Center was of greatest value to me in this 2017-18 year as a resource for specific books I wanted to recommend and/or actually passed on to teachers. In addition to relying on the “library” and the stand-in librarian services I used the Teachers’
Center for appointments with teachers, small conferences and meetings. I also taught two sessions of the Supportive Learning course which met regularly there.

Outcomes:

• The main skills learned in the Parents Effectiveness course were active listening, “I-messages”, and conflict resolution. Alongside these skills, participants developed an understanding and awareness of the self and others based on compassion and respect of individual growth. Children are the direct beneficiaries and also the teachers and schools where the children as well as the parents are engaged.

• The Supportive Learning course enabled teachers to identify – and supported them in addressing – learning, emotional and behavioral difficulties in children. The emphasis is on early identification and implementation of support programs. Teachers can contact the Supportive Learning Team to work with them to address the needs of the child, assist the school in constructing Individual Education Programs (IEPs), and work as liaison with other agencies in Auroville or outside. Teachers are also supported to work with the parents.

• The Teachers' Center library has been useful as a support for professional development. We have a growing book collection covering topics of interest for all teachers. Books are used to prepare workshops and also are recommended to teachers attending workshops or advisory sessions. We bring photocopies of the new books to teachers in the different schools which might need them.

Reflections:

The role and work of the Teachers' Center has crystallized into a stronger network, bridging schools (including Outreach schools), teachers, parents and educational experts. This was possible because the Teachers' Center team is working in different schools and our large team has the necessary skills, connections and entry points to all levels of child development. This allows that difficulties and queries encountered in the schools can be addressed in the best possible way.

At the beginning the Teachers' Center was quite active with part-time staff and volunteers working on materials and scheduling workshops, classes and conversations. Unfortunately the last two years the construction noise from the Archives next door has made the space difficult to use with groups of people, and we needed to branch out to different venues. Now that the construction is finished, there is great potential in the possibilities of a space dedicated to serving teachers from all Auroville schools.

We plan for the next school year to have a schedule that allows enough part-time staff to be present to enable us to keep the Teachers' Center open for drop-ins, advice, information and borrowing books. It is a challenge for us because the nature of our work is such that we have to be flexible to answer to the schools' varying demands.

Future direction:

Along with continuing our work for next school year 2018-19, we are planning some workshops:

• Neuro-dramatic Play by Sue Jennings (Oct 29 – Nov 2).

• A series of workshops on Supportive Learning, to include positive discipline, early childhood, reading difficulties and dyslexia, maths difficulties and dyscalculia, ADHD, autism, learning and self-esteem, trauma, and children's drawings.

We would like to establish a contact with the Pre-crèche in order to be connected to the full range of child development/schools.

We intend to offer with Lilaloka a “place of Supported Respite”, in collaboration with schools, for those children in need.

We would also like to connect with with the newly started “Matram” (Centre for Psychological Development and Support), housed in the Mitra/Town Hall campus.
Supportive Learning Teacher Training Course and Supervision for Auroville schools
A project of the Teachers' Center

The purpose of the course was to deliver a comprehensive suite of workshops targeting Child Development, Early Learning, Child-Centred Developmental Education and Specific Learning Difficulties/Disabilities. The short term aim was to raise awareness of the child in need of Supportive Learning in the classroom. Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that each school will have a trained a ‘Supportive Learning Teacher’ who is equipped to support, monitor, communicate progress, bridge school with families and make necessary referrals.

Description of project:
The teacher training course ran from August 2017 to March 2018. There were 7 new participants and 2 teachers from a former course who wanted to attend all or some of the workshops to refresh their knowledge base. It was run at a variety of venues in schools and in the Teachers’ Centre on selected Friday afternoons. Stacey Gluckman, Heidi Watts, Marion Meakin, Angelika (Director of Deepam School), Sigrid Lindemann and Jerry Beusen offered workshops on a variety of topics related to the purpose of the project.

Outcomes:
Participating teachers came from Deepanam School, Deepam School, Transition School, Udavi School and Nandanam Kindergarten. These participants, some of who were completely new to the concept of Supportive Learning, began to see how the knowledge of Developmental Learning and ‘Where Learning Goes Wrong’ related to the students in their schools.

One participant wrote: “This course has really opened my eyes to the challenges and difficulties that these kids have every single day. It has completely changed the way I view my students”.

There was an ‘open door’ policy for supervision in schools, and one of the mentors plus two workshop contributors were able to work extensively with some participants, identified children and their parents.

Former participants, now in post in Supportive Learning in schools, continued to benefit from ongoing mentoring and support plus access to refresher workshops as and when they so chose.

Teachers were encouraged to identify and use manuals and ‘toolkits’ to support the manufacture of specific equipment for use with students with specific learning disabilities such as Dyslexia and Dyscalculia.

The resource library was further enhanced with these materials in collaboration with the Teachers’ Centre. There was, and is now, an ongoing further enhancement of resource based support materials via the Affective Curriculum at Aikiyam School. Storybook-specific lesson plans, activities and materials are lodged in the Teachers’ Centre for use in schools and specifically for use around behaviour and bullying issues.

Reflections:
The most meaningful thing about all three of the courses which have been run is the way in which participants demonstrably change in their attitude towards, and confidence in, working with children with difficulties. The anecdotal evidence brought and shared and the way in which the groups become a cohesive forum for discussion, support and problem-solving not only demonstrates itself in the duration of the course, but also in the way in which teachers continue to interact with each other and with course mentors and contributors when back in their classrooms. There is also an
impetus of creativity, not only in approach but also in the construction, adaptation and sharing of materials.

Communication from some schools was not always good and some participants failed to show up with no explanation. This makes a hierarchical delivery very difficult. We are of the opinion that when schools are benefitting from added teacher training, they should give teachers ‘real’ time during the school week and not expect them to always give up their time after school and at weekends when many have family commitments. We must reconsider this for future courses and workshops.

Conclusion:
A Supportive Learning group began about 5 years ago as an interested group of teachers and teacher advisors who met regularly at the Teachers’ Centre to share, advise and attempt to resolve difficulties which appeared in the classroom. From this, the first Supportive Learning Course grew and there have now been three full courses facilitated by the Supportive Learning Team. We now feel that the time has come to open the course content to a wider audience and, therefore, we do not plan to run a specific course next year but facilitators will run courses, open to all, from the Teachers’ Centre.

(A): A participant working with a student during a school-based supervision and support session with Marion.

(B): A participant from the first Supportive Learning course, now a full time Supportive Learning teacher, working with identified lower school children in a dedicated SL room at Aikiyam School.
Baking English
A project of TLC

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 real-life situations, providing children with an opportunity to learn from context, with joy, and allowing for content to flow from spontaneous, real-life situations.

Description of project:
The Baking English project was initiated in The Learning Community six years ago and involves small groups of children (maximum 5 per group) exploring various aspects of the English language (including poetry, short story writing, parts of speech, punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc.) as well as research methodologies, mathematical concepts, computer graphic work, photography and team work skills.

This year, the Baking English project moved from TLC’s Base Camp kitchen to its own space in a new building recently constructed in Base Camp. The space incorporates a mud wood-fired oven, work surfaces, storage cupboards, sink area, and opens out to the tea shop counter where the products of the classes are offered to the wider community.

This year the format of the classes was adapted to be able to function within TLC’s Independent Learning environment, whereby the sessions are not held as pre-planned classes with set groups, but rather children sign up for one of 3 weekly sessions during their Monday planning sessions with their individual mentors. In this way, the children experience working with different combinations of other children, of different age groups, and the intensity of their engagement with the Baking English sessions depends on their individual interest and drive.

After participating in a baking session (with a recipe of their choice) the children choose 3 assignments from the Baking English assignments shelf. These are divided into categories: grammar, creative writing, spelling/handwriting and research. The assignments are ordered by level and children can choose to complete assignments from whichever categories they feel inspired to work. Only after completing the 3 assignments, can the child sign up for the next baking session, thereby fostering self-regulation, responsibility and good time management.

Many other elements have naturally come into the classes such as cooperation and teamwork, hygiene, time management, etc.

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

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

The individual needs of the child are nurtured as they emerge out of their experiences.

Children are increasingly empowered to take responsibility for their own learning process, and experience the nurturing of the faculties of cooperation, self-discipline and patience.
In addition to the exploration of the basic skills of the English language, children experience the overlap with mathematical concepts, among others, which emerge out of the baking process.

**Conclusion:**
Over the past 6 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 team work.
We have seen this year, that by adapting the methodology of the class to suit the concept of Independent Learning (IL) which we are implementing in depth in TLC, children are encouraged to assume more independence in the baking process.
Looking ahead, the new system of Baking English as a part of the IL methodology can be further refined. More attention to time management and cleaner/neater work ethics can be fostered, especially among the younger participants. Assignments can be broadened by offering supplementary material in different areas for children who would like to go deeper into the exploration of different areas of the English language that they have chosen from the range of assignments offered.
Independent Learning
A project of TLC

Independent/Integral Learning (IL) is central to the education program being developed in TLC. For an independent/integral learning we see the environment as playing an important role. Funding for this project was requested in order to enrich the environment with materials and resources for learning, for all ages (6-15), in language, mathematics, science as well as in other areas.

Description of project:
The project has been carried out by several of the facilitators, with focus on different areas. The work has been ongoing during the year. The integral learning environment has been enriched with cupboards full of inviting materials and books. The children have had the opportunity to deepen their study skills, as well as their capacity to plan and reflect on their work. There are now more materials to attract their interest and facilitate their learning. When working with the principle of education “nothing can be taught”, the materials that are made available for the child is extremely important. As we work with children of different ages and levels, materials have to be available to meet each individual need. An example could be a child wanting to learn about clouds. The material suitable for a six-year-old, ten-year-old or fourteen-year-old will be very different. When building up the integral learning environment this is one of the goals: to enable the children to find answers to their questions with materials suitable for their level.

Many children wish to follow explorations into topics that are of close interest to them. Working from the near to the far, facilitators help to guide the children’s interests into rich, multidisciplinary explorations. These interests can be sparked from any topic, and can serve as a bridge for the children between the different learning spaces in TLC Basecamp and beyond. To find what sparks in a child, a close communication between facilitators and parents is very helpful.

Exercises and study of arithmetic, geometry, algebra and their relationships develop the mathematical mind. Concrete explorations link the understanding of the details that form a part of the whole. Montessori materials form a base for these explorations, offering the children their own Aha! moments discovering the magic of mathematics, working from the concrete experience towards an abstract understanding. Foundation skills form the base to enable further deepening. The work with developing this area for the older children has been a focus this year.

Reflections:
The most meaningful aspect of this project was to be able to offer more easily available materials to the children. When a child has an interest in a specific area, there is a starting point. Before, facilitators have had to take time to find materials, either on the internet or at the Auroville Library. Now there is often something to offer the children right away.

The challenging part of this work has been the need to make so many materials. But through a close collaboration between facilitators, it has been possible.

Conclusion:
This project has been an amazing start to this work in TLC, and has also shown us the direction in which to focus for next year. We will be developing a new space to house integral learning in the areas science/history/geography/mathematics and geometry, to place more focus and deepen in the work on these areas. The need for this has come from the children, who are asking to work more with these areas. Next year we will be working to bring this to life as a new integral learning environment in Basecamp.
Transition School

Transition School, founded in 1984, is a primary and middle school for the Auroville community. Inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, we aspire to create a harmonious learning environment that nurtures our children and initiates a life-long process of personal development towards a balance of body, mind and spirit. Over the years we have been developing a program that reflects the values and ideals of Auroville and that takes into account the diverse needs of the children. Different learning styles are addressed through the use of various methods such as individual work, small group work, full class presentations, class projects and outings. Learning activities are interdisciplinary, long term and build on children’s individual strengths, and create a learning experience and classroom environment that is interesting, motivating and challenging for children.

The students and teachers at Transition School come from many different countries and different states of India. This creates a multicultural environment that provides many opportunities for dynamic, creative teaching and learning experiences. Importantly, it exposes teachers and children to humanity’s rich cultural heritage and offers many opportunities to learn from each other, understand different ways of looking at things and appreciate others, building human unity.

Some of the Activities of the year in the words of the teachers (described below):

1. “Auroville, Our Home”
2. Awareness Through the Body (ATB)
3. Vegetable garden
4. Understanding literature with the 7th grade
5. Music
6. Arts & Crafts
7. Theater: The Ramayana as interpreted by the 6th grade students
8. Creativity throughout the Curriculum (see separate report)
9. Further development of the Student Portfolio (see separate report)

1. “Auroville, Our Home”

Creating a value-based atmosphere has been and continues to be an important aspect of our work. We aspire for a place where children can grow freely and learn to work, play and live in harmony with others. The school’s natural environment, programs, assessment methods, subject matter, reading and teaching material are all deliberated upon by the members of the team, as it is fundamental that they reflect the values of Auroville and Transition School.

One example of our work together is the “Values for Human Unity” project. In 2001, we decided to try to develop an all-school project in which all students and teachers in the school explore a chosen value. That first value was Truth. Since that time, we have done a project every year, working with values such as Respect, Harmony, Freedom and Responsibility, Courage, Kindness, Human Unity and many more values that guide our daily lives.

In honor of Auroville’s 50th birthday, the students and the teachers decided that the theme we would work on this year would be “Auroville, Our Home”.

Because most of the children in the school have spent all or most of their lives in AV, they have been exposed to the vision and the realities of Auroville in many ways. Auroville is our home. The children move around freely exploring forests, gardens, farms and new developments and are generally welcome where ever they go. They love to hear stories from the old days and realize that Auroville is a result of Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s dreams and ideas. For some time we had been planning to work together to develop an Auroville program to help the children become aware of
even more. This project was started in late July with a brainstorm session in which teachers and the students shared ideas and questions with a focus on: “What do I know about Auroville, Our Home? What else would I like to know about Auroville?” Many ideas were generated, and then it was decided that the class teachers would follow the questions and interests of their students. Through this project children not only learned about Auroville, but also about themselves.

Below are some teachers’ reports on “Auroville, Our Home”:

**Middle School students (7th-8th grade)**

This year the teachers and the students chose to work on the theme of “Auroville, Our Home”. All through seventh grade and into eighth grade, the students had visited many areas of work that were especially related to the theme of Environmental Science. There, we not only learned about the research and the work that has been done in Auroville since the beginning, but we also got the chance to meet and talk to these dedicated Aurovilians. After each visit, the students came away inspired, and some of them thought they knew what they would do for Auroville in the future. I think that meeting people in their field of work shows the children a real picture of the diversity and dedication of Aurovilians. The adults were also very happy to meet the children.

We also read The Charter and “A Dream” and had long discussions on what this actually might mean – to them. This was very interesting for the students, but also for the teachers. Many ideas came up as they tried to deeply understand what was meant. Examples of this are included in the students’ portfolios, such as a student’s thoughts and reflections after meeting a particular Aurovilian.

**5th grade (“The White Tigers”)**

This year our common school theme was “Auroville, Our Home”. As part of this project, we started by reading the book “Tell me my friend, What is this Auroville?” [by Christine Devin and Jyoti Khare] together in class; we talked about it as well as about the Auroville charter. The children were then asked to reflect and think about what Auroville meant for them, and they wrote beautiful texts, which they illustrated with colorful drawings put up in our classroom. We also looked at some of the 12 qualities of the Mother’s symbol, by reading different stories together and having many interesting discussions.

As part of this project, we also went on two outings: to the Matrimandir and to the Auroville Botanical Gardens. Before going to the Matrimandir, we watched a short film which explained and documented its construction. We visited the Matrimandir Gardens, went into some of the petals, spent quiet time at the lotus pond and had a peaceful meditation in the chamber.

We went to the Botanical Gardens by cycle. We were introduced to the valuable work the team is involved in, and visited the beautiful orchid and fern houses and the cactus garden among others. We also had fun finding our way in the maze and patiently walking through the labyrinth.

**3rd grade**

This year, as a term project, I chose to teach about Auroville for a few reasons: the 50th anniversary, and because I thought it was important that the children of AV be familiar with the place they are living in, in order to encourage the feeling of loyalty and belonging.

Since the topic is a bit challenging for 9-year-old students, we had to find creative ways that the children could learn and most importantly enjoy and remember what they have learned. I chose a few ways to do that: drawing, colouring, creative writing, making models, having Aurovilians come to class and inspire the students with their stories, watching movies, and many trips around.
Trips and meeting Aurovilians were an important part of our week. We not only met Aurovilians in their work places, but also invited people (including the parents of some of the children) to the classroom to interact with the students.

A few of our activities were:

- When we learned about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, we focused on their symbols and lives. We cut and coloured the symbols, and had guided meditation to see what came while we were thinking about them, which the students were asked to draw. We also met Loretta who spoke about her experience meeting the Mother.

- We read “A Dream” by the Mother and shared our dreams for Auroville. Once done, we created a poster showing our work.

- When we learned about the Matrimandir, we went on a few visits to the place, and while there the students were asked to draw what they saw from different places. We were accompanied by Lisbeth, who had taken part in Matrimandir construction. We also watched a short movie about the construction of the Matrimandir.

- When we studied the Auroville map, we looked at all four zones, the green belt, and the Matrimandir, and then made our own map (90 x 90 cm). We had gotten an outline map from Lalit, and in groups the kids drew and colored what should be in each zone. Each student wrote about his/her community and home and drew a map.

- The students took home a survey to complete with their parents about what Auroville is to them, and their history here. We compiled all their work in a folder and called it “Auroville, our home and history”.

We all enjoyed this project very much, and the information will be remembered for a long time.

2. Awareness Through the Body (ATB)

This year in ATB we also integrated the theme “Auroville, Our Home”. One of ATB’s central themes and concepts is Evolution. To align with the work being done in school about Auroville, during the Evolution explorations we chose to emphasise and elaborate on the link between the sense of evolution and the central aim of Auroville: Auroville is to be an active hub for working towards a new social organization based around human unity, truth and growth of consciousness. Auroville is a place that wants to aid individuals and humanity to evolve into something truer.

The Evolution project consisted of about 10 sessions in which children explored with and through their bodies the sense that we are evolving beings both as individuals and as species. Through interactive talks, displays, guided relaxations, visualizations and body movements, the children explored crucial moments in evolution that help them to take the first step to a better understanding of the complexity of their being and of humanity. The exploration of each step brings/opens to a different dimension in us and into a different state of perception.

The interactive talks create a base frame/understanding of what the work is about, and why we do it (these talks are adjusted to the age and level of understanding of each group). The talks are supported by visual displays. Both the talks and the displays also aim at stimulating the interest of the children and plant a sense of wonder about Life, the Universe, and Manifestation: what are we? Where are I/we going? For the younger children the sessions are mainly experiential with short interacting discussions in which we briefly bring up key concepts and ideas, while encouraging them to share their thoughts on it. With the older children the talks go more in-depth and we invite them to reflect on the ideas and concepts and also share their views with the group.

In both the interactive talks and the explorations we want children to get exposed and have a body felt sense of the key concept: “We are complex evolving beings both as individuals and as species”. We are complex beings, and our interactions with others are based on our complexity. The more one can understand his individual complexity the better s/he can understand others and social interactions. This offers the possibility of finding more fulfilling ways of relating to oneself, others, and of working on social models that foster and support a sense of growth and fulfillment in its members. With more understanding of what they are made of, children can get the sense that they
have options and ways to manage their complexity in fulfilling ways and become more self-directed individuals, which in turn will result in a more evolved society – the core aim of Auroville.

To get in touch with the different ‘layers’ of the being, we worked on different types of body movements and form explorations that resonate with crucial moments in evolution. Here follow the key moments in the exploration that we linked to Auroville:

• The sense of a consciousness at the beginning of time as the threat that is pushing through to drive the being and the species into looking for new horizons. A sense of consciousness that is always in us, as the background against which all the inner and outer movements take place. Children could experience it as a sensation and create a sensory memory for it to be able to come back to it any time and in any place/situation.

• The cellular level, where millions of millions of years ago cells acquired programs/patterns that are still operating now in each cell of our body. We explored how cells collaborate with each other as a social organization, as one ‘body/’city’, and how out of the cells' collaboration, a new being comes to be: a multicellular organism. Although it is made up of many united individuals, it has its own sense of identity as a separate individual.

• The appearance of reptilians, our inherited reptilian brain, with the primitive impulses and nervous reactions of the reptilians. These are deep impulses and nervous reactions that run on the background of our conscious awareness, affecting the way we perceive and interact with others.

• The appearance of the mammalian brain, our inherited emotional brain and social habits. As with the reptilian patterns, emotional responses and preset social agreements run beneath our conscious awareness affecting all our perceptions and social interaction, much like computer programs running in the background.

• The appearance of mind up to the Homo sapiens, the “mental beings”. The beginning of the opening to a new possibility for becoming ‘conscious of being conscious’ and moving away from preset impulses and nervous reactions, the conditionings of Evolution. The first time in the universe when the beings can choose to help Evolution!

• The fact that, by using the ability to be conscious of being conscious as a spring board, humanity can move/reach towards new possibilities that lie beyond the current mind that humanity has reached: higher levels of mind, of knowledge and of being. We always conclude the project with a guided tuning towards this new possibility of a humanity and humans that are more connected to their truth, that have a sense of closeness with all Life. How within our imperfection, we are moving forward to become more fulfilled beings and create a more luminous society.

All along while children are guided to explore through their body each one of those evolutionary milestones, we help them to reflect on how if we want to create a new society we need a sense of how we got here. We need to come in touch with how, both as individuals and as a species, we have developed layers of habits: ways of thinking, feeling and acting; and while they were or have been useful in the past, they now need to be used as stepping stones to something new. As stepping stones, they have to be a help to move forward, not a hindrance. We have to be ready to use them as much as needed, but leave them behind at the right moment.

We want children to acquire the sense that we can find better ways of using ourselves, becoming more and more self-directed beings as opposed to being constantly run by learned habits/ways of using ourselves. We can align ourselves with a deeper truth, and by changing and evolving ourselves we will be able to help society to do the same.

We noticed that although the underlying understanding of the project requires quite a level of abstraction and depth of thought, in their own way and in different degrees all children had a sense of a bigger picture. A bigger picture of: how all came to be, themselves, new possibilities for society and the Auroville project essence.
Throughout the school year in other activities and explorations, we keep referring back to both evolution and Auroville. We especially brought that perspective into cooperative games, where children can practice being a positive and proactive member of a group/society. Here we emphasized that there is a double way interactive influence between group and individual; the attitudes and actions of an individual affect the whole group and vice versa. Children were helped to notice how the group has to find ways to assist each individual feel included, taken care of and stimulated to give to the group its unique abilities. At the same time, each individual has to see how best he/she can be of service to the well being and progress of the group, what can be his part in achieving the task; much like Auroville working to find that balance between individuality and collectivity.

3. Vegetable garden: a collaboration between the 4th grade class and Priya from Buddha Garden

This year the students in 4th grade studied ‘nature’ in its broadest sense. The year’s work consisted of a module about the stars and planets, together with modules about plants and birds. The aim of setting up a garden and growing food was to give the students practical experience of dealing with plants and natural processes, and to integrate this with the classroom lessons. It was hoped that it would also provide them with the opportunity to find out and understand where their food comes from and the work it takes to put food on the table.

The interest in the garden was sustained and even increased during this second semester, when the four groups took more ownership of their garden beds. At the beginning of the semester four more beds were created and a wider range of vegetables were grown. These included beans, tomatoes, brinjal and chickpeas, which apart from the chickpeas produced a very good harvest. We had a problem on one bed where the beans got attacked by aphids, but apart from that the plants were mainly pest-free. It was good to see how with help of Caveri the students decided how to share out the produce so that everyone felt they received a fair share of what had been produced.

This year there was no time to make compost, so most of it came from Buddha Garden. It is hoped that next year the work will be organized to make time for this very necessary part of working in a garden.

Next year there will be a new group doing this work. The students will finish by clearing all the beds and making compost out of those plants and leaves from the school grounds for the group who will be working in the garden next year.

4. Understanding literature with the 7th grade

One of the most rewarding experiences with the 7th graders this year was studying The Red Pony by John Steinbeck. The students had not been exposed to classic literature before, and we began with a discussion on how literature can mirror life, and it doesn’t always have a happy ending. Through reading, we can explore emotions and life situations.

The students researched the historical context of the story, set in California on a ranch, as settlers established their lives in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century. We discussed how even in different cultural and historical settings, basic human feelings of love, trust and betrayal remain the same.

The protagonist of the book, Jody, the little boy, lives a very different life from our students today, and some of his actions were described by the students as savage and unnecessarily cruel; and yet they came to understand that life on the ranch was close to nature, and his reality and perceptions were influenced by this. The students observed how Jody matured as the story progressed.

The book is divided into four separate stories. Initially, we read together as a class or in small groups, and this was followed by group discussions. Later, the students read at home, and then we discussed the story together.
A successful activity was journal writing based on the chapter they had read. Through this, they wrote about a time when they had taken care of something; their feelings towards elderly people; an activity that had developed their sense of responsibility.

Reading *The Red Pony* broadened their horizons and enriched their world view, and they will be ready to further develop their literary skills in 8th grade.

5. Music (grades 1-8)

As teachers and musicians we are always on the lookout for ways to spark interest in children. They often learn best when they are attracted to a subject, and relate to the work that they are doing. In music it is the teacher’s job to be aware of the things that children and young adults find appealing. We are teaching an art form, and sometimes it is easy for us to lose sight of what this means. It does have strict rules and disciplines, but at the same time it should essentially be something that gives us pleasure and enjoyment.

In the last years in Transition School we have started to work more towards the idea that children are naturally drawn to music. We as teachers actually don’t have to compel them at all, but guide them in the right direction. This is why we feel that it is important to be aware of what kind of things motivate children in music. If you find those, they can be drawn in quite spontaneously and naturally.

For younger students in the lower grades, it is not difficult. They simply love to sing and this must be encouraged as much as possible. Most have no fear at all, and all they would like to do is participate as much as possible. Rhythm is also very important. All children have a natural talent for rhythm inside of them, so it’s really just a question of providing them with the right outlets. The material should be fun, but at the same time challenging enough for them to learn new ideas and progress.

In the older grades, things get a little more complicated. There still is a very natural love for music, but it gets caught up with other emotions as they grow up around their friends. The fearlessness usually disappears, and the natural need to just ‘do’ goes away. This is why at this point it is essential to try to tap into the things that they do relate to in the subject. Almost all children listen and enjoy music by themselves outside the school environment, so again it is a question of finding out what it is that motivates them.

Popular music is of course one of the biggest pulls for children. They start to use it to define themselves as individuals, and for some, it plays a big role in their lives. Among the more schooled musicians this type of music can be looked down upon, and it is true that some of it is of very low quality, but if you can find the music that does work, you have a wonderful tool.

One of the activities that one can do with children is to get them to differentiate between what is a good song and what is not. What we have been doing in the last years is asking children to choose their own songs to sing, by thinking about what kind of song is of quality and what is not. What type of song can be sung in a school environment? Has the song got the right level for them? What makes good music? How is something appropriate and something else not?

If the right songs are chosen, then these can be used to take children quite far, and even the most disinterested students start to participate.

In India we have the added bonus that music is almost universally liked by children and adults because of films. In Tamil and Hindi culture, songs and film go hand in hand, and every child knows how to sing the latest songs, as well as popular classics that go back far beyond their years. Find the right kind of songs here, and it is a wonderful tool to get almost every child fascinated by music.

Choosing music that interests children doesn’t mean that there should be a reduction in quality. It is good that they are enthusiastic, but our role as teachers still continues to make sure that the best possible results come. They need to be encouraged to do their best, and to learn the proper techniques for performances. The natural enjoyment of music is a stepping stone to taking them deeper inside the techniques and practices that are required to take this subject further.
6. Arts & Crafts:

The goal for this school year was to expand the Arts & Crafts curriculum we have created, adding more of other the major arts. In addition to the usual projects that teach the children about the classic artists (Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, Leonardo Da Vinci, Piet Mondrian, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Henry Matisse, Gustav Klimt, Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, folk and Aboriginal art), we wanted to focus more on creativity and finding projects to encourage the children to work with their individual strengths through different media.

- The 1st graders’ “Own Planet” was inspired by the book “The Little Prince” by Antoine De Saint Exupery.
- The 2nd graders wrote, built backgrounds and props and performed for their theater project.
- The 6th graders created a video game.
- The 7th graders did a comic book project.
- The 8th graders made a movie, going through all the aspects of a movie production.

Auroville’s 50th anniversary gave us the chance to create projects that encourage the children to think about their physical and spiritual environment. The 3rd grade class made a 3D map of Auroville; the 4th grade designed “Urban Furniture” for a new bus stop in collaboration with Auroville Consulting; the 5th grade made 3D flowers with Mother’s name.

We improved the collaboration with the main class teachers with projects like writing and illustrating “Frog and Toad” original stories (3rd grade), and making backgrounds and props for the 6th graders’ play.

7. Theater: The Ramayana as interpreted by the 6th grade students:

We began with a basic script, and then the students started reading The Ramayana printed by Amar Chitra Katha, a comic book series used to spread the knowledge of Indian culture and create a better awareness of Indian mythology. After reading the comic book series they added essential scenes and dialogues to it. The students spent two months learning their lines and preparing the sets, props, and costumes. We invited many schools of Auroville to our play and presented it three times in our school and a fourth time in Bharat Nivas for the annual Tamil New Year program. We had a lot of help from within the Auroville community. Joy came to our class to teach us Sanskrit hymns. Jesse came and taught us different ways to act out a battle scene safely using fists and slow motion as well as sticks and choreography. The children matured a lot during the whole process. They took up a lot of responsibilities and learned to work as a group in a harmonious way. They were eager and excited and proud of what they achieved.

These have been just a few examples of the activities that occurred throughout the year. The staff also worked together to:

- Continue to improve the teacher training program and integration of new teachers. This year several new people joined the Transition team. In appendix a see a report by a first year teacher.
- Work on our project proposals (see the separate reports of these): “Creativity throughout the Program”, and “Portfolio Development”.

Outcomes:

Here are some of the outcomes of the year. It has been a busy year, and each class shared their work with the parents more than one time during the year.

- Many class Open Houses, Presentations and an All-School Open House.
- Posters on a variety of topics: Science (Force and Motion and Basic Physics), Animals, Birds and others. Power Point presentations such as “Biomes of the World”.

Reflections and conclusion:

Every year at the end of the school year, the Transition team sits together to assess the school year. What worked well this year? What was especially meaningful? What were difficult areas? What can we do to improve? We have made an action plan to help us work on some of the issues that we feel we need to improve or develop.

Additionally, every year we take the time for a teachers’ self-reflection. Everyone appreciates this time-out exercise to look at themselves and think about what worked well and what changes could be made in the classroom.
Creativity throughout the Program
A project of Transition School

This is the second year of our all-school project, “Creativity throughout the Program at Transition School”. Creative teaching and learning throughout the program was a focus of observation and study for the entire Transition team. The purpose of this project was to identify key features that enable the development of student’s creativity. All of the children in Transition School participate in Music and Arts classes; these classes are traditionally thought of creative classes and of course they are, but creativity means more than this. We started with a discussion. As the teachers shared their ideas, we realized that we had some questions. One of our questions was: “What can we, as teachers, do to enhance the development of aspects of creativity in the children and ourselves?” Other questions arose: What is creativity in the classroom? How can we make a classroom that encourages creative thinking? How can we balance creativity with the program and direct learning? We started the school year with a sharing of ideas based on these questions.

Description of project:
Transition School works to develop a program that is creative, relevant, challenging and meets the needs of the students. It is important for the school to keep developing as we are all learners and dedicated to helping the children develop all aspects of their being in a joyful learning environment. It is felt that the nurturing of creativity is an important factor in this. Together we tried to answer this question “What is a creative classroom?”

Some points came up that we wanted to explore:

• Creativity in learning is complicated and involves more far more than the creative work done through the arts. Creativity in learning goes much further: thinking, analyzing, discussion, differences, problem solving, – all of this and more helps to build and nurture a resourceful learning environment.
• A physical and psychological atmosphere that feels safe and accepting encourages the children to think, to solve problems to imagine different ways of approaching a painting, a poem, a science concept…
• Through our study we also shared the information that there is research that indicates that living, working and studying in a multicultural environment stimulates creativity.
• We have also experienced that teachers who are free to explore creativity in the classroom, who work on how and when to kindle creativity, are an important factor.

Taking all of this in mind, we continued our exploration and study of Creativity throughout the program at Transition School.

Outcomes:
In a study day that the Transition team participated in, we identified signs of a classroom which promotes creativity:

• students are given some control over their learning
• there is a balance between structure and freedom
• teachers are ‘playful’, and school is fun
• time is used flexibly
• relationships between teachers and children include high expectations, mutual respect, modeling of creative attitudes, flexibility and dialogue
• students work collaboratively and assess each other
• children are involved in their assessment (Student Portfolio)
• there is a mix of creative work along with the program; this helps students to be original and also encourages them to learn new things
• interactive learning

The following are some examples of creativity from the teachers.

Grade 1:
• **Math – “The Shop”:** The first graders concentrate on learning basic addition and subtraction. We decided with the children to make a little “Shop”. We let the children draw items for a shop. We then laminated them and put on prices from 1-9. The children were very excited about the shop and frequently asked to play with it. I started to do organized games with them, for example the “10-friends” game. Everyone had to buy two items that together would cost 10. Then we started to see if we could buy 3 items for 10.

• **English – Julia Donaldson project:** I love Julia Donaldson as an author and we spent a couple of weeks where I read many of her stories to the children. We read the story “Paper Dolls”, and all children created their own paper dolls modeled as in the story. They then wrote a story about their paper dolls. They used the “4 square” method, meaning they planned what was going to happen in the beginning, middle and end of the story. Some children were able to rewrite their rough drafts onto strips of paper in nice handwriting (mostly the ones with shorter stories). For most of the students I typed their stories, and we divided those over four pages. Each page got an illustration. Front covers were also made by the children.

Grade 2 – **“The Faces in our Class” cooperative memory game:**

The first and second grades used games in small groups to develop skills such as concentration, cooperation, reading, spelling, math, motivation, attention, and to have fun. “The Faces in our Class” game has pairs of cards with each student’s picture and name. The cards are placed face up in equal rows and columns. Children are encouraged to focus and hold with their attention on as many pairs as they are able for about 15 seconds. Then the cards are turned face-down. The object of the game is to match as many pairs in a row as possible. After each match, 1 is added to the count. If any is mismatched, the count restarts at zero. At any time the student can ask for help from the other players, yet help is only to be given if requested (difficult for many).

In playing this game, the children quickly understood that they were a team and not working alone. As a group they needed to concentrate right from the beginning to end with a higher count. They supported each other when needed, learned to focus more with each progressive playing of the game, had a lot of fun and were motivated to improve the count each time.

Grade 8 science:

The grade 8 students studied and worked with Newton’s laws. They were fascinated when learning about him, and they went on to learn a little more about many other amazing creative scientists. After studying the ‘Laws’ and watching some fun and interesting demonstrations on YouTube, I gave them newspaper, wooden boards, toy cars, sand paper, and other materials. They were asked to form groups and demonstrate these laws. Of course they met some problems along the way, but adapted their original ideas and kept working. It was a great learning day. They then went on to design posters to describe their work.

**Reflections and conclusion:**

There are many opportunities to add moments of creativity during the day. Sometimes during a discussion a student may say something that makes the whole class stop and pause for reflection. It
can be a refreshing and energizing experience.

These are just a few examples of projects and activities that the classes worked on this year. One of our conclusions was that creativity is not only involves the whole student, the teacher and the class working together with the freedom and encouragement to make choices, to take risks and to think imaginatively and in a way that tries to serve a purpose. Creativity is the process of having original ideas that have value. An idea that means something, leads to a new approach. The nurturing of creativity needs a supportive learning environment that encourages the participants – both students and teachers.
Holistic Assessment for Integral Education
A project of Transition School

Assessment of the student’s progress is a very important component of education. When it is well thought out and used appropriately, it can have a big impact on student learning and growth. Effective assessments give students feedback on their progress, how well they understand and what they need to improve on. It can also give them ideas on how they might improve. At the same time, assessment helps the teacher to better design his or her lessons. It helps the teacher guide the student in his/her personal development.

At Transition School, we use Student Portfolios as the main form of student assessment. The portfolios are compilations of the students’ work together with written reflections.

We regularly review the role of assessment for several reasons:

- Individual teachers have learned a lot through the years, and this information should be shared.
- We want to further develop the portfolio to include all the activities in school and the students’ personal interests that they might be pursuing outside of school.
- We have new teachers who profit and learn from the discussions and workshops.

Description of project:
Several times during this school year, we planned to spend some time sharing ideas on assessment in general and the student portfolio in particular. At the end of the first month of school we had a study session. Many of the participants had been involved in the development of the portfolio for some years, but there are also new people in the school who have not had that much experience or understanding of the portfolio.

We started with a discussion of the use of the portfolio. There are different types of portfolios, such as display portfolio and assessment portfolio. Our student portfolio is an assessment portfolio. Not only is it a chance for the teachers to assess the students’ work, but also students take an active role in their assessment. Every piece that is put in the portfolios comes with an entry slip: a student’s description of the work and how he/she felt about the work and the effort behind it. The portfolio can contain work samples such as:

- Worksheets
- Projects
- Reports
- Essays
- Explanation of science experiments
- Audio and video tapes
- Reflections on meetings or discussions
- Pictures: Art work, presentations...
- Each piece of work has an Entry Slip (a student assessment) attached

As a result of this discussion, many people shared samples of entry slips that they had developed. We opened a file in the teachers’ file on the computer so people could look and use the entry slips.

One point of discussion was the difficulty of classes such as Arts & Crafts and Music and others to show the work of the children. Photographs and recordings were suggested, also was discussion about the research of electronic portfolios. We continued discussion through the year and the
children continued to be given time to select and assess items for their portfolio. Older children not only chose their own assignments, but were asked to include specific work.

The team at Transition School also worked on developing an “Auroville” program this year. We will add a new section to the Student Portfolio that is based on this.

Outcomes:

Students learned to present their portfolios to their parents and others. With study, these work samples and the portfolio itself can demonstrate:

• Students’ interests, strengths and weaknesses
• Cognitive, aesthetical aspects of their being
• Emotional development and values for Human Unity
• Growing ability of self-reflection
• Cooperative learning skills
• Communication skills
• Problem solving skills
• Creative and organizational skill

Reflection and conclusion:

We plan to continue this work as we see it as a valuable and subjective holistic assessment tool that involves all who are involved in the learning process: the children and the teachers that they work with. We will continue to work on it and adapt it to the needs of the children.

As part of the reflection we add a report written by the grade 6 teacher about her experiences this year:

This year in the 6th grade, the Jaguars developed individual growth and decision making as well as organizational skills using the portfolio. They could choose how to present the work but had to find how to do it in a logical and systematic way. The children decided to put separators in between each subject with titles. They found many ways to do that using colorful papers and different writing styles and paper layering and paper cutouts, and some even did some collages. Then a lot of time was spent finding the best way to present their work. The kids decided to put the portfolio entry in a pocket on the left and the corresponding chosen work in a pocket on the right. Then they had to decide how to place the work chronologically to show how they progressed during the year. Some chose to put the oldest work at the back and put the newest work on top, others decided to do it the other way around. All along the year the Jaguars handled their portfolios and put care into organizing their work and documenting their progress.
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Establishing an Affective Curriculum
A project of Aikiyam School

by Marion

This project aimed to:
• Improve students' self-esteem and self-knowledge through looking at qualities such as kindness, compassion and empathy.
• Support them to be able to work with other people effectively and positively, and help them to develop a sense of how best they can learn, be self-motivated and interact with others.
• Establish, from the beginning of school, the foundations of self-esteem, self-knowledge, self-respect, respect for others, co-operation and appropriate behaviour.

Description of project:
The project had four phases, most of which ran concurrently. Marion was responsible for the In-Service Educational Training (INSET) with the teachers of the kindergarten and lower school, and with providing and introducing materials which support the teachers to introduce elements of this curriculum into their everyday activities. The teachers then worked with the students through story books and art/drama activities to underpin their everyday experiences in school.

Rita, together with Mala, class teacher, ran a Saturday morning ‘Be True Not Violent’ group which worked mostly with upper school children. This is ongoing.

Ibtsen, who is a Mindfulness trainer, began a series of workshops with the teachers to introduce the concept of mindfulness for their own personal development and also to support them in taking these activities into the classroom. This will develop next term.

Mathilde, resident art therapist, worked collaboratively with all strands of the project, exploring areas of creative and emotional intelligence on a regular weekly basis for grades up to 5th year.

Outcomes:
An Affective Curriculum is part of what we call ‘the Hidden Curriculum’. As such, it cannot be quantified in the same way as, say, a Reading Curriculum. The ‘evidence’, if that word can be applied, comes from anecdotal evidence from teachers and therapists, their feelings about how the children are beginning to use their own emotional intelligence, are relating to others and from a general, if gradual change in the school environment.

The use of the story books such as “Each Kindness” and the “Bucket Filling” series has begun to establish a language and terms of reference for empathy, kindness, cooperation and understanding. Some teachers reported an immediate change in the way the girls related to others, particularly to each other, and operated in the classroom and in free time. (The boys took a little longer!)

The language of ‘bucket filling’ began echoing through the school.

Students from all grades, when asked to define ‘bucket filling’ (an image used to support the understanding of improving self-esteem and quality of life through helping, rather than hurting or ignoring others) variously described situations where:
• “We say ‘please and thank you’ and do not hurt others.”
• “When I listen to others deeply.”
• “When I help with real happy from my heart.”
• “When I love everyone without any difference.”
• “When someone hurts you they are not filling your bucket. Their bucket is empty too.”
• “All living beings have invisible buckets.”
• “Don’t hurt a dog… dogs have buckets too.”
When a student had not done the homework, a classmate pointed out “See the teacher’s bucket is empty but your bucket is empty too!”

Regular routines of mindfulness exercises, such as controlled ‘finger’ breathing have brought a more relaxed and quieter approach to classroom activities.

Principal Shankar reports an improvement in the students’ ability to focus and engage in the early morning meditation which begins assembly. He further writes:

“Children who follow this curriculum are more aware of the bold words that talk about human qualities and feelings. Children can relate with the stories that they read because they help them imagine their society and prevailing situations and so can experience what is being said in the book.

The bucket filling/dipping activities keep children more concentrated, because their minds are filled with what is going on in the classroom.

The story books used in Affective Curriculum classes are great supplementary readers”.

Reflections:

There were many meaningful things throughout this project which is now established and ongoing.

The teachers themselves began to talk about altering their perception, how some cultural mores cut across some of the concepts and how these can be reconciled. They also spoke of how much they are learning from the mindfulness exercises and are eager to continue the work next term.

They also see the value of using story books in the classroom to address issues, rather than tackle things directly or wait for things to occur, negatively, and employ ‘crisis management’.

There was a very positive sense of cooperation and joint planning between teachers and therapists in which we can begin to see the borders between these elements blurring. Art therapy is no longer viewed as ‘somewhere the students go to do other things’ but has become a reflection on, and base on which to build classroom activities and projects.

The need for slow and thorough delivery in small batches, giving students time to assimilate is beginning to develop and also, for me, the same applies to INSET, especially in a situation such as this when we are working with cross cultural application.

The desirability of having whole school approaches to Affective Curriculum concepts is also beginning to be appreciated. In the Upper School the concept of Democracy and Personal Responsibility is developing through the election of a Student Council. Various smaller initiatives, engaging students in working on identifying and acting upon their roles in certain situations, are beginning to emerge.

Conclusion:

This is an ongoing project which is being absorbed into the milieu of the school. The following academic year will see this work developing in the lower school and adapting into the upper school with more sophisticated stories and concepts, more suited to older students.

Assembly will be class-based once a week and this will be the time for more precise exploration of the concepts associated with this curriculum.

The materials, lesson plans, activities and information about this course will be copied to the Teachers’ Centre for use in other schools.
Arulvazhi Education Centre

In Tamil, Arulvazhi means “Way of Grace”. This education centre, situated near the Promesse Community of Auroville, caters to the educational and cultural needs of the children aged 3 to 18 years of the neighbouring village, Morattandichavadi, in the light of the teachings of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Over the years Arulvazhi has expanded its scope to include women’s education and also to serve as a platform for interaction with delegates from different parts of Tamilnadu and Auroville. Its aim is to provide value-based education in an atmosphere of simplicity, beauty, joy and harmony, wherein children develop naturally.

Arulvazhi has seven areas of activities:

1. Créche and kindergarten group where importance is given to the development and use of the sense organs, the cultivation of the aesthetic sense, the capacity to choose what is beautiful, simple, healthy and pure.
2. Primary school group with activities of daily physical exercises, stories, songs and drawing classes in the evenings.
3. Computer class for beginners groups held in the evenings.
4. Yogasana practice led by a qualified yoga teacher on our school premises, daily in the mornings (Monday to Sunday except Saturday), and a special class Sunday evenings for the advanced level.
5. Adolescent girls’ classes held in the evenings, focusing on health education and social awareness, particularly in relation to gender problems and cultural expressions.
7. Cultural education through slokas and stories.

Highlights of the year 2017-18:

1. An educational tour for 15 students and 3 teachers was organised to visit Maharishi Vrathathri Yoga Centre in Pollachi and Pathanjali Yoga Centre at Udumalaipettai, to exchange knowledge expounded in those centres with that of our centre.
2. The children went to Berijam camp at Kodai hills for 20kms trekking; while returning they came to Palani and acquainted themselves with its significance in the context of Tamil heritage.
3. A Yoga demonstration programme was organised covering 10 villages in the Auroville bioregion from 17 June 2017 to 11 July 2017. A detailed pamphlet of simple yogasanas for daily practice was distributed to the audience.
4. As the Yoga demonstration project was intended to reach as many people as possible, a yogasanas demonstration film was created with Arulvazhi children, directed by Mr. Srinivasan of Yatra films. This film was broadcast by Doordharshan Kendra, Puducherry which covers 65km radio distance viewership.
5. Other demonstrations by the Yoga students in various forums included:
   - Women’s Day celebration in Morattandi;
   - demonstration at New Creation sports ground on Auroville sports festival day;
   - participation in a district level Yoga championship competition, in which 3 of our students got district level Yoga championship award.
6. During the Auroville birthday week, a yoga demonstration was given at Promesse community. Another was given at the Tamilnadu-Auroville seminar in March 2018.
7. At the Auroville Sangamam Festival, 38 students demonstrated various dimensions of yogasanas before an audience of 2000 persons.
Other activities:

1. Children participated in extra-curricular activities like songs, drama, painting, dance and art. The Evening School children participated in an interschool competition, and performed well compared with students from neighbouring villages. Teachers from the government school were appreciative of our efforts in bringing out the latent talents of the children.

2. Our women's wellbeing class, which includes yoga lessons, was conducted twice a week.

3. We arranged to take blood tests, blood pressure, height and weight for the women in the yoga class. Many women from the surrounding village benefit from this yoga class, which practice controls the blood sugar and blood pressure levels. We are giving food tips for diet, loss of over weight and also follow it up regularly.

4. We celebrated Independence Day on August 15 2017, Vinayaga Chathurthi in September, Kolu and Ayutha Pooja in October. We also visited Ilaignarkal Education Centre with students and staff. We celebrated Diwali in October, Christmas in December, Pongal and Republic Day in January 2018.

5. The staff and students visited the Sri Aurobindo Ashram on April 4 and participated in the meeting held on the Pondicherry beach where Sri Aurobindo landed on April 4, 1910.

6. The students visited Matrimandir in October 2017. They visited Sri Aurobindo’s room in November (Siddhi Day), and again in December (Mahasamadhi Day).

7. On Auroville’s birthday 2018, our students went to Matrimandir. On March 29 we took our students to the room in the Ashram where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo met for the first time in 1914.

Reflections:
Every year in all areas of activities we are progressing step by step, and there is overall improvement. But still we have to move forward, as our beneficiaries are going to outside schools and coming to us on a part-time basis. We are always fine-tuning our efforts to suit the day-to-day contingencies. The 50th Anniversary of Auroville’s birthday celebrations gave an impetus to our expansion of activities.

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

Aurohamsadhwani Art Centre has been running for over ten years, offering music and dance classes taught by professional teachers. We believe that music and dance can envelop and go beyond the barriers of any religion or cultural differences of the different human races and embrace all differences within. Aurohamsadhwani is supported by a team of five members from Auroville.

Activities of the year:
This year we offered four classes: veena, Bharat Natyam, keyboard, and guitar. Students from Auroville and the surrounding villages participated, ages 4 to 56 years, boys, girls and women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veena class</td>
<td>14 children, 7 adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharat Natyam class</td>
<td>20 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyboard class</td>
<td>5 children, 1 adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar class</td>
<td>5 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52 students</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Our veena students participated in Ragamaliga and Thalamaliga art and culture programmes conducted by the Tourism Development Corporation, Puducherry.
- We had a concert with 50 veenas for the 50th Anniversary of Auroville, held in the Amphitheatre. Our keyboard students also performed in this program.
- Our Bharathanatyam students did a performance called “Puthiyathor Ullagam” together with Kanchana’s Odissi dance students, based on the story of Satyavan and Savitri.

Outcomes:
5 Bharat Natyam dance students are ready to do Salangai Pooja and 5 students are preparing Arangetram. This type of programme offers the opportunity to the AV and the village students who are not able to join such classes in the city. Learning music together and understanding each other, helping each other brings unity among themselves.
Ilaignarkal Education Centre

Ilaignarkal Education Centre is an anytime school for Auroville workers of all ages and their wards, providing further learning programmes and courses in essential life skills, leadership and personality development for young people, both men and women.

Activities of the year:

April 2017:

• Celebration of Tamil New Year – Organised along with Mohanam Cultural Centre, the event happened at the Visitor’s Centre. The event was organised to create awareness about the culture and educate attendees about the meaningful seasonal festival. Renowned Tamil Siddha practitioner, Mr. K.P. Arjunan conducted a session on “NadiMaruthuvam”.

• Annual Day Celebrations – The celebrations included felicitation of Best Student, Best Youth and Best Staff apart from other cultural activities. Many Aurovilians, students, ex-students, parents and representatives of SAIIER and AV Outreach participated in the event. Best Youth Award was conferred on Krishna Thiruvengadam, who served as a volunteer Rural Social Technologist and helped in documenting our innovative methods and cultural educational programmes. Krishna has received many awards. This year he has been selected for the prestigious MIT Innovation and Boot Camp 2018 for his work, “Hive: Rural Design Studio”. This will help in realising his vision of bringing children to the forefront of Social Innovation.

• Tamil Heritage Festival – Organised along with Thazhi Foundation, Pondicherry this event was held to create awareness about Tamil Heritage through a painting exhibition. Students of Ilaignarkal with their teacher visited the Archaeological Park near Matrimandir to learn about the ancient civilisation that existed in Auroville region (2,000 B.C – 1,000 B.C).

May 2017:

• Summer Camp – The camp was organized for the children of Auroville workers studying in various schools in and around Auroville. The aim was to enrich the children in extracurricular activities which included yoga, identification of herbs, arts & crafts, Tamil language skill development, cultural activities and self-improvement programmes. Around 25 children participated; 3 volunteers and Ilaignarkal staff facilitated. A field visit was also organized to the Marakkanam village agricultural farm to have an exposure to agrarian life.

• World Heritage Day – Ilaignarkal organized the event collaborating with Thazhi Foundation, Pondicherry. Lectures and presentations were given during the event which had 50 participants from various colleges.

June 2017:

• (Continuation of the Summer Camp.)

• Celebration of World Yoga Day – The day was celebrated with the schools in the bioregion and AV Outreach. Demonstrations of ‘Aganda yoga’ continued all day along from 7 A.M to 7 P.M.

July 2017:

• Launching of Outreach Programme – Kuilapalayam, Edayanchavadi, Irumbai and Kottakarai Panchayat school students explored the curriculum through ‘Joyful Learning Process’ at Ilaignarkal as an annual programme. More than 100 students participated and benefitted from the awareness programme. Our school has adopted Panchayat Union schools to help
them to carry on their value-oriented education by providing space, educational tools and resource persons.

August 2017:
• Independence Day Celebrations – The event was attended by village elders, parents and workers of Auroville who shared their concern for AV-village relations through education.
• Celebration of Sri Aurobindo’s Birthday – Photo exhibition on the life and messages of Sri Aurobindo. This was followed by a video session and feedback by participants.

September 2017:
• Eco-system based Leadership Programme for Rural Youth – Workshop for two days was conducted in collaboration with Trust for Youth and Child Leadership (TYCL). There were 43 participants for the workshop from Auroville region. It was beneficial to both our staff and students.
• A delegation of 20 teachers from Thai Thamizhagam School, Tindivanam were hosted to train under the Joyful Learning Programme practised in our school.
• Beginning of Kolu Festival – The traditional festival of dolls celebrated for 10 days as the Festival of Evolution at our school, witnessed a doll exhibition on the theme of evolution aligning with the concept of Auroville’s existence. Awareness programme and cultural activities marked the celebrations.

October 2017:
• Kolu Festival got extended further for 5 days on the request of regional schools.
• Vijayadasami Festival – Inauguration of Bharatnatyam classes for Bharathi Educare beneficiaries, where every Sunday morning children learn classical dance under a trained teacher.
• Siddha Medicine Workshop – Organised for the workers of Auroville, our staff, students and parents; the workshop was conducted by Dr. K.P. Arjunan and his team from Vellore. Dr. K.P. Arjunan is the Head of traditional Siddha Medical Practitioners Association and one of the directors of Ayush (Alternative Medicine).

November 2017:
• Birthday celebration of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, former Education Minister of India. An exhibition on the life and times of Maulana Azad was conducted. The exhibition was attended by the students and teachers of Outreach schools. A rare book in Tamil on Hinduism authored by an Islamic scholar published in 1950 as per the instructions of Azad was on display.
• Yatra Srinivassan’s Book Release – Release of “Yatra Sirukadhaigal” by Ilaignarkal Education Centre, Yatra Arts and Amaidhikkural group to appreciate the Tamil stories from our region in native language but on an universal theme.

December 2017:
• Karthigai Deepam Festival – The event, held in collaboration with Mohanam Cultural Centre, witnessed recital of hymns, lecture on the relevance of Deepam (sacred holy fire puja with 108 elements), exhibition of different types of lamps, wicks and oil. Lighting of traditional fireworks (karthi) created from natural products (palm flower) demonstrated how to reduce pollution and appreciate Mother Nature.
• Sharing day – Ilaignarkal hosted the annual sharing day which witnessed participants of diverse age groups, ex-students, fellow Aurovilians, scholars and resource person of our peace circle. Nearly 120 people participated in the event and enjoyed sharing gifts.
January 2018:

- Celebration of Pongal festival – Along with Mohanam Cultural centre, African Pavilion and Yatra Arts. The celebration included display of traditional dance forms, games, stalls exhibiting overlapping cultural elements between Africa & Tamil Nadu, awareness talks, rituals, competition and traditional health practice consultation (Siddha medicine). More than 600 visitors enjoyed the sweet rice Pongal and vegetable curry made out of 28 native seasonal vegetables.
- Republic Day celebration – Flag hoisting, rendering of patriotic songs and experience sharing session with the elders in the form of stories of liberation movement and constitution of India, marked the day.
- We hosted a delegation of 16 students from Swadharma, Bangalore for training in Joyful Learning Programme and shared our research materials of our studies on tradition, history and heritage.
- Members of our team participated in the “Walk of Hope” from Matrimandir to Royapettai village to mark the 50th year celebration of Auroville.

February 2018:

- Ilaignarkal hosted 15 senior students from Sri Vigneshwara Higher Secondary School, Sethurapet.
- We facilitated participation in a session organised to address listening to problems of adolescence and training in co-counselling.
- The Mother’s Birthday celebration – Talk on Mother’s vision for Auroville and Auroville 50th Birthday celebrations. We facilitated the reception of hosts from all over the world and the visit by the Prime Minister of India. Our staff and students volunteered in maintaining the roads clean for the PM’s visit.

March 2018:

- We hosted a delegation from AVI USA and shared our school experience in working with AV communities and workers from the Auroville region. The delegates appreciated our efforts taken in the field of Tamil language studies and publication of research materials.

Miscellaneous activities:

- Periodic interaction with nearly 20 female beneficiaries of Bharathi Educare and their families, who receive support for education, health and social awareness.
- Literary circles on Thursdays lectured by learned Professors, writers and poets. This activity has now completed 12 years.
- Revival of “Vaasal” Magazine – Vaasal, a magazine in English designed as an entrance to the world of Tamil language, ideas, culture and heritage was revived after its initial launch in 2012, supported by Jonathan and Radhika, two Newcomers.
- Regular monthly visit of Siddha Doctor under health and healing project.
- Revival of satellite classes – Our staff visited Auroville units and offer classes for further learning of adult workers. Some of the Auroville units benefitted included WellPaper, Naturellement and Transition School.

Outcomes:

- 12 issues of our monthly newsletter “Auroville Seythimadal” in Tamil, which bring the Auroville network together (in return we receive 48 magazines and new books for review).
- Meenakshi’s poetry that appeared in “Auroville Seythimadal” was felicitated by Tamil Nadu Text Book Society and included in the curriculum of Grade 11 of Tamil Nadu Schools and printed in textbooks.
• Good response to “Vaasal” magazine from non-Tamil and native English speakers of Auroville as it progresses into its third edition (summer edition). A new website has been created for the magazine, promoting the language, culture and showcasing recommended sources for enrichment. Vaasal was also promoted by an article in Auroville Today, that showcased interviews with the editors Meenakshi and Jonathan Walton.

• An awareness programme into Tamil language, culture and heritage has become a part of Aspiration and Yucca programmes for Newcomers and pre-Newcomers. The programme has been coordinated by Aspiration Group along with Meenakshi and Jonathan. Ilaignarkal team plays the role of bridging cultures.

• Ilaignarkal is developing more of a Theme Library for workers of Auroville to learn 'local to global'.

**Conclusion:**
Ilaignarkal has been providing 42 years of non-stop service in the field of worker’s welfare, which aligned with the 50th year of existence of Auroville.
Isai Ambalam School

Isai Ambalam is an outreach school located on the periphery of Auroville, adjoining both Alankuppam and Kottakkarai villages. The mission of the school is “Creation of a learning environment in which the students and the teachers reach the highest mental and spiritual consciousness possible for one’s level, so as to live, learn, teach and function from there.”

Isai Ambalam was started in 1979 by a Dutchman, Ivar, with drop-out students. With the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Tamil Nadu (SSA), the school converted to a crèche, primary and middle school. This year there were 89 students at the school.

The school has been following the CBSE syllabus for the last four years, and in the coming school year all the children will be registered under CBSE as part of New Era Secondary School (NESS). There are qualified and well-trained teachers and many youth and volunteers, including 10 engineers who work with the children in science, technology, programming, electronics and mathematics. The medium of instruction is English and Tamil, and the children can continue higher education in NESS or any other school of their choice.

Activities of the year:

There are 5 Aurovillian and 4 non-Aurovillian teachers. Beside them there are 8 volunteer engineers from STEM Land and Aura Auro Design who work with children on maths and environmental studies through Education by Design (EBD) activities.

We have school from morning 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. We have increased our engagement with the children with sleep-overs and special programs on Saturdays.

The work on EBDs and integrating with the various activities in Auroville was supported by a grant from Bajaj this year.

Highlights of this year were:

1. Values and critical skills program by teachers.
2. Education by Design (Described in detail in this report).
3. STEM Land activities engaged with children beyond EBDs, with small products like a variety of torches and LED-based lighting and also materials to learn mathematics well.
4. Preparing Teaching Learning Material (TLM) for 1st to 3rd grades – we created a pathway that could be used based on a ladder system we had used with children in Tamil.
5. A Savitri play was created by the children, with the theme of understanding life and the sincere aspiration of one human being to bring light to earth.
6. Plan & outcome assessment – We created a software that could be used to create and track the outcomes.
7. National Knowledge Network (NKN) at Isai Ambalam – In the last quarter we received the NKN network, which has been useful to download relevant videos and software both for children as well as for the youth teachers at the school.

Values and critical skills program:

This year we focused with teachers to understand the ‘values’ concept deeper and practice it during the school day life. We have chosen 4 needed values for their teaching life: Goal setting, Perfection, Deep listening, and Time management. Both STEM Land and Isai Ambalam teachers have practiced and wrote their experience.

Education by Design (EBD):

Below are some examples of the EBD projects we did with the children this year.
• **India Map EBD:** Students from 6th and 7th grades made a map of India using red soil, clay, bricks, pebbles, sand, alluvial soil, black soil. They created it in a 3m x 3m area. Each student was given a separate part of the country to draw. By using graph sheets they drew the outlines of the map. They made the topography of India using clay. But after a couple of days it had cracked. Then students came up with a solution that since the layer of the clay is so thin, it had cracked. We had some remaining soil left after another Education By Design (EBD) project where we had constructed a clay kiln, so students used that red soil and created another layer above the clay. By using bricks and red soil students built the mountains. In order to differentiate between desert, mountains and rivers, they used different materials. For the rivers, they mixed cement with water and built many rivers in the map. For desert, they used sand. In the eastern parts of the country, they used alluvial soil to demonstrate the rivers taking alluvial soil to the delta before joining the sea. Tasks were properly divided among students and it took about two weeks for them to complete the map. The final output of the map looked good with mountains, rivers and other geographical features. By doing this EBD they learnt the geography of India.

• **Kitchen wastewater treatment plant:** The main objective was to reuse the kitchen wastewater for watering the garden. We decided to create a wastewater recycling system. To measure the height of the tank we used a bamboo stick. Children marked the height of the tank on the bamboo stick. We used a thread to measure the circumference. Children took the thread around the circular shaped ring and marked on the thread. The challenging part was we were not able to find the measuring tape and so used the metre scale instead. We found the height of the tank to be 3m and circumference around 3.14m. Through this we found out that the radius was half a meter. Finally, we found out that the tank volume was approximately 2355L. We fixed a motor to pump water from the pit. Eventually, the pumped water is used to water the garden. A circuit is connected to the water tank which indicates the rise in the level of the water in the pit.

• **Concreting (with iron reinforcement) the Pond:** Children made a pond in their school as an EBD. After 6 months it developed a crack, possibly because of all the roots of the trees around it. After that we sat with children and had a conversation about what to do about the pond and whether we should just let it be, with the lessons learned. The children were not willing to let it go without further effort. One child asked about concreting the whole pond to make it significantly stronger. The idea came from some concrete bars (iron center with jelly and cement) which were extremely strong and very difficult to break through while finding rubble for the clay room. The bending and cutting of rods were done by the children. We bought 40kg of 6mm and 50kg of 8mm rods for the pond. Children made 100 TMT rings to make a beam structure around the pond. After the rod work was done, we bought 1 unit of sand, jelly and 10 bags of cement. We built a temporary wall to hold the jelly and cement together, which we removed once the concrete set. We hired a mason to guide us for mixing the jelly and a smooth finish of the pond. While doing this EBD we paused at different times and had some discussions, and a session on questions that the children wanted to have clarified both with the teachers as well as with the mason.

• **Vegetable garden EBD:** Children wanted to make a garden at their school. We had visited the Botanical Garden and Pebble Garden. We saw different ways of making a garden. We wanted to set up a drip irrigation system in the garden using sprinklers. We started planting in the beds we had prepared. Children from 6th and 7th grades took responsibility to connect sprinklers all over the garden. It was a new experience connecting sprinklers and routing the pipe to our garden. We are starting to see plants coming up. Children take turns to water the plants. Now they give all the vegetables that they harvest from the garden to the school kitchen.

• **Tree house:** Josh, a volunteer, built a tree house with the help of 5th, 6th and 7th grade students. We had a long-term wish to build a tree house, but we had not had the right person...
to guide the children. With the help of Josh we made the tree house. The children enjoyed cutting bamboo in our school campus, according to the height of the tree house, and cut the pakumaram for the base. After cutting the bamboo they burnt it in the fire so that insects will not stay inside and eat up the bamboo. They tied it with the coconut rope and made it strong. The children were very happy with their work and spend quite some time up during break. All the teachers climbed up and felt enthusiastic about their children's work.

- **Tanjore Temple:** A challenge was given to students that “Why does Tanjore Temple’s gopuram’s shadow not fall on the ground?” and “Why is Tanjore called a bowl of rice?” “How does the shadow fall on its surface? In what angle?” We converted this project as a maths project. Multiple challenges were given to them. The students went to Tanjore temple, and they found that the shadow falls on the ground and told their teacher that the challenge is in fact incorrect, and wondered why this saying (about the shadow) still exists and has been believed for such a long time. They studied the history and one of the theories found was that the king Raja Raja Cholan asked the architect, “Will this structure ever fall?” and the architect is said to have replied that “Not even its shadow will fall”, but this appears to have been misquoted and misinterpreted as various theories on the shadow of the temple. Then there were some design projects where children needed to construct a structure where its shadow fell within a certain area from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., which the children created and through it learned about angles.

- **English class and Time Zone EBD:** How do you boost the Isai Ambalam 4th and 5th grade students’ English comprehension and expression? Simply introduce them to someone who doesn’t understand Tamil! Chris, a volunteer from the US, came to our school for two weeks and worked with Kavitha during the students’ English lessons. Many topics were discussed and Chris soon discovered that the students loved to sing. She introduced two well-received new songs: “The ants go marching...” song reinforced the rhyming concept, and “If you’re happy and you know it...” explored emotions.

  But by far the most exciting events were the Skype calls to Barbara, Chris’ friend from the US. The students asked questions to get to know Barbara and her life a bit more. They were surprised when Barbara opened her window and showed them that it was dark outside while the sun was shining brightly here in India. This started the EBD about time zones. Eventually children figured out that when one side of the earth faces the sun it is dark on the other side.

  They built clay models of the earth and sun (complete with LED lights) to demonstrate the concept. They learned about time zones and were able to figure out the times in different places on the planet based on where they were located and its time zone. When it is 2:30 PM in India, it is 5:00 AM in Virginia, USA – no wonder it was still dark at Barbara’s home during the Skype call!

  And to top it off, the students were thrilled when Barbara showed up at Isai Ambalam a week later!

  Both Chris and Barbara appreciated the opportunity to meet with Kavitha and the students, and to learn about the Isai Ambalam School’s learning through “challenges” methodology.

**Events and interactions:**
1. In June 2017 all the students went to the “Science Express Train” exhibition in Pondicherry.
2. Maria, a volunteer, helped the 5th grade students and the teachers to improve their communication skills.
3. Mr. Swami Dath Ananda Swamiji from Chengalpat hoisted the flag and inaugurated the new clay room on 15th August.
4. We celebrated Ganesha Pooja festival in our school. All the students learned the importance of Ganesha.
5. Brinda from the USA conducted a one-day workshop on EBD and critical skills.

6. Susan, a volunteer, helped in the crèche and kindergarten class for 6 months. She taught the children music with different instruments.

7. Mr. Ravi Alugandi, a resource person from Andra Pradesh, conducted a half-day workshop on origami and puppet-making for teachers.

8. We celebrated Deepam festival and lighted lamps.

9. We celebrated Christmas and one of the Aura Auro teachers, Naveen, dressed as Santa Claus and gave prizes to all the children.

10. Ms. Swathi, a resource person from Azim Premji University, conducted 2-day workshop on Maths and hoisted the flag on Republic Day.

11. Sri M came to the school and had a conversation with the students.

12. Sahana, a volunteer from Bangalore, stayed with us for 2 weeks and learnt the techniques of teaching values. She gave a seminar with powerpoint show about activities to understand the concept of perfection.

13. There were many trips to learn about initiatives inside Auroville (as part of EBDs) to learn about forests, bees, etc.

14. 3rd to 7th grade children went on an educational trip to Tanjore and Pitchvaram.

15. Ankit, ‘India on my cycle’ from Rajasthan, came to our school and interacted with the children and shared his experience about traveling through 16 different states in India.

16. Anita walked with all the children (except pre-primary) to Matrimandir on 24th April and did meditation. They children gave feedback that they felt quiet and peaceful there.

**Conclusion:**

We hope we will have more volunteers in the coming years to retain the energetic environment that has been created at the school today.
Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre

At Kuilappalayam Cultural Centre (KCC), we have the aims of:

• Providing a gateway and the space to strengthen the bridge between Auroville and our villages, connecting people through many different activities.
• Holding the richness of our Tamil traditional cultures and arts, through conducting meaningful and thoughtful creative events.
• Making awareness on such threatening issues like plastics, adulteration of foods, pollution, health issues, child & women safety, and adults’ future education.

Activities of the year:

This year, we carried on the activities of Evening Tuition and Silambam, which were mainly supported by SAIER.

**Tuition:** During this academic year, from June 2017 till April 2018, our students’ regular attendance had been increasing and decreasing frequently for various reasons, but we never gave up our faith and confidence in order to promote it to the next level success through our constant and continuous efforts.

Overall, around 150 students of 5+ different schools, including Aikiyam School, Kuilappalayam Trust School, Kuilappalayam Government school, Aravindhar High school, and some from Pondicherry schools too, showed their presence on various timely basis for whenever and wherever they were in need of helps and supports in their lessons, like English, Math, Tamil, Science and Social science. All of them were from the nearby surroundings of Kuilappalayam and Laxmipuram villages. These classes were systemized and led from Mondays to Saturdays of every week, at our small shed in the KCC campus by the KCC student teachers.

**Silambam:** Silambam class happened for 2 hours from 10 pm to 12 pm on Sundays, and the practice trainings happened once or twice a week during weekdays after 5pm. A very good professional, trained and experienced Silambam master from Pondicherry taught these Silambam lessons. Some classes had quite good attendance of 30 students, and they benefitted from the knowledge and the skills of it.

**Summer Camp:** Every year, we used to conduct a “Summer Camp” for the students at the end of every academic year. This year also, from May 1st to 5th of 2018, there was a Summer Camp organized with many different activities, such as painting, crafts, indoor and outdoor games, awareness programmes on plastics, a one day trip to Perumukkal (a historical hill on the way to Tindivanam – Tamilnadu), cultural performances, competitions, etc. It was conducted in the daytime from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm and then 1:30 to 05:00 pm, where the children were also offered different types of food and snacks. Altogether 40 students, 10 teachers and some volunteers also participated; it has become quite a favourite programme of the year.

As an outcome, the parents and students shared their wishes for continuing this programme for their whole holidays of 2 months, because they had these types of unique opportunities only from our KCC, where students and participants are fortunate of enjoying with their new friends, gaining knowledge and skills, learning many new skills and games, making artwork, creating many new things, etc.
Outcomes:

- A Silambam group was created, and they were prepared as pioneers to teach to their youngsters.
- Since many different school students of various age groups participated, the tuition activities represented another platform for students to share their knowledge and skills. It also helped them to find many brotherhoods and sisterhoods from their region.
- Parents became half or fully relieved from their stress on how to help and support in their children’s subjects, because these days the level of the school education is quite high for younger ones too; and whether they are in English or Tamil medium schools, many of the parents struggle on how to give a right care and attention to their kids. So the parents and students became aware that they have a right place of our KCC very close to their homes.

Reflections:

The most meaningful experience this year was to see and feel the vibrations and sense the parents and students becoming glad and relieved to have a study environment close to their living places.

Our challenges were...

- Since our tuition activities happened late in the evening after 5pm, and it became darker sooner after 6pm, our students and parents faced a hard time in coming and going back, because there were no transportation facility from our side.
- Most of the time, the people also have had a strong belief about the ghosts and some evil forces in the night times, so many of our parents and also students got afraid to come to the evening tuition in the dark time.
- We see that if a transport facility is provided, it reduces both the parents and students’ tensions and stresses for bringing and taking them back home safely, but we do not have the transportation facility yet. Also, many students walk on their own, back to their home. When they go, stray dogs sometimes bark, chase and threaten them, and so they become quite scared.

Conclusion:

Our next year intentions are...

- To provide quality tuition and all other classes on a regular and no-age basis to everyone, helped by collecting a minimum contribution from the participants.
- Engaging and encouraging the students in several physical activities.
- Making efforts for getting support on offering transportation, through our savings and contribution from the well-wishers.
- Conducting some Exhibitions and Workshops, and also organizing some public markets and exhibitions for some awareness and fundraising purposes.
Life Education Centre

Life Education Centre (LEC) aims to:
• offer a space for young women from the villages where they can be provided opportunities for growth
• provide activities that could enhance physical, mental, and sensorial capacities
• be a connecting space between Auroville and the villages
• be a learning space for everyone

Activities of the year:
The year was packed with enriching activities:

1. Reflections on life
   - **Group discussions**: It was a time to share issues – personal and societal; listen to the opinions of others and receive support.
   - **Life Mapping**: Students went through a process of recollecting memories from childhood through present day, and illustrated the essence as a map. They then shared their reflections with the group, which proved to be a powerful exercise.

2. Exploring Colors
   - **Painting**: Students explored free-form painting and colors. This progressed to instruction on color theory that provided the opportunity to understand the basics of using colors aesthetically.
   - **Patchwork**: The students then applied their knowledge of combining colors to fabric. The result was patchwork done individually and as a group.

3. Exploring Soil
   Soil from different parts of the world was explored for its color and texture. The activities over a period of six sessions included feeling the soil without seeing (blind-folded), listening to the sounds that each type of soil produces, and finally experimenting modeling with clay from Auroville. Each session brought a lot of learning and a multitude of therapeutic value as lives in villages are closely associated with soil. The activities proved to be very unconventional through a sensorial approach that was much appreciated by the women.

4. Health Care Education
   - **Basic body anatomy (involving body systems)**: Students learned about the major body systems and organs involved in each of those systems. The classes were interactive with coloring and videos to make understanding easier. The classes also included discussing common health conditions involving these systems, their symptoms and common preventative remedies. Traditional ways of treating these conditions with herbs were also shared.
   - **Yoga and healing**: Students were individually evaluated for health and therapy offered appropriately. Group yoga sessions and general well-being suggestions were also offered.
   - **Exercises for different body systems and Nutrition**: Following the knowledge gained through studying body systems, the students were taught to exercise particular systems and were given nutrition advice for each.
   - **Reiki**: Students learned about subtle energies in the body and received individual Reiki healing sessions. They also received level 1 Reiki initiation to work on their energy bodies.
• **Session on menstrual hygiene:** The session about menstruation and hygiene was informative and students were able to openly discuss and ask questions that are considered taboo. They learned ways to avoid plastic napkins.

5. **Body Work**
   - **Aviva:** Weekly classes to exercise the pelvic region were offered.
   - **Yoga Nidra:** The active workout was followed by a complete relaxation of the body through Yoga Nidra.

6. **Other activities**
   - **Computer lessons:** Weekly lessons in Microsoft Word, Excel and basics of internet were provided.
   - **Chanting and singing:** Students learned chants and traditional devotional songs.

7. **Leadership and Communication**
   Students learned to demonstrate skills to participants of workshops. These workshops were offered by LEC to Aurovilians, Newcomers and people from the Auroville bioregion.
   - **Cooking Workshop:** For 16 students from The American University of Paris; for 20 women from villages around Auroville.
   - **Aviva and Yoga Nidra workshop:** For 18 women from Boodheri (near Tindivanam).

8. **Experiments**
   - “**Connecting Thread**” – Community Quilting Event: LEC is a connecting space between Auroville and the villages. “Connecting Thread”, a community quilting event was organized in LEC in this context, during which Aurovilians, guests and women from the villages created a quilt collectively. The event was also an offer from LEC for the 50th anniversary of Auroville.
   - **Children’s workshop:** LEC will offer workshops for children to engage in fun activities using fabric.

9. **Study Tours**
   - **Thiruvakkarai:** temple and fossil park.
   - **Devikapuram (Arani):** study of silk weaving and 13th century temple visit.

10. **YEN KALVI (college and career guidance)**
    Students who aim to pursue college education:
    - were helped with career counseling
    - are being followed up with needed preparations for competitive examinations
    - were provided information about degree courses and career choices
    - will be taken on a guided tour to Pondicherry University (pending approval from Pondicherry University)

**Outcomes:**
General outcomes of our activities are that:
- Women feel more confident
- They fear less about themselves and society
- They have gained better ability to make decisions
- And gained better clarity of thought
- And a wider perspective about life.
Research on Education, Skills, Employment, and Employability among Youth in the Auroville Bioregion
A project of Life Education Centre

by Devi Namasivayam

In the last 10 years more youth in the Auroville bioregion have been pursuing college education and receiving degrees. It is an interesting scenario in that people in villages are very eager to see their children obtain higher education that they themselves could not accomplish, but are unable to guide them in choosing courses and careers as their education is only up to primary level. This research aims at studying the education levels of youth in the Auroville bioregion and the employment rate after completing college education. Equally important, the research is aimed at studying the level of support and guidance they receive from parents when wanting to pursue college education. As first-generation college aspirants the challenges faced by the students are unique. The research aims at understanding these challenges and finding ways to improve the situation through the YEN KALVI program.

The motivation for the research came through meeting with students during YEN KALVI program activities. YEN KALVI aims at helping students pursuing college education by providing information about college and career choices and offering advice about appropriate course of study that would align with their interests.

Research questions:
The research aims to answer the following questions:
1. Are students motivated to pursue college education?
2. Are parents educated enough to provide guidance regarding higher education?
3. Are students informed about different possibilities of fields of study? Is there a variety in the chosen fields of study?
4. Are students willing and feel the confidence to go outside the Pondicherry area (or the state) to pursue college education? Will their parents allow them to do so?
5. How many are able to support themselves through part-time work while in school/college?
6. How many are able to successfully find employment after graduation?
7. What abilities do students wish to possess in order to find employment? (understood through experience or perceived)

Data collection and Analysis:
The research was conducted through surveys and interviews with youth in the age range of 16 to 23. It was conducted in the Auroville bioregion villages – Edavanchavadi, Morattandi, Alankuppam, Sanjeevi Nagar, Kuirupalayam, and Kottakarai. Other small villages like Nesal, Rayapettai, Annav Nagar were included as part of these main villages. Data was entered using Microsoft Access and analyzed.
Results:

Interest among Participants in Pursuing College Education (Figure 1)

100% of the students who participated in the survey were interested in higher education. They were either in school and expressed interest in pursuing college education or were pursuing college education at the time of the survey or had completed college education.

Educational Background of Parents (Figure 2)

72% of parents had education levels below 10th grade. Many had education below 5th grade. For the purpose of this survey 10th grade was taken as the bare minimum to be included as an educational background necessary for a parent to provide guidance to their children regarding college courses and career choices. Only 2% of the parents possessed college degrees. 33% of participants had siblings who had some college education.

Employment after College Education (Figure 3)

Only 27% of the participants who completed college education were employed. 73% were unemployed.
25% of Participants noted work experience as the foremost necessity for increasing job opportunities. Communication skills, ability to speak English well, and self confidence were other skills that were desired by the participants to increase their chances of finding employment.

**Observations, Conclusions, and Remarks:**

The research survey confirms that youth in the bioregion, with a few exceptions, are unprepared for higher education due to lack of planning resulting from inadequate guidance. In many cases, the parents who are themselves uneducated impose the choice of a neighbor or friend and push the youth to pursue degrees even when the chosen field of study does not interest them. Opting for colleges that have poor infrastructure in order to stay close to home, limited capacities for critical thinking and lack of confidence to compete with students from advantaged backgrounds, and inability to comprehend the relevance of the chosen field of study are some causes for inadequate subject knowledge and incompetence for work. The findings show that unemployment rate is quite high (Figure 3) at 73% in the Auroville bioregion that can worsen without appropriate intervention. Students who completed college education cited lack of experience and confidence as two main reasons for unemployment. Lack of experience is a chicken and egg problem that requires innovative strategies to solve. Projects (in the final year of study) with real-world applications planned and implemented well, internships, and volunteering could be possible opportunities for the youth to obtain experience and understanding of work environments. The project work in the last year of college study remains academic and theoretical and does not provide them the opportunity for a real-world experience of the subject. Many survey participants were prepared to volunteer if they had the opportunities to do so.

YEN KALVI program will continue to provide information sessions and also guidance and support to the youth in the Auroville bioregion. The program will also aim to expand to find strategies for providing the youth, who are first-generation college aspirants, with opportunities for developing skills, abilities, and experience to meet the challenges of finding meaningful work.
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.

Our objective at Oli School 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.

Activities of the year:
At present we have 120 kids aged 2 to 6 years.

There are 13 teachers working and still under training at school. 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.

Through the years we have come up with an Oli School curriculum. We try to respect the alternation of intellectual, practical, physical and sensory activities, according to the Montessori principles and in agreement with the integral education approach. Matrimandir is also an important part of our pedagogical philosophy. We consider that Matrimandir visits help our children develop these aspects.

We have developed a unique practice at the school, adapting some simple breathing exercises and visualizations from the Holoenergetics healing method to a daily exercise of conscious breathing three times a day. This is a time for silence and centering that is slowly becoming a natural resource exercise for the children and the teachers.

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

Teachers’ development is an important part of our school and philosophy. During this 2017-18 year our teachers participated in:

- Online Montessori training for three teachers (Sangeetha, Sakthiya and Viji)
- Yoga class with Muthukumari for teachers and kids.
- Aviva class by Suriya
- Swimming classes with Marie-Claire

Reflections:
We are very happy to see that more and more parents are trusting us and are happy with the education given to their children and that they are leaving their children for another year. We really want to concentrate on the poorest villagers’ children first to give them a chance in this small age to prepare them for life.

As for funding, 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 a third of the budget, which is getting better but still not a healthy situation. We go on our fund raising and would like to extend it also to India.

We are very happy to see that the Outreach Board is bringing us all together, and we want to participate in the Outreach Board activities.
STEM Land

The tagline of STEM Land is learn, grow, work, teach which captures the essence of STEM Land:

• Exploring self-directed learning, and researching the use of technology in effective learning and learning environments.

• Exploring a learning organization as an environment where learning (unending education) and growth (constant progress) of its members and those they interact with is the primary goal, while still being effective in engaging in a real-world context.

• Providing opportunities (and mentoring) to youth in and around Auroville to become skilled in electronics, programming and teaching.

• Providing opportunities for skilled youth to engage with children in schools and move beyond simple procedural learning into application, problem solving and self-mastery.

• Exploring alternatives to examinations as a way for children to demonstrate mastery.

• Supporting those who want to see similar changes in their schools and organizations, through e.g. modules in specific topics, and teacher training.

Activities of the year:

Broadly, our activities this year were focused on creation of a STEM Land in Isai Ambalam School and our work with the children on real-life Education By Design (EBD) projects as part of the school transformation program. At Udavi School we consolidated our work and also set up an iSMART classroom that is used for teacher training as well as offering courses in electronics, Django Python, etc.

We got more rigorous in research and interacted with professors from IITB, Heidi Watts, etc. and took up three research projects this year. We presented two papers:

1) epiSTEME7 Paper on “Fostering Responsibility for Learning”

2) At Sinthanai Sangamam regarding “STEM Land at Isai Ambalam School”

We also made presentations about our work at the SAIIER gathering and at The Bridge Program (which connected visiting researchers with those in Auroville).

We have started bring out a quarterly newsletter that captures many of the happenings at STEM land. These are on our website, www.auraauro.com.

Outcomes:

The first beneficiaries of STEM Land are the youth (ages 9+ this year) who are part of STEM Land; they had the opportunity to learn how to be good teachers and engineers, and to grow through exploring how they want to be and what they can do for society and community.

The other beneficiaries of the project were over 100 children that the youth of STEM Land interacted with in an intense fashion. The team also interacted with teachers and researchers in the field of education, which was enriching for us and hopefully for them as well.

Reflections:

We saw progress in the children:

• At Isai Ambalam – with their confidence, competence to handle acads and do real life projects, and their improved spoken English.

• At Udavi – with peer learning and interactions in multi-grade classes, as well as “Stewardship for New Emergence” tools being used by the children to create a learning community.
In our team, six out of nine members completed a 10-day silent meditation course which was hard, but has been useful to ground us in our work.

Two of the senior youth have relocated to the city to work. This brought us into a new phase, as no one had left the organization in the last three years. We started a new 2-month process called ‘boot camp’, inviting youth who were interested in learning and growing to come and intern with us and experience the rigor that we follow. We are happy that the ones who survived are part of STEM Land in some capacity.

Many members of the team continue to participate in, benefit from and organize the “Stewardship for New Emergence” programs both in English and Tamil (“Amma Appa program”). These tools have helped us handle various situations and to continue to progress as a team.

Some personal reflections from team members:

- **Sundar:**
  
  The year 2017-2018, progress occurred in various aspects. I am able to notice a vast change in my inner being, and abilities as well. I have realized that happiness is something special that I create within me, and this emanates in all things that I do, and participate small or large. Supporting children in their growth and seeing them accomplish their goals gives a huge sense of awe, and responsibility. As a learner and technologist I have gained the confidence to support my fellow colleagues and learned from the team as a whole, this has made my knowledge rich and diversified. Each member of the team has a unique set of universal values, skills and accountability, and seeing them engaged with commitment gives me an adrenaline drive to progress towards perfection along by their sides.

- **Naveen:**
  
  This year I enjoyed working with the 4th graders at Isai Ambalam. We had a lot of conversations which shifted the interaction between me and the children. We did a lot of hands-on activities and also built a honeybee model. While working on the activities I would get inputs from the children, and we would work from what they have told. Like that they were taking responsibility for their learning. This time I was rigorous in tracking the children’s growth by tracking their homework and their tests. I had also applied what I learned from the D.El.Ed course on how to interact with a child and classroom interactions.

  While having conversations with the children I would always bring the aspect of the problems around us and deepend the conversation (e.g. pollution, importance of honeybees). I am proud of the 4th graders about what were able to accomplish this year.

- **Arun:**
  
  This year what was interesting for me that I realized that learning takes different pathways. In Udavi I was supporting all the multi-grade classes. I needed to be always ready to answer any questions the children ask. Since the children work on different topics and it is also multi-grade, the questions are diverse, and this makes me think more than what is needed for a blackboard teacher. Teaching them science, software and math at the same time makes it more interesting. I was always helped by the tools I learned from “Stewardship for New Emergence” workshop.

- **Poovizhi:**
  
  It’s almost an year since I joined STEM Land Aura Auro Design. The first thing that I learned in STEM Land was Scratch from an 8th grade child. It opened me up to learn more from children in STEM Land including printing 3D models, Alice, Geogebra, Goanimate, puzzles etc., and I’m still learning to solve the Rubik’s Cube.

  I’ve been coordinating STEM Land at Udavi and supporting teachers during the class. I’ve got an opportunity to meet different people who come to STEM Land, and interacting with them was valuable. I’ve also interacted with volunteers and have learned technical skills from them. STEM Land provides a space to cover whatever I have missed learning in the past (when I was in school) and to visualize concepts. I learned to build a few electronics circuits,
and also supported in creating a software for children to track their progress. I have learned to come out of my comfort zone to learn new things.

I enjoyed presenting our poster in EpiSTEME7 in Mumbai and our paper at The Bridge Program. This gave an opportunity to interact with researchers. I am also part of the research team, and this makes me to analyze what I do with children. I’m grateful to each individual in our team for supporting me to learn and grow.

- **Logeshwari:**
  
  My attitude towards learning has changed. For example, I used to feel bad or insulted when I don’t know something (technically). But now this has changed. I feel ok, this is something I do not know, so let me learn it.

  The important thing I see is that whatever I learn I need to connect it real life and be able to apply it. Then only it is useful and I remember. Otherwise I would forget it.

  It is interesting for me to learn from the kids. I not only learned puzzles, mindstorms, Rubik’s Cube (in progress) from children, I noticed they never give up in what they do. They continuously try without any fear. I am inspired by this quality and want to use it in my life.

- **Sanjeev:**

  I am grateful for the many challenges that came up in the last year that have supported me and the team to grow. A couple of the youth from the first year relocated to cities after 3 years. I realized that I had worked with the assumption that given an opportunity to learn and grow, a person would want to have a sense of community and contribute to where they are. I wondered if the intensity and rigour of our organization (we start the day at 7:00 a.m. working in two schools, and then engineering work till 4:30 p.m.) is resulting in burnout. It also made me reflect on what my role in the organization should be.

  In this time Ankit, who is traveling to all states of India on his cycle visiting and learning about alternative education initiatives, was at the school a couple of days. In one of our conversations regarding travel, I joked that I have become a tree and I do not travel. It will be 5 years (in a week) since I moved to Auroville, the longest I have lived in one place (continuously) in my life. Ankit just replied that trees are very welcoming.

  Some people sit in the shade of a tree for a short time, some will benefit from the fruits of it, and some will take the seed (essence of the tree) and plant it elsewhere and create more trees. A tree does not judge, it gives because that is its purpose. This is my role.

**Conclusion:**

With new members and various teacher trainings being requested of us, we are looking at organizing ourselves to create modules that we can provide – making use of research, innovation and collating the projects done by children in each area of our work.
Deep learning of Mathematics through EBD (Education By Design) and materials
A project of STEM Land

by Arun

We use Mathematics at STEM Land as a language of science, and the goal of learning it is to be able to interpret, analyze, abstract and model something in real life. The ability to do these builds critical skills (problem solving, logical thinking, etc.) and competencies (perseverance) in children, broadens their mind and helps them ‘mathematize’ (or ‘think mathematically’) (Pal Y, et al., 2005).

This project aimed to explore the questions:
- How does the use of physical material to understand abstract concepts help children's deep learning of Mathematics, in terms of their ability to apply what they learn in different contexts?
- Do the results of the above measures change if the children themselves create these materials rather than using ready-made materials?
- How effective are real life EBDs (Education By Design) that apply Mathematics to real-life problems for the above measures? (For real life EBDs the mathematics required to understand, interpret and design is often concepts ‘beyond their syllabus’. These projects are often inter-disciplinary (e.g. including EVS, Electronics) in nature.) Does it help children feel that learning Mathematics has a purpose or does it intimidate them?
- How does doing this research change my perceptions of how I engage with children with Mathematics?

Teaching Learning Materials:
We have a variety of Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) at STEM Land. Following is a description of 3 of them.

Vaughn Cube
We identified multiplication tables as one of the stumbling blocks in children's ability to do calculations. Difficulty with the multiplication tables made children feel they were not good at Mathematics. We used the Vaughn Cube with children from 3rd grade onwards who had difficulty with learning multiplication tables (up to some in 8th grade).

The Vaughn Cube for Multiplication is a complete program that includes 2½ hours of DVD video with accompanying skill development and testing materials, and an Instructor’s Guide. The goal is that in approximately 6 hours (including video and practice) a child can answer the 100 multiplication facts. Students do not have to memorize the multiplication table by continuous repetition. Instead, they use their natural ability to remember what they see and where they see it.

Observations: We attempted to use Vaughn Cube methodology including the videos and soon found that it was exhausting for the children. We adapted the Vaughn Cube methodology by creating laminated sheets for the objects that need to be mastered, so children could touch, feel and work with the sheets instead of watching videos. We also identified specific tables that children needed to master and focussed on those objects, thereby reducing the length of time required to learn these objects. We also used group activities rather than only individual learning that opened the possibility of peer-learning.
Many children who struggled with the tables have been able to master them now. As the Vaughn Cube method has lots of pictures, children were more interested and were also able to work in groups. Once they understood it they didn't need a teacher’s help and could work independently.

Ganit Rack

We used the Ganit Rack for addition and subtraction with the 1st grade, 2nd grade and 3rd grade children as they had some difficulty in seeing patterns in numbers.

The rack consists of two rods of 10 beads each with 5 beads in red and 5 in white colour. This helps children to automatize additions and subtractions up to 20 and number facts. For example, to add 6 and 7 the children quickly remember that 6 is 5+1 on the first rack and for 5 + 2 on the second rack. The two 5’s together is recognized as 10, and the result 13 is read out easily with the remaining 3 white beads.

Observations: As the Ganit Rack is a hands-on material, they were engaged and were able to count beads and observe patterns. Even the children who don't usually engage in class were very engaged when they were doing additions with the Ganit Rack. They also became independent as they practiced more and asked for teacher’s help less often.

8 out of 12 children from the 3rd grade class wanted more problems from the teacher at the beginning, and later solved their own problems.

The Ganit Rack let the children easily see patterns of 5.

Algebraic Identities

We used materials to make algebraic identities concrete with 8th and 9th grade children. The materials for \((a+b)^2\) and \((a-b)^2\) are squares and rectangles made of cardboard sheets of different colours, representing product of ‘a’s and ‘b’\’s. The \((a+b+c)^3\) Montessori material consists of wooden cubes with different shapes and colours.

Observations: The children were able to understand and visualize the identities instead of memorizing the formulas. Using the materials, they were able to feel squares and cubes physically. This gave them a better sense of squares and cubes.

Education By Design (EBD):

Following the concept of EBD, the children from Isai Ambalam School were given real-life challenges and an opportunity to collaborate in teams to work towards the solution.

For example, the school was running out of water for 3 months. Children were struggling to go to the restroom and to find drinking water. We decided to take this as a real-life problem for their EBD. The children started to discuss in groups what were the real reasons behind the shortage of water. They had lots of hypotheses and they tested them.

Through the experience of solving this problem, children ended up practicing skills in mathematics, English, Tamil and science. For Math they measured length of pipes, and built a pond in school where they measured the diameter, depth, area etc. For English they wrote everything they learned in their notebook in English. The younger children who were not able to write in English wrote in Tamil first and then translated it back to English. A few children discussed the project in English and presented it to the whole group in English. As part of science children learned the water cycle. They learned what groundwater is and the process of settling down in the aquifers. They watched a video to learn few concepts like groundwater, water cycle etc. They also saw the process of drilling a bore well near their school. The water problem was fixed by lowering the bore well pipe by 150 feet. Now the total depth of the bore well is 350 feet.
We work on EBDs with the age group of 8 to 13. There were other EBDs, including creating a herbarium of plants found in the school, and studying and creating models for the honey bee. We also took on real life challenges which included creating a pond, refurbishing a clay room, making a garden and kitchen water recycling. The children gave ideas to solve problems and did fieldwork such as painting, digging, masonry, plumbing, planting. They also contributed in measuring the depth of the bore well, and automating the process of pumping water.

**Materials created by children:**

1m scale and 1m square

12 children from 5th and 6th grade worked together to make a 1m wooden scale. A 6th grade girl said that she was thrilled to use and cut the wood for the first time. With that 1m scale, they cut out a 1m² in a chart paper. They were able to figure out that 10,000 cm² can be placed on a 1m². Then, they shared their learning with the younger children. The older children asked a question to the younger ones, “how many 1cm² can be placed on a 1m²?” Many of them were stuck with the number 1,000 and were not able to go further. Using Dienes blocks, the older children demonstrated that there are 10,000 cm² in a 1m².

**Sets game**

One of the volunteers had an interesting game that helped children learn some of the fundamental ideas about sets. The setup of the game required a couple of hidden rules about two sets (e.g. one set of blue shapes and the other set of rectangles). Then three 9th graders drew the Venn Diagram and the children guessed a shape and its color in each section till they were able to figure out the secret rules. Within two or three days most children had mastered it and were then able to link it to concepts of intersection, complement within set theory.

**Areas and ratios**

The children from 7th grade created their own materials to understand areas and ratios. For ratios, they cut out sponge sheets to visualize ratios and connected it with fractions. For areas, they cut a rectangle and figured out that half the area of a rectangle is the same as that of an area of a triangle.

**Outcomes:**

From our observations in 5th grade, 7 out of 9 children were able to retain previous term concepts like unit conversion (m to cm, km to m, minutes to seconds, days to hours etc...) and ratios. 5 out 7 children from 4th grade were able to remember the life cycle of honeybees. After having a conversation with the children, 8 out of 12 children from 3rd grade were remember the process of creating a herbarium model book.

From surveying 22 children in Isai Ambalam school, more than 50% of the children said that they learn more during EBDs than in a normal class. 18 of the children said learning with materials helped them understand concepts better.

From the previous term EBDs, a child said he remembers “names of materials in pond work, life cycle of honeybee, whether honeybee can create forest or not, process of painting in one direction, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction.” Another child said she remembered “how to make a raised bed for plants, how to grow plants without using chemicals.”

We conducted a survey with the children at Udavi School. Children were asked two questions:

1. Rate how interested you are in learning mathematical concepts using materials.
2. Rate the increase/decrease of interest in mathematics from when you were in 5th grade.

We used the Likert Emberling scale for rating (1 = not interested, 5 = interested, 10 = very interested). According to this survey, their interest increased when they used materials to understand mathematical concepts.
Reflections:
I learnt that children who were below average in their academics showed interest when they learnt through materials. They showed even more interest when they learn through Education by Design and built something. By doing EBD children improved their communication and showed teamwork. There was a lot of peer learning happening with multi-grade classrooms. It was enriching for me as a teacher, and allowed me to learn a better approach to be effective as a teacher.

Conclusion:
In this research project we found that children tend to be more interested in learning when they use materials. The EBDs also help them to interact with the real world rather than just learning something abstract. It helps them apply their learning. When they learn with materials/projects, they have a deep learning and can retain the concepts going forward to the next grade.
Effective learning environments by utilization of LIAP (Leadership In Action Programs) in STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) Education

A project of STEM Land

by Sundar and Sanjeev R.

At STEM Land we wish to create an effective learning environment. We want children to take charge of their learning, by having the freedom of choice with the responsibility to focus on what they want to learn. Sri Aurobindo indicates that “nothing can be taught”, but the teacher can support and encourage a child in the process of learning, thus guiding them towards perfection. We believe we are being true to this first principle of true education.

The aim of this research was to study co-created effective learning environments with children by utilization of LIAP (Leadership In Action Programs) that connect the children to what they care about most, how they perceive patterns in society and community, and how they act. We explored the effectiveness of such a LIAP with 12 to 14-year-olds to foster leadership skills at STEM Land.

Description of project:

We conducted LIAP programs for the children at the iSMART classroom. The program was conducted over 5 weeks, with a session on each Monday. Students were 7th and 8th grade students from Udavi School and 3 interns at STEM Land (Aura Auro Design).

Students were split in groups of 6, with 1-2 table Practitioner Coaches per group. The Practitioner Coaches facilitated exercises adapted from “Stewardship for New Emergence” for the groups. We felt that for the sessions to be effective we should have resource people who are external to our current work, and so enrolled Bridget, Helena and Ahmed who are part of conducting the main “Stewardship” program. They were supported by the STEM Land team of Arun, Bala, Pratap, Poovizhi, Naveen, Sundar and Sanjeev.

The sessions conducted were as follows:

Day 1: ‘Stand’ and Fears

The day started with introducing the resource persons. Then ground rules for the entire workshop was created by the participants – children and coaches for children and coaches. These included: Switch off mobile phones; Respect the material and others and yourself; Be responsible; Only one person talking at a time; Be engaged and interactive; Raise your hand if you want to say something; Don’t waste time; Concentrate on the session; Speak softly and clearly; Help others; No clapping or chit chatting/whispering; Don’t ridicule others; Be joyful; Don’t play; No judgment.

Ahmed facilitated a session on sourcing our inner power. The children were asked to imagine their own superhero, someone he or she would admire, along with the powers the superhero would possess for the wellbeing of all the beings in the world. The children came up with different heroes of their imaginations. The values that each of the different heroes embodied were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>+16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>+5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth</td>
<td>+1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Handwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
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<td>Intelligence</td>
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<td>Compassion</td>
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<td>Harmony</td>
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</table>
Each and every one declared their values in front of the class. These are what each of them ‘stand for’.

Once all the participants had grounded themselves with their ‘stands’, the next tool was introduced. Everyone in the room was asked to find the social fear each one has, so that in a day-to-day life one can realize and act from possibilities rather than fear (which is a default state). The fears were found to be:

- Failure (+10)
- Loss (+10)
- Making mistakes (+7)
- Judgment (+13)
- Not being good enough (+4)
- Not being respected
- Ridicule (+2)
- Rejection

- Loneliness (+1)
- Loss (+10)
- Making mistakes (+7)

The children drew and colored their superheros before the next session. The day closed as each day does with organization group feedback: what went well, what could have be done differently for the next session. We felt we could do more thought breaks.

Day 2: Background conversation and deep listening

The day started with insights from the previous session: ‘what I learnt about myself’ (distinguished from what I have understood about the theory). This was done so that each of the participants could inspire others through their own learning.

Then the children were introduced to the most common forms of background conversation, which constantly distract the listener from really connecting with the speaker. This gave the children reflections on how it feels when someone listens to you and when someone does not.

This was followed by an exercise done in teams, demonstrating what is deep listening and what is not, how we have a choice to listen deeply or not, and how this can impact people around us.

Day 3: Four Profiles

Insights from background conversation and deep listening were processed on stage. (S: “I noticed that when I do not listen to others, they stop talking to me.” N: “I respect others when they are speaking by listening to them.”)

The profiles Wisdom, Social, Personality, Professional were introduced. We did a group exercise of speaking based on these profiles, and table sharing. Two insights from each table were processed on stage.

Children came up with insights about how segregation based on religion occurs and how to notice it and speak up. At the end a child came up with “everyone has to be respected”.

Day 4: Movie on Creativity

Insights from the four profiles were processed on stage. (G: “We are all human beings, we should be kind.” “I noticed a social profile by going to a wedding of a different religion.” M: “I notice we see others’ profiles and compare; profiles are just like dresses, I don’t judge people by their dress.”)

A short documentary on creativity was screened, with a powerful sight of how to view different events or opportunities in life with different perspectives.

Insights that came from participants on ‘what I need to do to be creative’: Free mind and imagination; Look from different angles and persevere; Different styles of thinking; To see extraordinary in ordinary; Discover and have my own way.

Day 5: Story of Stuff

Insights from the last session on were processed on stage. (A: “Not stop trying in any situation.” D: “Do something new every day.” P: “Make the ordinary to extraordinary.”)
System thinking was introduced to the children; an example of how the lunch break works was explained. Once the children found out what a system was and how it was designed we moved to watch a documentary called *The Story of Stuff*.

Here the participants were asked to find different systems principles they could identify. Some were: Recycling; System which is harming the environment; System with ‘perceived obsolescence’ and ‘planned obsolescence’; A pattern of production – consumption – disposal; System without responsibility or values; System has external cost; The system delivers what it is designed for; System is inter-connected.

At the end of these sessions, children were given triad sheets to color and instructions on how to attend each triad. Triad groups were posted in STEM Land and a PC had two triads with 4 children in each. This process is ongoing and being documented for insights from the children: on how they act now after knowing the tools and putting them in practice.

The completion of workshop for session 1 was celebrated with refreshments.

**Outcomes:**

- Children realized how social profile was segregating them, and decided to act from wisdom profile and said it is not right to treat people based on caste and religion.
- They found out the importance and benefits when listening to other people attentively and not being distracted or letting their background conversation and judgments take over.
- To not be afraid of making mistakes, and after getting one answer they look for the next right answer.
- Children were able to reflect on their daily progress and create their own weekly plans to execute.
- Children reflect in weekly triads, to inspire and grow with the learning of others.

**Conclusion:**

This series of workshops gave me the opportunity to work with children and see their inner values.

It will be continuing in the form of triads and documenting the reflection of the children over a period of time, to see the changes each student finds in his or her day-to-day life.
Factors and interventions influencing students’ attitude towards mathematics
A project of STEM Land

by Poovizhi and Pratap

At STEM Land our goal is to develop the values of responsibility, equality and the courage-to-create in children. As teachers, we wanted to examine the factors that influence students’ attitude towards Mathematics, so that we can alter an attitude such as “I don’t like Mathematics and I am not good in it,” towards “Mathematics helps me view the world critically and I need patience, logical thinking and perseverance that I have or can develop”.

Description of project:
We are a team of engineers who teach and are presenting our observations in rural STEM centers run in two outreach schools of Auroville: Udavi School and Isai Ambalam School. Both schools aspire towards the holistic development of the child. The children attending come from villages surrounding Auroville. Udavi School follows the Tamil Nadu State Board syllabus, and there we work with 47 children from 7th to 9th grades intensively for 6 hrs/week for all their Math classes. Isai Ambalam School follows the Central Board syllabus, and there we work with 48 children from 3rd to 7th grades intensively for 6 hrs/week for their Environmental Sciences and Math classes.
We believe the purpose of teaching mathematics is to sharpen, broaden and make the mind supple. Given this belief, our definition of mathematics is not only the subject of Mathematics or specific mathematical concepts, but the ability to think mathematically, apply what is learned and solve problems.

For this research project, we specifically explored the factors:
- Ability to connect mathematics with real life problem solving
- Ability to do arithmetic calculations
- Ability to do well in examinations
- Learning environment
- Does age change their attitude, i.e. children’s interest in mathematics when they were younger vs. when they are older
- Does making a choice of learning pathways impact their interest in mathematics

We gave a survey to help us interact with the children one-to-one and understand the children better. From the survey it was clear that children are very much interested in learning mathematical concepts by doing EBDs (Education By Design) and are proud of making projects on the math concepts.

We facilitated some activities. 6th grade children at Isai Ambalam School assembled a roller coaster kit which required a lot of patience and logical thinking. They shared their work among their friends and played the game. 8th grade children at Udavi School learnt Pythagoras’ theorem with help of a kit. They were able to give a presentation on Pythagoras’ theorem. 5th graders at Isai Ambalam were able to find the degree of angles, and were able to understand and complete tasks given to them.

Outcomes:
This project has led to a draft research paper (“Factors and interventions influencing student’s attitude towards mathematics”) looking at the data obtained from the survey we gave the children, correlating and understanding what we do well at STEM Land that we would like to retain and promote. The overall conclusion is that children have retained or increased their interest in
Mathematics by coming to STEM Land. Some detailed points:

- The children in 9th grade felt accomplished with what they have been able to achieve in an environment where they pick their tasks and plan their work.
- The ability to do well in examinations is not correlated to the children's interest in mathematics at STEM Land.
- Children are able to connect mathematics in their day-to-day life primarily through shopping and calculating monthly expenses. Only one student felt that he used Mathematics to change his perspective e.g. from panic of only having 10 minutes to do something, to feeling like he has time when he thinks of it as 600 seconds. However, when children are asked about what they are proud of doing at STEM Land, they are able to connect it to real-life problem solving: work that goes on at home or around home and critical skills like planning and teamwork. This they felt was achieved by solving puzzles, participating in EBDs and by visualizing concepts using Montessori materials.

Reflections:
This project has helped us clarify and emphasize our role as teachers: instead of merely imparting knowledge and information, we try to create a learning environment where children are eager to learn.

We will continue to explore various interventions that alter children's attitude towards mathematics.
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Awareness camps on bio-diversity conservation & Revitalization of traditional knowledge and culture

A project of Aranya Forest

Aranya is a service unit primarily focusing on awareness about natural and cultural perspectives, ecology and environment, for school-going kids, teachers, teenagers, local communities and NGOs.

Aranya started as a soil reclamation project done on 100 acres, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Since then the Aranya community has been in existence. The forest has been established and various activities have been taken up to explore awareness in Natural Resource Management and Conservation, primarily for school students and other interested groups. Aranya works closely with SAIER towards awareness and education on environmental issues, bio-diversity conservation, natural resource management, etc.

Description of project:
This project aims to increase awareness on bio-diversity conservation and revitalize traditional knowledge and culture through hosting camps and visits at Aranya. Children attend awareness camps where they explore our Adventure Zone and are exposed to various landscapes of forest, canyons and lake ecosystems. They learn to identify birds, butterflies, snakes, reptiles and animals, play on the rope bridge, flying fox, and tree huts, and are offered our display of posters, books, periodicals and audio-visual equipment.

Outcomes:

We provided trainings, workshops and seminars to the school students, teachers, research scholars, NGOs, self-help groups, Government organizations, and Panchayat leaders. Members of bio-diversity conservation groups participated through nursery raising and plantation activities in Aranya Forest.

Under the supervision and guidance of the Project Director, experts on plants, animals, ecology, social and cultural sectors were involved during the programme days. Around 3,000 school children and others were benefitted from these activities as detailed below.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name of the school / college</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
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<td>Forest Department + Poothurai Pop Meet</td>
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Aurofilm

The aim of Aurofilm is to use Cinema as a tool for education, artistic and creative research. Along with the production of short films during the year and setting up regular screenings of quality films and other related events, we wish to offer to the Auroville community and the attending visitors, a way to develop taste and discernment as well as to strengthen the sense of Unity, which goal Auroville is aiming at.

Since the last three decades and a half, the Aurofilm team does research work on Cinema and offers regular film-screenings for the Aurovilians and their Guests. We also organize at least one annual thematic film festival and other film related activities such as inviting film personalities to give talks or workshop. From time to time we also produce documentaries and short fictions. This is done as a cultural and educational service that is non-commercial.

Activities of the year:

This year was very unusual for us due to a much reduced period of film screenings and changes in the venue for the screenings. It started with 2 members of our team having to go out of Auroville for two months in the summer months and therefore too small a team to organize regular screenings in May and June. Then the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium was closed from June to February for major repairs and improvement work in view of the Auroville 50th Anniversary. We took some time to figure out how and where to continue our screenings. It is only in October that we could confirm resuming our Friday screenings at the Video Room at Visitors’ Centre. However, this was not an easy solution since the equipment over there was not to our standards: the screen was too small, so we bought an 8x10 feet screen; the speakers were weak and we brought an additional speaker borrowed from the auditorium, along with our own sound mixing table and cables; we brought our inverter/UPS for the DVD player, and finally our own video projector for better resolution and luminosity for a good quality film projection. We had to set everything up before each screening and pack it up after... We could only leave part of this equipment in the place, so before and after every show, we had to bring to and fro some heavy bags from Kalabhoomi... another matter had to be looked at: comfort! This Video Room is usually used for the visitors to watch a rather short video on Matrimandir. People sit on thin cushions spread out on tiers that have no chairs. In collaboration with the Kalabhoomi Music Studio, we could borrow some 30 good cushions and use those most of these Fridays. The venue became somewhat cozy and a good atmosphere was always present for all screenings. We used it for the whole winter season, moving back to the Auditorium at Bharat Nivas only for our 3 day Indian Panorama in med-February. Then, with summer time returning and the Video Room being too hot for higher temperatures, we chose to accept the possibility to screen our film programs at the Multi Media Centre (MMC) at Town Hall from April 2018. We will use the Friday slot that the MMC team had nicely left free in order not to overlap with the Aurofilm programs.

On the film production side, our team did not produce any new film but we continued to help the production of Jinu Thomas’ documentary film on Auroville: “Auroville – From Seed to Sapling” which is getting completed at the moment. It is a complicated project as the theme was ambitious, wanting to cover a lot of the history of Auroville, coming up to the 50th Anniversary. The team took a lot of material from the Auroville Archive, did many interviews of old Aurovilians, went to record many events here and there in Auroville, to shoot in many places. The plan is clear and the film has taken the desired shape, but binding together the visual footage with a good narration/text is the team’s last task, which they are presently completing.

Outcomes:

During this financial year, we screened 34 films (last year 57!). We are still working on the same
format which has 8-9 films categories that are evenly distributed every month all along the year (we had 7 categories this year as it was shorter in terms of number of screenings).

1 - In the Classic section we presented:
   1/ RED SHOES, 1948, MICHAEL POWEL/PRESSBURGER, UK
   2/ WEST SIDE STORY, 1961, ROBERT WISE-JEROME ROBBINS, US
   3/ HANDS OVER THE CITY/LE MANI SULLA CITTA, 1963, FRANCESCO ROSSI, ITALY
   4/ THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, 1951, ROBERT WISE, USA
   5/ LOST HORIZON, 1937, FRANK CAPRA, USA - presented by Lionel Tardif
   6/ WAGES OF FEAR / LE SALAIRE DE LA PEUR, 1953, HENRI-GEORGES CLOUZOT, FRANCE
   7/ ABHIJAN / THE EXPEDITION, 1962, SATYAJIT RAY, INDIA

2 - Becoming Classics:
   8/ UN DIMANCHE A LA CAMPAGNE/A SUNDAY IN THE COUNTRY, 1984, BERTRAND TAVERNIER, FRANCE
   9/ FANNY AND ALEXANDER, 1982, INGMAR BERGMAN, SWEDEN

3 - Contemporary Indian Cinema:
   10/ ISHTI / SEARCH FOR SELF, 2016, G. PRABHA, SANSKRIT/Engl. subtitles
   11/ NEWTON, 2017, AMIT MASURKAR, HINDI/EST
   12/ BALUTA, 2017, AJAY KURANE, MAHARASHTRA, MARATHI/EST, 26 min.
   13/ SHEPERDESS OF THE GLACIER, 2016, STANZIN DORJAI & C.MORDELET, LADAKH, LADAKHI/EST
   14/ THE WATERFALL, 2016, LIPIKA SINGH DARAI, ODISHA, ENGLISH
   15/ RAILWAY CHILDREN, 2017, PRITHVI KONANUR, KARNATAKA, KANNADA/EST
   16/ MANUSANGADA / CRY HUMANITY, 2017, AMSHAN KUMAR, TAMIL/EST
   17/ MEGHNADBOD ROHOSYO, 2017, ANIK DUTTA, BENGALI/EST
   18/ KSHTITI - A HORIZON, 2017, MANOUJ KADAAMH, MAHARASHTRA, MARATHI/EST
   19/ POorna, 2017, RAHUL BOSE, HINDI/ENGLISH
   20/ HA BHARAT MAZA / INDIA IS MY COUNTRY, 2012, S. BHAVE – SUNIL SUKTHANKAR, MARATHI/EST

4 - Cinema of the World:
   21/ CHHALIA, 1960, MANMOHAN DESAI, INDIA – in HINDI/EST
   22/ GRAVITY, 2013, ALFONSO CUARON, USA-UK – in HINDI/EST
   23/ LAMB, 2015, ETHIOPIA – in AMHARIC/EST
   24/ POPE JOAN / DIE PAPSTIN, 2009, SONKE WORTMANN, GERMANY – in ENGLISH/FRENCH ST., presented by Lionel Tardif
   24/ I, DANIEL BLAKE, 2016, KEN LOACH, UK
   25/ THE SALESMAN, 2016, ASGHAR FARHADI, IRAN, FARSI/EST
   26/ OUR LITTLE SISTER, 2015, HIROKZU KORE-EDA, SOUTH KOREA, KOREAN/EST
   27/ THE LIBERATOR /LIBERTADOR, 2013, ALBERTO ARVELO, COLOMBIA, SPANISH/EST

5 - French Cinema:
   28/ L'HERMINE / COURTED, 2016, CHRISTIAN VINCENT, FRANCE
   29/ ENTRE LES MURS / THE CLASS, 2008, LAURENT CANTET, France

6 - Documentaries:
   30/ THE PEARL BUTTON / EL BOTON DE NACAR, 2015, PATRIZIO GUZZMAN, CHILE, SPANISH/EST
7 - Animated and/or Children films:

31/ **THE RED TURTLE** (animated), 2016, MICHAEL DUDOK DE WIT, FR/BELG/JAP., SILENT
32/ **THE PROPHET** (animated), 2014, R. ALLERS, T. MOORE => 9 directors from several countries
33/ **UNE VIE DE CHAT / A CAT IN PARIS** (animated), 2010, J.L. FELICIOLI & ALAIN GAGNOL, FRANCE

Like last year, in February and March, our friend and film expert, Lionel Tardif visited again and in collaboration with the “Pavillon de France”, we had several interactive programs with him. Lionel Tardif is a film director, a writer and the person in charge for many years in charge of the “Cinémathèque de Tours” (an annex of the Cinémathèque Française, the French National Film Archive, located in Paris). Today, Lionel is retired but still runs a cultural center in the French southern city of Perpignan with of course a meaningful film programs and events. His interest is like ours: presenting quality films that will uplift the audience and help broadening our views towards a higher life... The film screenings we presented with him are mentioned above in the list of shown films. Lionel also presented at MMC, Town Hall two of his own documentary films and two other films that for him are landmarks in Cinema.

We also received a request from “La Casa de Latina America” in Auroville to organize the screening of a bio-pic/biography on the life and work of Simon Bolivar from Colombia also known as “The Liberator”. The film was: **“Libertador”**, a 2h. Colombian production made in 2013.

Of course in the middle of February we did organise our annual film festival called “Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema” (PCIC) in its 10th avatar (please see separate report).

**Reflections:**

We believe that to share our research work and present it in a regular manner to the public, a weekly quality film show from a planned program is very important for the experience of the Auroville audience – usually from age 12-13 (if not a ‘children’ or ‘general audience’ film that can have children from 8). Our regular audience can improve their discerning capacities, can learn on the different cultures, customs, history, arts, as well as remember names of filmmakers and their country, regular actors, keep in mind the music, specific aspects of their work, etc... They can also reflect and work on many different levels and aspects of their own being and nature as Sri Aurobindo advances as a necessary step for the evolution of mankind. This is up to everyone in their own capacities...

**Conclusion:**

We are grateful to be able to provide this service for so many years and wish to continue in the same spirit.
Attending the 48th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa
A project of Aurofilm

Aurofilm aims at fostering education, research and personal progress through the medium of Cinema. Cinema in its best form is complete and fulfilling as an art form and acts as a valuable tool in improving our human nature. For this, Aurofilm offers regular film screenings and special events at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in Auroville, the Visitor’s Centre Video Room and sometimes in our Kalabhoomi studio, for the benefit of all the Auroville residents and their guests.

In order for this work to be propagated, research based on meaningful and artistic cinema, requires the Aurofilm team to be constantly in touch with the world of film production and distribution. India’s well organized international film festivals provide the perfect milieu for this activity. Hence, it is our objective to attend one of these events every year.

Description of project:
Every year, the Directorate of Film Festivals of India (DFF), a Government of India organization (from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting) along with the state of Goa through the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG, Panaji), organize the International Film Festival of India “IFFI”. It is a high quality event that showcases and promotes the best films from a global platform, which includes India as well. It facilitates the meeting of all professionals from the film family (production and distribution). It is a ten-day event that has existed since 2004 and it is permanently set up in the capital of Goa, Panaji.

The 48th edition of the IFFI was held from 20 to 30 November 2017. The three-member team of Aurofilm attended only six days of the event (20 to 26) in alignment with the allocated budget. However, it was very helpful and we could attend many film screenings in the different festival sections that included:

- **Opening and Closing Film**: respectively **Beyond the Clouds** by famous Iranian film director Majid Majidi which he entirely shot and produced in India; and yet another Indian co-production (with Argentina) for **Thinking of Him** by Argentinean filmmaker Pablo Cesar. Interestingly enough, this film is inspired by and talks about the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore and his Argentinean muse, writer Victoria Ocampo.

- **International Competition, with 15 films from the World** with the prestigious Golden Peacock awards, out of which 3 were from India (we had selected Village Rockstar from Assam for our Panorama here but it was unfortunately unavailable).

- This year, there was a “**Gandhi Medal Films**/ICTF UNESCO with 8 films. This category is a competitive section for films that explore the themes of peace, harmony and unity – no wonder we did select 4 of them for our Panorama in Auroville!

- Cinema of the World had 80 titles and we could watch about 20 of them.

- **BRICS Film Festival Award Winners**, a selection of 7 films from the BRICS countries, with Kaasav (Sumitra Bhave & Sunil Sukhtankar, from India/Maharashtra).

- **Restored Classics** showcased 8 films from masters from France (Jean-Luc Godard and Luis Bunuel, 1967), Japan (Yasujiro Ozu, 1952), India (Mrinal Sen, Khandhar/The Ruins, 1984), the UK (Alfred Hitchcock, 1927), USA (James Whale, 1932), Germany (Fritz Lang, 1927) and Sweden (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1986).

- **Indian Panorama with 26 films** from the different states of the country.

- **Lifetime Achievement Award** and retrospective of Canadian director Atom Egoyan with 3 films.
• **Country in Focus** was also on **Canada**, with 8 films curated by the Toronto International Film Festival.

• **Master Classes and Discussions** for “learning from industry masters, experts and leaders” – more than 30 guests speakers.

• **Daily Forum, press conferences.**

• The **National Film Archive of India (NFAI)** like every year presented their annual high quality exhibition of film posters and other film material from the Indian film productions, displayed in and outside the festival grounds for an extended public.

• The practice to **screen Documentaries & Short Films before every long feature films in the Indian Panorama** section still goes on, and it is a very good initiative that gives the festival delegates the opportunity to discover these otherwise forgotten items – for everyone is busy with more glamorous or famous films in different places...

We went to register immediately upon arriving in Panaji and got our accreditation as Delegates, which would open almost all doors for us in the festival. Then, in order to navigate efficiently through all the programs and activities, we had to go daily at 8 am to the ticket counters at the festival premises, after having carefully studied the program and made a selection on a maximum of three films per person to be booked per day, with the possibility to attend one or two more – schedule and seat availability permitting. Our program was always very tight, filled up with many hours of film screenings – with their waiting lines – walking from one venue to the other, taking a snack or beverage break, attending a forum or watching a press conference from a screen somewhere. We did meet the festivals new Director Sunit Tandon, Ms. Tanu Rai, deputy director at DFF and in charge of the Indian Panorama, and the NFAI in charge to maintain the contacts. We met some producers, technicians, screen-writers, journalists, film students and so on. Some people would recognize us and we could exchange our perspectives on the festival organisation, film selection, give and take our recommendations based on film seen or known by our interlocutor or ourselves. Our days were more than full and the week was (as foreseen) quite tiring – yet, highly enriching.

**Outcomes:**

Attending IFFI enabled us to select 8 to 10 good films for our 3 day “Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema” festival. We have also renewed our contact with the Directorate Film Festivals from Delhi. This is the most important as this institution is the one allowing to screen these new films in Auroville; most of them are not yet released in the country. Finding authorization from the various producers to screen them publicly in Auroville would be an impossible task – hiring fees would be exponentially expensive as Aurofilm is not in the regular distribution circuits and our presence is not established well enough. At the festival, we also met directors, technicians and film producers and could directly speak with them, presenting ourselves and encouraging them. Some of them agreed to have their film presented in Auroville for the promotion of their work.

To actively attend this film festival is the best opportunity for the Aurofilm team to follow what happens in the realm of film production from India and the world. On a practical level, to make and/or keep contacts with the DFF, NFAI and other organizations and individuals during the festival is important in order to introduce and establish Auroville and ourselves. It is also necessary so as to request the film prints or permission for our own 3 day Indian Panorama (**please see our Report on that activity**) and other weekly film screenings for the community. The Auroville community ultimately benefits in being exposed to quality Indian and world cinema through the screenings we organize throughout the year – whenever these films are available on Bluray or DVD or is directly sourced from their producers/directors. The various films we choose to watch during the festival are also for reference, for our film making and research. This research work is available to the visitors, students and volunteers who contact us at Kalabhoomi or even attend the film screenings in Bharat Nivas.
We can also say that through our presence and outreaching effort in such events/festivals in India, Auroville can be known as a place where culture and art is a major component of research and where promotion of quality cinema is an important aspect. All in all, with this exhaustive program, we really made good use of the place and time to gather contacts and material for our work for the year.

Reflections:

Over the years we have been able to be present at this kind of festivals, we have learned to better our use of the time, the venues and the programs. We are also becoming more discerning and can perceive an improved quality and impact the Indian selection of film will particularly have in Auroville. It is also positive to see that we are somehow getting more confidence in addressing the people we need to get acquainted with for bringing their films or their knowledge into Auroville.

Conclusion:

These international film festivals are huge events and Auroville would probably take many years before replicating such happenings. The Auroville Film Festival (organized by another team) is more publicized and seems to become more of this bigger scale. We do not wish for our own festival (3 day “Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema” Film Festival) to be of such a scale. We have also noticed that the public who appreciates our themes are not necessary large in number but they are an audience who is well educated and informed, when it comes to cinema and film festivals. Our ‘reduced version’ is so far acceptable and we can of course still learn and improve!
This year was the 10th issue of our festival dedicated to the most recent productions of Indian Cinema. Our aim is to present films produced in the different states of India, in their distinct languages and that do not necessarily follow a conventional and commercial ‘recipe’ provided by the film industry. India has shown that such good films are indeed produced every year, even though with some difficulty, mostly towards promotion and distribution in the final phase. Of course film festivals rounding and National Awards distribution do help, yet these productions are still reserved for an ‘elite’ or a niche, and usually do not get down to the ‘common people’. In Auroville, with this annual Panorama, our international audience can discover some of these gems.

Description of project:
Preparation for it started as early as November 2016 when the Aurofilm team went to attend the 48th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa with the purpose of watching many Indian films in order to select the ones we would screen during 3 days in Auroville in February.

With Auroville’s 50th Anniversary in the same period, it took quite some time and difficulty for us to finally get our dates confirmed at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium. Ultimately, our preferred dates 16, 17 and 18 could be maintained.

We then activated our contact with the Directorate of Film Festivals (DFF) in Delhi to request authorization to receive and screen 9 films for which DFF normally has rights after the Indian Panorama in Goa took place. With confirmation received for only 7 titles, we wrote to two film directors we had contact with, to request separately their film to be added along with the DFF approved ones. Again with their consent, we could then start working on a more definitive schedule (a complex task in view of many overlapping programs happening in Auroville at the same time) the gathering of texts and pictures for the festival brochure and the announcements as well as designing the different posters for this event in Auroville. As the festival time came closer, the last preparations such as ordering snacks for in between films, placing placards and poster, bringing the flowers and decorating the Auditorium were done.

Jinu, our young volunteer – also hailing from Kerala – was our projection operator for all screenings and everything went very alright. This year we had to use the generator for the whole event as some electrical problems with the line were occurring which could affect the electronic and digital equipment.

The introduction to the screenings was helping nicely to call for openness, concern and empathy towards the situations and subjects of all films. We had with us a young Indian volunteer from Kerala, Aishwarya, who had prepared short introduction speeches for each film and their context. Our team had also prepared, published and distributed 225 brochures on the scheduled films so that people could better keep information about the artists and their productions. Mutthiah, a young graphist designer nicely volunteered to do this and made a really attractive brochure.

With tea and snacks provided between two films, moments to exchange on Indian Cinema, information about artists, film directors, the next films and much more, could be part of informal discussions.

The films:
This panorama did not have a particular theme apart to present productions from 2016-17. However, several of the selected titles were related to children and education like “Kshitij” (from Maharashtra, by Manouj Kadaamh), “Railway Children” (Karnataka), “Poorna” (Hindi, by Rahul Bose) and “The Waterfall” (a 20 minute short film from Odisha, by National award-winning woman director
Lipika Singh Darai), as well as achievement by women or their empowerment with “Baluta” (a 26 minute short film from Maharashtra, by Ajay Kurane) and “Shepherdess of the Glaciers” (from Ladakh by Stanzin Dorjai Gya & Christiane Mordelet). With “Newton” (Hindi, by Amit Masurkar) and “Manusangada” (Tamil, by Amsham Kumar, also a National Award recipient) taking up actual social issues – respectively right to vote for the first one and intercaste conflicts for the second – as well as a Bengali mystery story “Meghnadbod Rohosyo” (by Aavik Mukhopadhyay), we could bring to the international audience a wide variety of issues that could interest everyone on different levels.

Outcomes:
Even if it is difficult to number the audience that came over these three days to attend one, a few or nearly all of the nine films screened, and even if a number of other cultural programs were happening at the same time due to the season and the Auroville’s special Birthday this year, we can say that the attendance was quite significant. These people from around 50 nationalities and different ages and backgrounds came to enjoy the Indian films we had picked up for them: Residents of Auroville, Newcomers, visiting friends and family members, students and interns, volunteers, young and older people – all of them from all over India, from the world: the East, Far-East and the West could gather at the Sri Aurobindo Auditorium in this concentrated time. We feel this is one of these numerous steps that go towards Human Unity!

Reflections:
Our annual 3-day Panorama of Contemporary Indian Cinema is appreciated and even if not a big event, it has its own lustre and success. This year we might have benefitted from the high energy of the Auroville Golden Jubilee which had attracted many more people – although it somehow did scatter it too! This is maybe the reason why we did not want to prepare something exceptional for this exceptional year... It was simple yet with its quality; we are happy about this.
“Auroville – From seed to sapling”
A project of Aurofilm

by Jinu Thomas

“Auroville – From seed to sapling” is a documentary film directed by Jinu Thomas, which aims to act as a window to Auroville’s intriguing journey over a period of 50 years. The purpose of the project was to document Auroville's growth through the insights of its diverse population and to outline its past, its present and its possible future.

Description of project:
The project is an initiative of Aurofilm and is supported by Outreach Media. The film is a filmmaking experience and research that will result in a documentary about Auroville in English. (Duration to be finalized very soon)

Outcome:
Through the collaboration of volunteers and Aurovilians, a documentary was made. The film benefited the volunteers who helped make it by giving them exposure and the opportunity to interact with the people who helped build and preserve Auroville. It also will benefit the community of Auroville itself as it documents its growth, and covers the various perspectives of its unique inhabitants. The documentary also offers an expansive and insightful take on the time-line of Auroville, which could be helpful for those who are not familiar with Auroville.

Reflections:
The documentary provided us with the amazing opportunity to interact with the pioneers of Auroville and the youth of Auroville alike. It was humbling to be welcomed into their homes and listen to their personal stories and opinions. We did face certain technical and logistical challenges but they were overcome after consulting external help and collaboration.

Conclusion:
Making the documentary was a wonderful experience which inspired the team to take the project further and maybe make a series of short videos covering specific aspects of Auroville. As the place and its people are so intricate and diverse, it's almost impossible to cover it all in a single film.
Auroville Archives

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:

• The entire Archives Building has been completed and Auroville Archives has shifted from Bharat Nivas’ basement to the ground floor of this new building (the first floor will be allotted to other administrative services for the years to come). All its collections (artifacts, documents, photos, audios and videos) have been shifted to the new premises where they are now kept in far better conditions in terms of humidity and accessibility.
• Auroville’s Outreach-Media now operates from the Archives building as Archives has made available to it one office and agreed to share the 10-seats meeting room. The idea of this office sharing is to facilitate the combining of our respective data banks (together also with that of Auroville photographers, videographers and publishers) into one main digitized data bank of documents, photos, audio and video documents.
• Thanks to a large grant from the GoI for Auroville’s 50th anniversary, the Archives has now a video section where video recordings of Auroville’s past are now properly stored, labelled and used to produce new videos from Auroville’s rich history. The massive capacity of the new data storage equipment allows the storage of all digitized documents, photographic, audio and video recordings. Thanks to this grant, AV Archives also now has an Uninterrupted Power Supply which is far more powerful and whose battery bank has a much larger capacity.
• As part of Auroville’s 50th anniversary celebrations, Archives:
  ◦ Helped the Photographic Department of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram’s Archives conceive and put up an exhibition on Auroville’s early days, which was exhibited both at the Ashram and also at Bharat Nivas during these celebrations. It is presently being exhibited again at Bharat Nivas.
  ◦ Assisted making an exhibition for the Sangamam celebration for the inhabitants of Auroville’s bioregion on Auroville’s physical transformation during its 50 years’ journey. Around 5,000 people visited the exhibition, which was much appreciated.
• Archives keeps receiving new materials, and more have been coming now that people know that things are preserved and labelled in much better conditions than before.
• Archives keeps scanning and labelling thousands of documents, publications, photos, audio and video recordings and sorting them so that they can be viewed on computers.

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.

This year for us specifically:
• A new building has been completed for the Archives and it has moved in it.
• 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.
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.

Conclusion:
Auroville Archives is going through a very interesting transition period. Moving into the new building is providing very much needed new opportunities. Our team is growing as more people are interested in joining it.
Auroville Campus Initiative (ACI) was created in 2014 as an answer to the need for a common platform to share knowledge. In 2016, ACI became SAIIER’s Department of Further Learning with the following mission statement:

1. Develop higher education programmes in Auroville expressing the ideals of Auroville.
2. Research and develop transformational learning methods in the context of everyday life activities of Auroville.
3. Network with various units and services of Auroville to make them part of higher education as Learning Labs.
4. Facilitate the emergence of Auroville as an international campus for Integral Education.
5. Network with outside universities and educational institutions for the emergence of a learning society.

**Swadharma programme:**

The Swadharma 5-week self-discovery programme for youth between 18 and 28, launched in 2016, is still ongoing. We offer the programme twice a year, in January/February and in August/September.

So far over 60 youths from India and abroad have participated and all experienced a very positive transformative journey. We encourage participants to stay in Auroville for some time after the programme and engage in the community life. Most of them take on some internships and two have started their Newcomer process.

Siddharth, who was part of the first Swadharma group, joined our team in March 2017 and recently became a Newcomer. He is an active member in developing the programme and creating an alumni community. He also documented the third Swadharma programme and created a video with the participants and mentors’ interviews (available on YouTube).

**Auroville Gap Year Programme:**

We are now launching Auroville Gap Year Programme (AGYP) for Auroville youth. There is a great amount and variety of knowledge and talents in Auroville. Nevertheless, most youth between 18 and 28 leave Auroville to pursue higher education outside, work to earn some money and travel. On the other hand, there is a great interest and demand outside of Auroville from youth and others to learn and share our experience.

We would like to offer the youth other alternatives. AGYP will start in September 2018 for one year and will include a period of self-exploration to know better who they are and how they see themselves contributing to society. We will visit many Auroville units and services to explore our community and get inspired by individuals’ life journeys. Then the participants will get into action by taking up some projects of their choice. By the second semester, they should be ready to engage in a 6-month apprenticeship corresponding to their field of interest to get professional experience and real life exposure.

Throughout the programme, we will have regular sharing and mentorship, we shall follow each participant individually, enabling self-reflection and channeling meaningful communication between the youth and the unit/service of apprenticeship.
Outcomes:

It is heartwarming and inspiring to see the Swadharma tribe grow and thrive. The feedback from the participants as well as from the resource people and the community at large have been very positive. New applicants heard about the programme from previous participants and the community is growing steadily.

Many alumni have engaged in meaningful activities in and outside Auroville and are actively promoting a change in behaviour and consciousness. They are also bonding with Aurovilian youth and others, as well as inspiring and guiding young volunteers.

Reflections:

Through Swadharma programme, the participants become aware of their inner abilities, their strengths and potential and change their lifestyle. They become more responsible global citizens and engage themselves as agents of change. We believe they are playing an important role in spreading awareness and shaping the future.

One of the major difficulties has been to welcome youth from less privileged families who can’t afford the full financial contribution to the programme. Valentine, an Auroville youth who joined our team recently, is in the process of developing a fundraising platform to create a scholarship fund.

Another difficulty is the visa issue, as foreign participants have to come with an Entry visa specifically to attend the programme and are not supposed to explore the rest of the country during their stay. The procedure to get the visa is a bit of a burden and since its validity starts from the date of issue, it impedes advanced planning and commitment.

We are very grateful to be able to use Mitra hostel facilities. However, the increase of tariffs due to GST and other factors and the fact that they can’t provide breakfast or dinner any longer is creating a challenge and affects the atmosphere of a youth community.

Conclusion:

We are grateful to Mohit and Siddharth, both Swadharma alumni, for the movies they made which reflect the insights and transformation gained by participants.

Beside running the Swadharma programme, we are happy to now focus on Auroville youth and offer them a programme that will be tailored according to their own needs while developing a collaboration with Auroville units and services. In the future, we are envisioning to open the programme to a wider audience according to demand and needs.

Other activities planned for this year are:

- a platform for sharing experiences in Integral Education as part as a larger confluence,
- a Swadharma-type programme for older people as we are getting many requests.

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

Activities of the year:
In May/June 2017, three Nature Camps were attended by 106 participants total. This included 99 students from a diverse range of schools, including: Aikiyam (8), Udavi (12), Transition (36), TLC (15), Future School (2), NESS (6), Last School (4), Deepanam (14), home-schooling (1), and Kulipalayam Trust School (1). In addition, 7 teachers attended camp from the following schools: Aikiyam (1), Transition (3), TLC (1), Deepanam (1), Last School (1).

Outcomes:
Auroville Nature Camp exposed 99 students and 7 teachers to the wonders of nature and helped them develop skills for living and working outdoors. While these students were the direct beneficiaries, indirectly, their experience in and appreciation for nature will hopefully manifest itself in the Auroville bioregion in the future through nature conservation efforts.

Conclusion:
We again executed another successful summer with three full camps. Completing camp infrastructure continues to be our biggest challenge. Goals for the coming year include completing the infrastructure of the camp and working to fundraise further toward this goal.
Auroville Theatre Group

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

Activities of the year:
We directed two productions: ALL MY SONS by Arthur Miller, and KING LEAR by William Shakespeare. We also produced the show, FEAR WALKERS, adapted from a short story by Friedebert Tuglas, Estonian writer and critic.

ALL MY SONS was performed at CRIPA Garden, Kalabhumi on May 5, 6 and 7th, 2017 at 7:30 pm. Performers included Swar Weinberger, Jill Navarre, Shilpi Singh, Vinu Karthick, Nishant Saini, Ahmed Ibrahim, Myrta K., Manjula Arumugam, Satyendra Kumar, and Satish T., with stage manager Sikander Khan and assistant stage managers Sanjeevi and Gospell Shanell. Directed by Jill Navarre.
ALL MY SONS seemed particularly relevant. The play is Arthur Miller's explosive drama about the period immediately following the end of World War II. Profoundly influenced by the Depression and the war that immediately followed it, Miller tapped into a sense of dissatisfaction and unrest within the greater American psyche. His probing dramas proved to be both the conscience and redemption of the times; allowing people an honest view of the direction the country had taken.

KING LEAR by William Shakespeare was performed at Adishakti Theatre on December 7, 8 and 9th, 2017 at 7:00 pm. Cast:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jill Navarre</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kong</td>
<td>Lear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurydice</td>
<td>Goneril</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohit Latiyan</td>
<td>Duke of Albany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gandhi</td>
<td>Oswald / Duke of Burgundy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poojashree Berman</td>
<td>Regan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugumar Shanmugam</td>
<td>Duke of Cornwall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friederike Bruhns</td>
<td>Cordelia / Gentleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christophe Benesse</td>
<td>King of France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm Boyer</td>
<td>Earl of Kent / Messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satyendra Kumar</td>
<td>Earl of Kent / Messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rey Predrag Ra</td>
<td>Fool / Gentleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swar Weinberger</td>
<td>Earl of Gloucester</td>
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</table>
FEAR WALKERS was directed by Tamur Tohver from Polygon Theater, Estonia, with Nishant Saini and Steina Ohman. The play was adapted from the short story “Popi ja Huhuu” by Friedebert Tuglas. Tuglas is an Estonian director, actor, theatre practitioner and theorist, teacher and researcher. He founded the Polygon Theatre (2008) and Theatre School (2009), and has directed over 70 plays in theatre, radio and TV, in different countries. FEAR WALKERS premiered Jan 26, 27, 28th, 2018 at Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas.

Today we have to ask questions on the scale of the global village. We need to be able to see ourselves from the widest viewpoint possible. FEAR WALKERS is a story of tolerance and consideration of others.

By today’s standard, we are none of us winners or perfect in this regard, but there is always the possibility to change. What we strive for then, both mentally and physically, is evolution and self-realization, but our energy is ill spent, often already gone, wasted, in a life unlived. Is everything really ... over?

The thing that is left is our fear and ignorance. The Fear. How can we overcome this?

Reflections:

We had the chance to work with some really fine actors on King Lear. This really helps to keep raising the bar and challenging others to work at their best. Working with professionally trained actors was a blessing.

Overall this year there was a whole lot of goodwill, encouragement and challenging moments which we overcame.

Coming up:

• Starting in June for performance in August: “Obediently Yours, Orson Welles” by Richard French. This is an American play about the famous director/actor/writer Orson Welles.
• Starting in September for performance in December, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” by William Shakespeare.
• In April we have already offered a 6-day workshop at CRIPA entitled “Truth on Stage.”
• Co-direction on Therakootu Performance in cooperation with Pitchandikulam Forest and the Nadakkupam Environment Education Center, in September.
CRIPA (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, fosters supports and encourages research into the Performing Arts in Auroville.

Activities of the year:
The 2017-18 season was a big challenge for us: with the 50th Anniversary we were busy with a lot of rehearsals, but also performances. We became the first place in Auroville in terms of performances (38 this season against 16 the previous year!)

Theater, classical music, jazz, rock, Indian dance, Carnatic classical, rhythms of Korea ... all activities are represented at CRIPA. And we are the only place in Auroville where you can rehearse and do a performance for free.

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

Conclusion:
We started the phase 2 of CRIPA that will allow us in the near future to better welcome the public (toilets!) and also use a new rehearsal room for new activities. This 2nd phase will be really useful for many people, and many artists are waiting impatiently. I take this opportunity to thank SAIIER for its support.

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

by Kalou

This year, we had a lot of work and challenges with the preparation of Auroville’s birthday. We built a big and beautiful metallic sphere to develop acrobatics, dance, aerial practices for our performances. All these practices helped the children to develop their consciousness of the body, and it’s a beautiful way to live and express our yoga.

Activities of the year:

There were classes every morning and afternoon. With the new high roof my students could really increase their level! Then we had three creations and, in September, the preparation of the Auroville Birthday performance at the Matrimandir garden.

In January we started to work on the yearly performances for Kindergarten and Nandanam.

Outcomes:

This year, we created 3 performances: one on February 17th for Auroville’s birthday (open to public), and two at the end of April for the schools and the parents.

Reflections:

Now, with the new high roof, we are working on some new fears and this is a very interesting development as it is a new challenge in our life! For this, we need to work on patience, concentration and trust.

The work with my students, and specially with the new sphere, helps them to develop their sense of teamwork. They have to become one: a group, with cooperation, synchronization and coordination with each other to found a collective harmony. We would like to prepare a big performance with the sphere for the next year.

Conclusion:

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

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

by Thomas

Gratitude Animal Farm was inspired by protecting the environment by providing the necessary infrastructure (green work and animals/birds). Birds were the original inspiration.

**Activities of the year:**
Main activities include maintenance of the place, which means repair work of the fences, the repairing of the aviaries and of course feeding of birds.

**Outcomes:**
Apart from the animals, a forest and a park-like atmosphere has been created. I hope the visitors and guests will benefit from it. It is important for radiating beauty and contemplation.

**Reflections:**
To keep the project running is meaningful for me. The farm itself is the challenge, and discovering what it does to you (learning).
I am grateful this work has been given to me.
Kailash Youth Residency

Kailash is an educational residency. The general idea of Kailash is to have a shared living experience where the youth manage their community life, the duties that come along with it and the social outcome of it. This means that they will have to organize their own lives to keep the harmony of the residence. They will learn from the consequences of their acts and not because they blindly apply externally imposed rules.

A few rules have been set up from the start, and are not to be compromised:
- Open to youth between 16 and 21 years old.
- A daily activity such as school, work, apprenticeship, etc. is compulsory.
- Active participation in the community life. (Weekly meetings, gardening, cooking shifts, maintenance of the building, and so on.)
- Respect each other and the neighborhood (no loud noise after 9 pm).
- No illegal drugs in the residency.

Activities of the year:
This year, life in Kailash was smooth and harmonious with the residents caring for the building and participating in community life. The refurbishing of the building (with a complete repaint and cleaning of bathrooms) definitely had a positive impact on the general caring and maintaining of the space.
We had our yearly traditional end of the year barbecue with the Secret Santa and group photo.

Outcomes:
On a total of 14 available rooms, Kailash benefits the Auroville youth between age 16-21, as 12 rooms are available for them.
It also benefits non-Auroville youth who wish to come and live a different life experience within Auroville, not accompanied by their families, as 2 rooms are available for them. Those youth need to fit into the original frame and criteria too.

We have extended the age group to a maximum 25 years old for Indian student interns, coming from the understanding that they will be coming to Auroville at a later stage of their educational life (after a one-on-one interview assessing the possible integration of this person into the existing group of Kailashians).

The number of non-Auroville youth were bigger in proportion this year as we have had several youngsters coming from abroad deciding to experience Auroville schools (Future School and Last School). These youth are between 16 and 18 years old and have been able to follow their educational/life project in a safe and supportive environment thanks to Kailash.
Also, we have hosted some women interns who had faced some security issues in their previous living quarters.

The location and lifestyle of Kailash make it a safe and secure space of living.

Reflections:
What felt meaningful this year is a feeling of maturity and capacity of Kailash to adapt to the changing realities of Auroville. The education and learning environment of Auroville is becoming more and more attractive to children and families from abroad as well as other parts of India and youngsters express the individual wish to experience it. The families are not able to make a complete family move for a year or two, and Kailash offers the possibility for these kids to relocate independently. With the understanding that Kailash is not a boarding, but a living community,
where the caretakers do not live in the building, are here to accompany but not take over at any given point the parental authority or responsibility. Each non-Aurovilian youth has an Auroville legal guardian or a work/intern place that takes responsibility for them.

The older son of Jean-François and Kripa who was born at the finishing stages of the construction of Kailash in August 2001 and who grew up alongside the setting up of Kailash joined and moved in in August 2017 as a full time resident. It was a milestone in our history as parents and caretakers of Kailash.

A clear learning is that the building needs to be maintained and clean with certain standards to be respected and enjoyed by the residents. This is difficult to sustain with no budget and no community help, solely by part of the contribution of the non-Auroville residents. A contact and communication has been developed with the Auroville Housing Service to get some help from them when felt needed and when the costs are above our means.

**Conclusion:**
For next year, we are looking into ways of covering the top roof, as the building gets very hot and this will allow the residents to go through the hot summer days and the regular power cuts (with the consequence of no fans) with a better basic comfort.

Kripa and Jean-François will be gone for a year, so Safia has joined the team of caretakers, and will be here with Fabien and Quentin to supervise and accompany the youngsters in their life in Kailash.
Kalabhum Art Studio

*by Nele*

The open art studio has been set up as a collaborative space to facilitate interaction between artists and interested students of all ages. The students from Transition School and Future School appreciate the small groups with individual help and professional equipment and the art studio atmosphere.

Many adults at some point in their life feel the need to express themselves through art. Often this need is not developed because either one thinks one is not good enough, or because one does not have the necessary facilities. The nonjudgmental atmosphere and the diverse offer of guided and free classes according to the level help to overcome these difficulties. Some artists also like to come to the studio’s free sessions to exchange ideas, and get inspiration.

The studio wants to give a chance to all who wish to pursue art, for whichever reason.

**Activities of the year:**

There are currently three artists, teaching groups of students ranging from age 9 to 75. Most classes are planned and guided, and one afternoon is set aside for more experienced students to come and work free on their own projects, while exchanging ideas critic and so inspiring one another.

The studio is at walking distance from the schools, thereby making it possible to include the studio classes in the school schedule. Over the year I offer various art projects to the students, for which they can sign up and come and work in the studio. In the last year we had five groups from school age (Transition School and Future School), one group from the fashion school, and two adult groups. Each group can have between 3 and 6 students. I try to give a balance between classes for technique and free exploration.

Some interesting developments this year have been:

1. A semester of drawing studies in anatomy and drapery for the fashion school students.
2. The introduction of clay and sculpture classes by Sabrina who has joined the team at the beginning of the year.
3. A fantastic initiative was taken up by one of our students, Li Mei, who taught a series of classes on creating paper flowers
4. A series of figure studies in charcoal with the Future School group.
5. We continued and refined work on the preparation of the surface of the painting. We used cloth, tissue, paper, white cement and gesso on paper. It was shown how important each step is for the final artwork, from the material used to composition, layering of colors and interaction of the colors, light and contrast, etc.
6. Future School students experimented with new materials such as paper mache and bamboo for sculpture.
7. A study on finding one's own expression and interpretation of an object, by going beyond the outer shape and analyzing its inner structure and form. This is a new and very important way to observe and give a deeper meaning to the artwork and at the same time a creative way of self-research.
8. A series of exercises on color: interaction of colors, the use of layers and brushstroke.
Outcomes:

The studio serves as a space to meet, to explore art, to exchange ideas, to learn, and to teach. We have been able to provide some skills to enable the student to accomplish their intention, whether it is sketching the idea for a dress for the fashion student or work on interaction of colors for the painting class, or creating a sculpture.

We talk about how to observe with attention to get inspired, find ways and techniques to materialize the idea, with methods like aquarelle, sketch, acrylic paint, spray paint with stencils, sculpture in clay or paper mache, collage and many more.

We talk about composition and proportions by doing specific exercises in life drawing and still life study.

Reflections:

This year we have seen an increased interest from the students, especially from the younger children, and in the free expression class on Saturday. This has been encouraging and led us to offer more courses.

With three professional artists in the team, we are able to offer a very diverse program and it has been very well received.

Working in a well-equipped and functioning artist environment exposes the student to various aspects of creating artwork. The student is able to see how the artwork evolves through various stages from inspiration to the final object.

The learning process is reciprocal. The facilitator gets new ideas for their own work by seeing the work from the angle of the student. So I would not call this “teaching” but “creating together”.

Conclusion:

This project continues to grow. Most students are attending the courses since many years and the groups have formed a dynamic which helps the student to feel comfortable, free, but also trying to do their best work possible. The secure atmosphere created also makes it easy for new students to integrate.
Kalabhumi Music Studio

Kalabhumi studio is (and has been for many years now) an important incubator for many Auroville-based musical projects, as it offers a safe space for self-expression and bonding through common musical activities. These often culminate in musical programs and concerts staged for the community at large. For many users, the studio serves as a space for teaching, learning, and sharing their musical endeavors, which make it a true Aurovillian space.

**Activities of the year:**
- Aurovillian users: 30-35
- Guest users: 20-30
- Auroville youth users: 10-15

**Bands and regular activities:**
- AV Sisters
- Swaha Blues Band
- Dhani and Amando
- Rolf Jazz
- Soul Cypher (Edo)
- Divij Funk Band
- Punk band (Roeland)
- Amrit and Noe
- Arnaav band
- Agni piano classes
- TLC music classes (led by Galit)
- Weekly jam sessions
- Single instrument and voice practice sessions
- Music one-on-one classes
- Demo recording for Auroville musicians (Shanks, AV sisters, Jeremy, Edo)

**Special programs, activities and rehearsals:**
- “Kalabhumi Goes Live” (6 months, Aug ’17-Jan ‘18), with more than 30 participants from the Auroville music community and an audience of 150-200 people each month. This became a monthly regular event transforming the studio space into a concert venue utilizing studio resources.
- TLC play and Trashion Show rehearsals
- Korean Traveling School practice
- Music video shoot by French artists
- Guest musicians, concerts, and rehearsals
- Photo-shoots for Aurovillian artists
- Cleanup, equipment testing, and studio maintenance.

**Equipment bought/repairs:**
- Bought: 2 ton Lloyd AC, new with warranty (March 2018)
- Bought: microphone stands, XLR cables, and jack leads for instruments
- PA power amp
- Carpets, batiks, wall lights in attempt to refresh the look of the music studio and bring a cozier feel to the space.
Achievements:

- Increased the studio use to capacity, allowing a multitude of users to benefit (8am-10pm, Mon-Sun).
- Collected all monthly contributions making it possible for the studio to run and prosper.
- Upgraded the contribution scheme in early 2018 to improve studio finances.
- Started to collaborate with CRIPA and the Auroville Theatre Group to build a Kalabhumi campus.
- Involved Newcomers and Aurovillians in studio maintenance and running.
- Encouraged youth and new users to access the space, adding to the Kalabhumi studio community feel.
- Provided monthly events to engage Auroville and Pondicherry audiences with music performances made in Auroville.
- Showcased a wide number of performers.

Challenges:

- Electrical failures almost monthly, at times damaging equipment in the studio and interrupting normal activity.
- Financial support is still needed to help run and maintain the studio as well as buy new equipment.
- Lack of a second rehearsal space, which could double the capacity of studio and allow multiple sessions to happen. This is very important considering the number of full time artists in Auroville has increased in the last two years.

Next steps for 2018-19:

- Ensure complete usage of timetable, sharing equally time slots and allowing everyone interested to use at least once a week.
- Check all members pay their monthly contribution in order to avail of necessary funds and save for priority investments.
- Investing into: monitor speakers, new mixer with output USB recording, a new semi-professional keyboard, and other ornaments/furniture to embellish studio indoor area.
- Painting of the façade (involving Auroville artists or school), in order to give studio a fresh identity and look.
- Build together with Auroville Theatre Group and CRIPA a second space for common use, where a good number of music rehearsals can happen.
- Investing in metal cabinets for equipment storing and safe keeping of musicians’ items.
Laboratory of Evolution – Centre for Human Unity

The LOE-CHU, founded like SAIIER itself in 1984 on the suggestion of Kireet Joshi, is dedicated to the study of and research about all that can help humanity towards the new step of Evolution as described by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother – including Human Unity, the very goal of Auroville.

One main aspect of our work is our Specialized Library: a center of documentation (in all media) for research in all fields related to Evolution and Human Unity. The head-librarian and coordinator of that team is Kalyani, with the help of Olivier, the second pillar of our Library.

The other main aspect of the LOE-CHU's work is research, not only academic, but also through documented direct experience. Bhaga, the original Founder of the LOE-CHU as a whole, is the head-researcher and coordinator of that other team, the second pillar of which is Namah.

Activities of the year:

For our Library, the theme of this year was renovation. A new member joined the Library of LOE-CHU: a retired engineer who dedicates his time to all-over maintenance and repairs in the place. Also a grant through Auroville's 50th birthday funds brought about the renovation of our external walls and the landscaping of our immediate surroundings – a most welcome embellishment.

As for the Research team, it has included this year not only Namah and Bhaga, but also a beloved previous member from many years ago, Egle, now back in Auroville. Yet another Newcomer, Irena, has chosen the LOE-CHU as the framework in which to do her own research work in Dance Therapy, mostly through a special dance technique known as ‘Dance of the 5 Rhythms’.

Over the year, several French groups attended Namah’s workshops about Auroville, discovering with her help different subjects of study available in our community. Programs were offered by her on the Integral Yoga, in French, for guests as well as Aurovilians. Namah’s main interest and focus here is to make understandable an Unending Education (as in Auroville’s own Charter by Mother) according to Sri Aurobindo’s integral psychology. Besides these personal activities, every week Namah participated in the regular meetings of the group Lîlâ-CIRHU, this year studying particularly “La Genèse du Surhomme” (by Satprem). The group organized a whole exhibition on the subject, realized from 15th February to 15th of March on the occasion of Auroville’s 50th birthday.

Bhaga held regular meetings with a small group of Aurovilians (mostly from the Lîlâ-CIRHU group), sharing among themselves observations about body and cells’ consciousness based on Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s experiences, and Bhaga’s own ongoing researches. Bhaga also received during the Winter months two regular visitors from France: two ladies both from the medical field, who come since three years to learn and practice ever more about their own cellular consciousness, and the Integral Yoga as a whole. A young French man, a doctor too, has also been coming on his own for the same purpose.

This year, through African songs Bhaga also experienced a renewed inner link with Africa, where she was born and grew up until teen-age. This brought about in Bhaga a whole direct understanding of how the various Cultural Pavilions of Auroville’s International Zone can be used by each person towards his or her realization of Human Unity through Diversity: they can do it even within their individual consciousness. This led to a whole little event during Auroville’s Golden Jubilee Week, in which these songs were sung and danced at the African Pavilion as its special contribution to the general celebrations, and a symbolic inner call for the awakening of Africa itself to the evolutive spirituality of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Brain training and assessment project – a report by Egle

Since the very beginning of the LOE-CHU in 1984, it was a dream of Bhaga to work and do some research with Biofeedback devices in general, and particularly the method called Neurofeedback. This is a modern technological development, which allows a person to receive an
immediate feedback of one's brain activities. Until now these technologies have been very expensive and available only in the hospitals.

We have got the equipment from one interesting and progressive Dutch company, which helps people to understand their brain activities, how these influence their life and how their reality and life can change, if they manage to change the brain patterns.

Mainly neuro-feedback is used very effectively as a therapeutic tool in cases of many psychological problems, such as ADHS, depression, trauma, dementia, etc.

Our aim at LOE-CHU was to see the patterns of the brain, but not only to concentrate on the problems and to heal them. The aim of all these training sessions is in the final stage to learn to reach meditational states of mind (Alpha-Theta brain waves balance) fast and at will. Since the brain receives an immediate feedback, it sees what happens and learns to reach or change the brain wave patterns quite fast. It can be compared with learning to ride a bicycle.

The project has been created for Aurovilians with the aim of training and research. We have made 30 brain waves assessments and quite some brain training sessions with 5 Aurovilians.

Some people after getting the test results said that they could observe some changes in their lives and behaviour, even without undergoing the training. Alone the awareness and knowledge of one's brain activities already gave to those people a tool to work upon their difficulties and to strengthen the positive ways of their brain.

Also it was interesting to observe, that when people concentrated on special chakras or meditated, the test results changed immediately. So, the participants knew, that if they concentrated or just closed their eyes, that could change the brain activity, which in turn changes the mental and psychological condition.

We see that this is a long-term project, because to change some brain patterns, which one can have after traumatic experience or even since childhood, takes a long time. It could take a 6 month weekly training. And, as the creators of the equipment suggest, only then it is possible to work on meditational states and reaching them at will. As they say, in meditational state “we can do more, while doing less”. Because in meditational state brain works most efficiently and without losing too much energy. This goes of course in alignment with the practice of yoga.

Reflections:

It was very interesting to see in retrospective, once knowing the brain patterns of a person, how is one's personality, character, attitudes, etc. It is an interesting psychological research subject. Everything is connected and the influence goes both ways. Change the mood and the brain patterns change. Change the brain patterns, and the mood will change.

It was also evident, that each brain is very individual, though some similarities have been observed among very long term Aurovilians.

Although all this is very interesting and there were lots of requests from Aurovilians to have at least the test, even if not continuing with the training, the experiment was challenging. The biggest challenge was related to the equipment itself: the equipment always stresses out the “difficulties” of the brain and not the beauty, the authenticity, etc. This is the limitation of this technology and, of course, it was mainly created as a therapeutic tool.

So, to continue with the research in meditational states of mind, we probably would be able to do it once people underwent the training.

For example, one test person had great mental capacity, fast working brain and at the same time was able to go into meditational trance state (theta-delta) within minutes. But the equipment was not able “to see” the advantages of this brain, and stressed out the unbalances here and there, etc.

It was quite a challenge practically too, since only one person knew how to work with this equipment, while there were plenty of interested people to have the test and to proceed with the training. It is a very personal work, so time-wise it is simply not possible to work with all
wiling people. We would need a few more machines and more people to conduct the test and the training.

Outcomes:
This year our Librarians went through the classification of our books and tried to be sharper in defining each one's main subject and connection with the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.
In the Research field, a compilation on the aspects of the different planes of the being was done by Namah. The research was to classify elements of our life, our psychological aspects and our behavior belonging to each plane, and to find effective practices which could help towards transformation of the whole being. In that way, as many as 40 different inner exercises were prepared and put together by Namah for concentration and relaxation, at the physical, mental and vital levels.
The direct contact and collaboration between LOE-CHU and the African Pavilion has been enriching for both sides, and has been beneficial inwardly for many of the guests from different places who were at the time staying there, and who expressed their gratitude.
Not only are more Aurovilians now valuing and practicing Cellular Consciousness, but through the three medical persons coming regularly to Bhaga, it is the entire medical and scientific world that starts being touched by word of mouth. In the same way, the kind of persons who come for Namah’s workshops spread the word about it among others of the same generally high social milieu – not yet reached often enough by the deeper levels of Yoga beyond the usual (Hatha) Yoga as practiced in the West.

Reflections:
Regarding our Specialized Library, the feedback of the guests was overwhelmingly positive this year. We have over the years constituted quite a large collection of rare, very interesting books, which attracts the researchers and often they remark that a lot of those books are not anymore available in their countries.
Our Research work too has been especially appreciated this year, by a growing number of Aurovilians of increasingly diverse origins, as well as by the outsiders, very diverse too, that came in particularly great numbers in this Golden Jubilee Year.
Bhaga’s continued participation once a week in the Library work has helped bridge the gap that had existed some years ago between the Library and the Research teams, due to lack of communication and the misunderstandings that are the usual result. More interactions, along with mutual goodwill, have this year created a shared feeling of more cohesion among us, which is a very encouraging sign for our own internal ongoing experiment as the “Centre for Human Unity”.

Conclusion:
We will continue to maintain with great care our books, as they are precious and some of them unique. Quite a number of them have been donated by our regular customers, as well as guests.
And we will continue to also maintain with great care our internal relations within the LOE-CHU, including those Aurovilians who at some point have been members of our overall team, and also the new ones who might like to help. In this year of Auroville’s Golden Jubilee, a need is felt, not only to reprint books published long ago, as still very useful and beautiful, but also to take up again and finally bring to fruition some previous projects that had been met with a very positive response but for various reasons not completed.
A book about the main aspects and results of the LOE-CHU Research is also long overdue. With the help of Paulina, young student just arrived (April 18th) from Germany as an intern at the LOE-CHU Research for the next six months, it will hopefully become possible to materialize such a book, mostly from Bhaga’s ongoing research blog started in 2011 (labofevolution@wordpress.com), and from other relevant documents.
Pitanga Cultural Centre

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 a free service to adults and Children, 6 days a week, that helps people to unfold to their fullest potential especially in terms of their bodies.

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; the following table shows our regular classes and health activities during this past year:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitanga Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Yoga classes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Health treatments</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Iyengar Yoga</td>
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<td>Craniosacral therapy &amp; Osteopathy</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Hatha Vinyasa Yoga</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Psychotherapy and Hypnosis</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Hatha yoga</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Journey to the memory of the body</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Yoga Therapy</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Releasing through Awareness</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Pranayama Yoga</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Thai Yoga Massage</td>
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<td>Svastha yoga</td>
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<td>Reflexology</td>
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<td>Hormonal Yoga</td>
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<td>Ayurvedic massage</td>
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<td>Yoga Nidra</td>
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<td>Biodecodage</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Vinyasa flow Yoga</td>
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<td>Naturopathy</td>
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<td><strong>Dance</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Yoga therapy</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Odissi Dance</td>
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<td>Thai Shiatsu massage</td>
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<td><strong>Exercise</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Vedic astrology</td>
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<td>Aviva exercise for women</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Discover energy body</td>
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And this table shows the occasional activities held in 2017-18:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of performance</th>
<th>Artist / Organizer</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26th April 2017</td>
<td>“Face to Face”</td>
<td>Laterna Magica Laura Pok and Nathalie Houtman</td>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
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<tr>
<td>29th April 2017</td>
<td>An Evening of Classical Guitar</td>
<td>with Ashaman</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 of November 2017</td>
<td>TRIBUTE TO LATIN AMERICA</td>
<td>Jivatman &amp; Susana</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th March 2018</td>
<td>“Birdsongs”</td>
<td>Pondcherry flûte quartet and Duo Laterna Magica</td>
<td>Pondicherry &amp; Belgium</td>
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<tr>
<td>21st March 2018</td>
<td>Piano Concert</td>
<td>with Leonardo De Donno</td>
<td>Italian</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title / description of exhibition</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Origin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr 15th 2017</td>
<td>Muthialpet !</td>
<td>Lisbeth &amp; Ashwin</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 14th 2017</td>
<td>Painting Exhibition</td>
<td>A. Sathya</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 16th 2017</td>
<td>BODIES – Collection of Drawings from CREEVA</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 7th 2017</td>
<td>BODIES – Collection of Drawings from CREEVA</td>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 18th 2017</td>
<td>A photo exhibition on the Land of Temples</td>
<td>Pierre F.</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 9th 2017</td>
<td>Watercolour Painting Exhibition</td>
<td>A. Sathya</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 30th 2017</td>
<td>Painting exhibition</td>
<td>Iono</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 20th 2018</td>
<td>Painting exhibition</td>
<td>Monique Patenaude</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 9th 2018</td>
<td>“I invite you to the great adventure”</td>
<td>Paulette</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 24th 2018</td>
<td>Kokedera – Moss Temple, Kyoto</td>
<td>Monna</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Origin</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 11th 2017</td>
<td>Kaya Bodha (Body awareness) Workshop</td>
<td>Hans van Baaren</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 8th 2017</td>
<td>Kaya Bodha (Body awareness) Workshop</td>
<td>Hans van Baaren</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 6th 2017</td>
<td>Iyengar Yoga Workshop on Shavasana</td>
<td>Tatiana</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 7th-10th 2018</td>
<td>Pranayama course</td>
<td>Namrita &amp; Francois</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 7th-10th 2018</td>
<td>Pranayama course</td>
<td>Namrita &amp; Francois</td>
<td>Auroville</td>
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Highlights of the year:

1. Our Iyengar teachers, Tatiana and Angela, 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 and Tatiana offered a number of themed workshop afterwards where students could deepen their practice and an enlarged pranayama class.

2. We saw an increase in Yoga classes this year as compared with last year.

3. In the summer holidays of 2017, we finished extensive improvements to the infrastructure of Pitanga which included store room, paving of walk way, new shelving and sliding door systems in the bathroom and we have repaired two times Aquadine water system. We also termite proofed the entire building.

We keep track of the numbers of Auroville community members and registered guests who availed of the services at Pitanga. We estimate at peak times we have 500 visits per week of people attending activities.

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 SAIER 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.

“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. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use.”

Sri Aurobindo
Sanskrit Research Institute

by Martin Gluckman

Sanskrit Research Institute (SRI) works with the Sanskrit language producing educational tools and materials to further enjoyment, research and study of this language.

Activities of the year:

Pāṇini Research Tool:

We have published the first version of our Pāṇini Research Tool (this tool is a consolidated reference for all the sūtras in Pāṇini’s grammar) which has already received a good response from educators using it. Pāṇini has compiled and standardized Sanskrit grammar and has been a subject of immense wonderment for all scholars who have delved into this subject so much so that A.L. Basham has written: “one of the greatest intellectual achievements of any ancient civilization, and the most detailed and scientific grammar composed before the 19th century in any part of the world”.

It has been a great honour and joy to work with Pāṇini and our attempts in this light have been to bring a complex and magnanimous subject within access of all.

- “Just a note to let you know how much I appreciate the work you’ve put into this. It’s a great tool. I’m sending all of my students here to use it. Many thanks!” (Guy Leavitt, Columbia University)
- “The pāṇini study tool is amazing! I am so glad that someone has taken the time to put these resources together.” (Andrew Ollett, Harvard University)

We will continue to update the tool with further projects as we prepare further data. It can be explored at: [http://sanskritdictionary.com/panini/](http://sanskritdictionary.com/panini/).
Ongoing dictionary works:

Our Sanskrit Dictionary has added a number of new dictionaries and tools under it during the course of the year. It continues to be a popular tool with Sanskrit students around the world: around 50,000 people are using it monthly from more than 150 countries. In total we have had 2.23 million visitors from 209 countries till date (as of 14 May 2018).

During the course of the year we added with kind permission of Dr. Potturu an Āyurvedic Medical Dictionary. This is in alignment with our wish to add subject specific dictionaries to enrich the subjects and data in our dictionary. Currently the dictionary has 931,416 unique Sanskrit words!

We have also added Abhyankar’s most excellent dictionary of Sanskrit Grammar. This is of great use to students of Sanskrit grammar and in particular Pāṇini as Pāṇini has hundreds of technical terms specific to learning Sanskrit grammar.

New reference material works:

We have continued to publish references for students of Sanskrit, most recently adding the Laghusiddhānta Kaumudī and a reference to Vasu’s Aṣṭādhyāyī. Both are for students of Sanskrit grammar and avail an easy digital reference to these key texts.

Launch of the SRI website:

We have happily published our website at https://sri.auroville.org, the website is currently up to date with our completed, ongoing and forthcoming works. It also offers a form for volunteers to apply to volunteer and for general enquiries. A page describes each of our projects and there is a section for video works completed.

Video works:

In November 2017 we were very fortunate to host Dr. Rama Nath Sharma (Professor Emeritus of Sanskrit from the University of Hawaii) for a 5 day seminar on Pāṇini. We have completed the filming and editing of the 5-day lecture series, and published the video on our website.

50th birthday activities:

We gave a lecture on occasion of Auroville’s 50th Birthday, in Savitri Bhavan’s beautiful Sangam Hall, entitled “7 years in the woods of Sanskrit”. The video is currently being edited and will be published shortly.

We also co-organized 5 days of Vedic chanting (Somayāga) coinciding with the 50th birthday in collaboration with the Sri Aurobindo International Foundation, Hyderabad. Our team have videoed during these 5 days and we will produce a short film of this event.

Reflections:

This year we have taken on more volunteers and interns and it has been wonderful to see the impact of working with Sanskrit on our team, all people report a deep sense of peace and purpose working with this beautiful language and its literatures. This is the very same reason we have created this project and it is wonderful to see the appreciation of others.

Conclusion:

Sanskrit is a language close to the heart of Auroville with both Sri Aurobindo and The Mother encouraging the study and sharing of its beauty. From Auroville this is our attempt to share our love for this beautiful subject that is the key to the vast and wonderful literature of India.

We currently have a number of exciting projects under development and look forward to sharing those next year. It has been a great honour and joy to work with Sanskrit.
Savitri Bhavan

Savitri Bhavan has been created as an educational centre dedicated to fostering awareness and understanding of the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which are the underlying foundation of the aims and ideals of Auroville. Its purpose is to gather and create and make available to Aurovilians and members of the interested general public all kinds of materials and activities which will support this awareness and understanding.

Activities of the year:

The regular activities of Savitri Bhavan continued throughout 2017-18, focussing as usual on Sri Aurobindo’s epic Savitri, the lives, work, writings, vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the Aims and Ideals of Auroville, under the categories of Research, Creation and Collection of Learning Materials, and Outreach. Some highlights of the year were:

- **Savitri Study Camps in Tamil, May 13-17 and November 24-26 2017**
  Bhuvana Sudarsen offered two Study Camps in Tamil on the two first cantos of Sri Aurobindo’s epic Savitri – a Legend and a Symbol to 25 participants from Sri Aurobindo Centres in Tamil Nadu.

- **International Yoga Day, June 21 2017**
  At Savitri Bhavan a 3D animation film created by the Sopanam team of Auroville and entitled Introduction to Integral Yoga was shown on the evening of June 20. On the 21st itself a full programme of events took place throughout the day, starting with a session of Sanskrit chanting and followed by a workshop, ‘Introduction to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’ led by Ashesh Joshi. This workshop was accompanied by an exhibition of quotations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Yoga and introduced by the release of a new book by Ashesh Joshi with the same title. The major event of the afternoon was an informal sharing amongst Aurovilians on the topics of The Newness of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga and Auroville and Yoga, accompanied by PowerPoint Presentations prepared by members of the Savitri Bhavan team. In the evening a new film entitled The Yoga of the Earth was shown, consisting of selected recitations and comments by the Mother from the first Canto of Savitri illustrated with paintings by Huta.

- **Visits of Auroville School Children, July 11 and November 7, 2017**
  In preparation for presentations they were planning in honour of Sri Aurobindo’s birthday, a group of children from Deepanam School visited Savitri Bhavan on July 11 to ask questions about Sri Aurobindo’s life and about Savitri. Then on November 7 we had the visit of a class of ten-year olds from Transition. We heard from their teacher afterwards that the children told her they had expected the outing to Savitri Bhavan to be very boring, but it turned out to be their most interesting one so far.

- **The Book of Yoga: talk by Dr. Alok Pandey, August 22 2017**
  As the concluding session of his Study Camp at the Sri Aurobindo Society in Pondicherry on Book Seven of Savitri, The Book of Yoga, Dr. Alok Pandey gave a talk in the Sangam Hall on August 22, 2017. It was well attended by Aurovilians as well as the Camp’s students from all over India.

- **The Life Divine**
  On September 9 2017 a group of about 30 Aurovilians who had been meeting every Thursday to study Sri Aurobindo’s philosophical masterwork The Life Divine reached the end of the book, completing 9-years of regular study begun in December 2008.
- **Inside the World-Stair: February 18, 2018**
  On February 18 2018 the 8th Nadkarni Memorial Lecture, focusing on Book Two of *Savitri*, was given by Mrs. Sonia Dyne, who shared her research into Book Two of *Savitri*.

- **Auroville’s 50th Anniversary** was celebrated by a series of special events at Savitri Bhavan:
  a) **Savitri around the World** project screened February 19-20 2018
     From 6 am on Monday 19 February until 4.30 pm on Tuesday 20 February the *Savitri around the World* complete reading of Sri Aurobindo’s mantric epic was live-streamed around the globe from Savitri Bhavan. 471 readers representing 99 locations in five continents participated in this project which was organised jointly by Auroville International and Savitri Bhavan. In Auroville the event could be viewed on the big screen in the Sangam Hall, while others watched thousands of others followed it on the Internet across the world.

  b) **Visit of the Prime Minister of India, February 25 2018**
     Visiting Auroville to grace Auroville’s 50th Anniversary Celebrations the Honourable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi visited Savitri Bhavan to pay homage to Sri Aurobindo’s statue, where he was welcomed by a group of Aurovilian singers and musicians with a rendering of *Bande Mataram* and was introduced by Dr. Karan Singh to members of the Working Committee, before proceeding next to the Matrimandir and then Bharat Nivas, where he gave an inspiring address.

  c) **Divine Flowers** exhibition February 21-28 2018
     This outstanding collection of live flowers and paintings with the Mother’s Spiritual Significances opened on her Birthday, 21 February and continued until the evening of Auroville’s 50th Anniversary on 28 February. Many visitors from the Ashram and Auroville as well as groups of school children from around the region enjoyed the beautiful displays.

  d) **50 Poems from Auroville**: AVI Book Release February 27 2018
     On the eve of Auroville’s 50th anniversary, as a birthday gift from Auroville International UK, a collection of 50 poems written over the last 50 years by poets connected with Auroville was launched with readings of poems from the book.

  e) **Talk in Italian on Savitri**
     On February 17 2018 Aurovilian Paola de Paolis, the Italian translator of *Savitri*, gave a talk in Italian on her latest book, ‘*Savitri – La scoperta dell’Anima e la vittoria sulla Morte*’ recently published by Editione La Lepre, Roma.

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**Publications:**
Two issues of our English-language journal *Invocation: Study Notes on Savitri* were published in April and November 2017, and two issues of *Prarthana*, its Tamil equivalent, appeared in August 2017 and February 2018. The February issue was a special edition for Auroville’s 50th anniversary containing 16 pages of colour photographs illustrating an article on the history of Savitri Bhavan. In addition to the four journal issues a new book in the *English of Savitri* series was released in August 2017. This third volume of the series is devoted to Book Seven, *The Book of Yoga*.

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**Construction:**
A further highlight of the year was the completion of the extended Picture Gallery, built to provide a permanent home for the full series of 472 *Meditations on Savitri* oil paintings created by the Mother with her disciple Huta as illustrations to selected passages from Sri Aurobindo’s epic, thus fulfilling Huta’s wish, as the Mother had promised her that it would one day be fulfilled. This long-awaited development marked the completion of the Savitri Bhavan campus according to its Master Plan and was made possible by a grant from the Government of India.
Outcomes:
All the Activities mentioned above have contributed to the primary purpose of Savitri Bhavan: spreading awareness and understanding of the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the underlying basis of the aims and ideals of Auroville.

Reflections and Conclusion:
The year was a challenging one in many respects, with the capacities of the team being stretched to the limit. Undoubtedly the most meaningful as well as the most challenging undertaking this year was the Savitri around the World project, proposed by some members of Auroville International France and Netherlands and organised by them jointly with Savitri Bhavan. Getting off to a slow start as the small team of volunteers struggled to find the best way of achieving the aim of a live on-line reading of the whole of Sri Aurobindo’s epic by representatives of as many countries as possible around the globe, once the process was established it elicited enthusiastic support, but still there was a rush to get the final product ready in time for the 50th birthday celebration. One member of the team in particular, Jettie Zwaans of AVI Nederland, was in touch with every one of the individual readers and kept track of who was reading which passage. Many countries were represented by Aurovilians or visiting friends from abroad who took the opportunity of getting their readings recorded at Savitri Bhavan, by a hard-working small team of film-makers and editors. While the eventual 35-hour live-streaming of the event on YouTube was enthusiastically appreciated by viewers all over the world, the organisers could not help noticing many regrettable imperfections which made them feel that the final output was not suitable for permanent posting on the Internet. Instead it was resolved to produce a more perfect version for that purpose. This is expected to be one of the main projects of Savitri Bhavan during 2018-19. At the same time the team will be aiming to continue expanding and improving the programmes on offer, while facing the challenges of the year ahead.

As the concluding session of his Study Camp on Book Seven of Savitri, The Book of Yoga, Dr. Alok Pandey gave a talk in the Sangam Hall on August 22, 2017. It was well attended by Aurovilians as well as the Camp’s students from all over India.
Savitri Hostel

Savitri Hostel has been created entirely with personal donations as a place providing simple temporary living accommodation for individuals connected with the work of Savitri Bhavan. At the discretion of the Management, accommodation may be provided to Aurovilians, registered volunteers, newcomers or intending newcomers who are giving voluntary service at Savitri Bhavan or in other Auroville services, or to guests of Savitri Bhavan, such as invited speakers or researchers. The Hostel consists of 9 rooms providing space for totally 12 occupants at a time. Occupants are expected to be self-supporting during their stay and to make the normal contribution to the Auroville Central Fund.

Activities and Outcomes of the year:
During 2017-18 accommodation was provided for 3 Aurovilians, 10 Newcomers, 8 Volunteers, 13 friends and supporters of Savitri Bhavan and 15 short-term guests with a special interest in the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the activities of Savitri Bhavan and the aims and ideals of Auroville. Stays varied from a few days to several months at a time.

Seven tours organized by Auroville units for 300 architecture students to pass through, studying the architectural details of the building, have also been welcomed.

The team of Aurovilians and employees caring for the Hostel has become like a family in which all continue to grow as individuals (with their respective families) and as a group. Three adult children of long-term staff members were accepted as Aurovilians this year, and while this is not a primary aim of the Hostel, it is a very satisfying development.

Reflections:
Offering and exploring gift economy option of contribution with guests is one notable area of learning and progress. Upon applying for stay, guests are first offered an option to participate in gift economy. This immediately initiates and supports a conscious process of reciprocal identification between the hostel team and the guest in which some of the special values of Auroville can be explained. This is a new process for many, so time and care is taken to explore the spirit of gift economy with each guest in an ongoing way.

Conclusion:
Savitri Hostel is more than a place to stay, and in this light we feel that it is fulfilling its aims and purpose well.
Scholarship and Educational Fund

The Scholarship and Educational Fund (SEF) was established in 2008 to provide financial assistance to Aurovilians who seek educational opportunities outside Auroville, including with exam fees. Financial support is provided in the form of interest-free loans, repayable once the recipient begins earning an income.

Activities of the year:
During the 2017-2018 financial year (April 2017-March 2018), 41 loans were disbursed to 33 Aurovilian applicants.

Outcomes:
32 Aurovilians received financial assistance to pursue educational opportunities. Of these, 27 pursued college or university level studies in India, and 1 travelled abroad to study. 3 additional grant recipients received assistance with exam fees, including 2 for CBSE exams (conducted at New Era Secondary School) and 1 for O or A level exams (conducted at Future School).

Reflections:
This year the SEF drastically cut back on providing financial support for exam fees. As mentioned above, just 3 recipients were helped with their exam fees, whereas many more received help in previous years. This was based on a decision made by the group that was partially based on a shortage of funds. Also, it was felt that high school aged students taking exams were too readily applying to SEF for help with paying fees, possibly also including in cases where assistance was not really needed. One of SEF’s primary criteria for providing support is financial need; support for exam fees was cut back to ensure this criteria was met.

This year the SEF also carried out a survey of early grant recipients (available from the SAIIER office).

Another thrust this year has been a preliminary attempt to seek repayment from past recipients who have completed their studies and are now working. The survey described above was in part an effort to connect with these past recipients and determine ability to begin repayment. All repaid funds will be used to provide financial assistance to future applicants.

Conclusion:
The SEF juggles financial constraints with students’ often very clear financial need and academic merit. This year, in addition to providing financial support as usual, the group also implemented a survey. This was done in an attempt to inform and improve on our process going forward.
Telos

The main purpose of Telos is to establish the idea of Integral Education in the field of higher education based on integral yoga and the vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Activities of the year:
Manoj has conducted the following training sessions:
1. Half-day session for 60 faculty members on Self-awareness and Higher Goals in Education (SAHGE) – Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IITM), 1st June 2017.
3. Self-awareness programme, one-day session for 80 students from IITM, held in Auroville – September 16, 2017.
5. One day faculty training for 40 faculty members at TKM College of Engineering as part of their programme on “Nurturing Quality Teaching in Engineering Education”. Teaching and Learning Centre, Kollam, Kerala – December 20 - 21, 2017.
6. Two sessions in Auroville for 25 students from DJ Academy of Design, Coimbatore – March 7th and 9th.
7. Integral Karma Yoga, one day session for 40 students from IITM on March 11th 2017, in Pondicherry.

Work is progressing to create an online course on integral yoga.

Outcomes:
This year Telos has reached out to around 155 students and 140 faculty members in India. There is a steadily growing interest in bringing self-awareness into education.

Reflections:
The educational landscape is changing rapidly and the demand for more wholesome education is steadily growing. While it is very inspiring for people to visit and have short sessions in Auroville, solutions tailor-made for academic contexts are essential if some considerable impact is to be made. Long term engagement is necessary if learning is to deepen and change lives. Short term programmes can only create a passing excitement.

Conclusion:
It is relatively difficult for the older generation of faculty members to change their way of teaching due to many factors. Whereas, the young faculty members, who are getting into the education sector and aspiring for change, are ready and willing to learn new ways. They are looking for alternatives. So are the students who are increasingly shifting to online courses. The way the new generation is learning is quite different from the pre-internet generation; a combination of offline and online approaches with long term approaches are to be developed.

If integral education is to benefit wider population it is critically important to create online courses with offline practice groups. This is a huge work and requires wider collaboration among integral education fraternity.
Unity Pavilion

The main aim of the Unity Pavilion is the fostering of Human Unity and Unity in Diversity. This is done through a wide range of activities such as cultural events, exhibitions, workshops, community gatherings for participatory community process, value-based research and Peace work.

Activities of the year:

This year our activities and events included:

• The “Art for Land” Exhibition, creating awareness and raising funds towards consolidating the land of Auroville’s Master Plan.

• National and state cultural programs, including Gujarati Gatha and Ukrainian Day.

• Cultural programs connecting Auroville with other organizations related to the work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, including an offering by youth and children of Sri Aurobindo Society, Guargaon for Auroville’s Birthday, as well as several programs and concerts by singers and musicians from Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

• Exhibition on urban planning for the largest “Line of Force”, called “The Line of Goodwill”, incorporating Roger Anger’s drawings on the development of the Galaxy plan and the Lines of Force.

• The “Sourcing Our Oneness” program, basing itself in the Five Dreams of Sri Aurobindo (as broadcast on All India Radio on August 14, 1947), keeps reaching out, opening space for resonance and goodwill between all the organizations and individuals related to and engaged in the realization and manifestation if the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

• The “Honoring Participation” website is now up and expanding with information about people who have and are participating in the building of Auroville. (http://auroville-honouringparticipation.org/)

• “Stewardship for New Emergence” and “Amma-Appa” workshops.

• New Economy Lab: Research on Auroville economy with some breakthrough results creating understanding of the system shifts and how to align with the ideals of the Auroville Charter and “A Dream”.

• CAT’s (Create Auroville Together): RAS community interaction, inviting projects and present movements to share with the larger community.

• Interaction with students and visitors from India and abroad. Unity Pavilion interacts with and gives talks / question-answer sessions with a wide range of visitors to Auroville. Many groups of especially Indian Architecture students contact us, as we have become known to be both knowledgeable and to receive people in a very friendly and welcoming way.

• After several years, we have finally through the 50th Anniversary budget been able to buy and install a simultaneous translation system. Presently the first part is in place, serving two translated languages and 30 receivers. We are looking forward to start using it, and will also go on with the fundraising to be able to increase the number of receivers as well as senders for more languages.

• On 21st September the Unity Pavilion participated in the celebration of the International Day of Peace. As always there were a lot of activities with many participants, including classes from Auroville schools.

• Our yearly Christmas celebration is becoming more and more popular with increasing
attendance. Volunteers join to decorate the place, and children, youth and adults from very diverse background enjoy an afternoon with cutting stars, playing dance games and singing together. Vegan and vegetarian sandwiches, cookies, rice porridge and hot drinks are served to all.

- On the 28th of February, the seven Nakashima Conoid Lounge Chairs were installed around the Peace Table. We had been fundraising for this project for the last three years, and thanks to the Nakashima Peace Foundation, Stichting Aurofonds, Foundation for World Education and a private donor, this completion of the Hall of Peace was made possible.

Outcomes:
One of our main efforts is simply to create Goodwill as an underlying resonance for all work and interaction. We feel that the Auroville community has benefited from our approach and activities, and we trust that we are contributing to building Auroville by creating a space which is not only about doing, but about being.

Reflections:
The contribution and interaction with youth was most meaningful this year. We have now a lot of young people involved in the work, and it is definitely putting things at another pace. But shifting roles is always challenging. How to keep everyone on board while shifting responsibilities? What does our passage through life contribute, and how do we harvest each capacity in a wise way? How do we see to it that all needed work gets done, while also accommodating each one's growth and expression? These are questions we are working on.

Conclusion:
We want to further expand and widen our involvement if the Art for Land program. Materially, the new bathrooms + storage building will be completed this summer, and so there will have to be reorganization of work for maintenance purposes. We need to do fundraising for the caretaker’s unit which is planned on the second floor of the building, so as to complete this work.

With the old storage hut removed, the work will now taken up for the Hall of Peace garden.

We also see that now with the increasing number of events (not only with us, but overall in Auroville), we cannot continue to depend on borrowing equipment from Bharat Nivas and Kalabhum. So to facilitate cultural events we see the need to improve the stage lighting, as well as purchase two amplifiers for instrumental music.

As the work and activities are increasing, a Newcomer, Palma, is joining the management team.
Independent projects

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Aurogames Research, Development, and Implementation

by Paula Caesar

Introduction:

The main purpose of the project was to create activities to support an integral education. People came together and engaged in an activity, alone or cooperatively, in a focused and concentrated manner. Chit-chat, cell phones or other distractions were missing. This guided everyone to connect deep within and with another. The activities help to develop concentration, memory, attention, analytic skills, perseverence, patience, cooperation, imagination, creativity, visual and spatial perception, acuity, orientation, and flexibility.

Description of project:

People came to my house to engage with Aurogame activities once every week. The sessions were planned beforehand depending on previous experience with the materials. One session with 8 new people (5 adults and 3 kids) was set up as an experiment to test a new way of working with the materials and see if different conditions had an effect on ability in a difficult task in the future. Though the outcome was as predicted, it requires further testing with more people.

Currently I am developing a new game; it is challenging and one that creates visual dissonance. Based on feedback after sessions, I have made new cards and continue with more trials. This particular game has been helpful for people to: concentrate with intensity, develop memory, accept mistakes and learn from them.

Outcomes:

From January 2018 until the end of March 2018 I have had 14 game sessions with kids, teens and adults. I have conducted a workshop over three mornings for kids (“Paint and Create”), recorded, edited and posted 18 videos onto YouTube, showing snippets of people engaged in the games. I also recorded an 8 part video series – “The Evolution of an Aurogame”. In this series I share a short history of Auroculture, who originally created the games, as well as the original box she created and how it has evolved into many different activities.

Reflections:

During the past 3 months it has been a joy to witness kids, teens and adults deeply immersed in an activity. There have been moments with many distractions like barking of dogs, construction or other noises, yet the focus remained. As I record parts of the sessions, it amazes me to see the intense concentration, cooperation, synchronicity, and at times perseverance of all the participating people. Even when a number of people worked at the same table, they stay focused on their own progress in their own activity. There was no chatter.

I also learned that adults enjoy these activities and benefit from playing. I want to extend the activities and offer them to older adults to see if they may help maintain cognitive function and engagement.

My biggest challenge has been time and space. Except for the workshop that was offered at White Peacock, all of the sessions have taken place in my home. This limits the number of people that can participate in a session to 8-10. Also with my schedule and that of others, sessions normally happen on Saturday afternoon or Sunday.

I would really like to explore these games with more people.
Conclusion:

I want to continue to offer these games, develop new ones, and learn from sessions with people. Really being present and available for others – to support if necessary – allowed people to develop trust. It helps people to immerse into a game. One of the activities, “Paint and Create”, came into being after listening to feedback from a few children. When they arrived for the workshop they were so excited to actually paint their own game in colours of their choosing. They were awestruck to see that we (adults) had listened to them, took their feedback and manifested their idea!
Development and testing of Auroville-based supplementary materials for standard curricula, more effective sustainability education in schools

by Deoyani Sarkhot

The main purpose of the project was to see how Auroville-based supplementary materials can help in more effective teaching of sustainability principles that will result in better understanding of the principles and the scope of related practices, as well as behaviour changes leading to more sustainable choices. A supplementary objective was to look at methods of evaluation that can help in measuring the effectiveness of the material.

Description of project:
I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for the individuals and schools I worked with this year: Raghu, Siva and Prathap who teach in Isai Ambalam School, Payal who teaches in Udavi School, Mala, Thamilselvy and other teachers in Aikyam School, Mary Kapur who teaches in Transition School, Bridget Horkan and Muthukumari from Thamarai, Isis Roux Pagès from Auroville Earth Institute who developed and shared a great hands-on activity on earth building with us, and Erik Jansegers, a honeybee specialist from AuroOrchard farm, who taught us (students and myself) a lot about bees. I would also like to thank Kavitha and Sanjeev Ranganathan (Isai Ambalam), Sanjeev and Davaselvy (Udavi), and Shankar (Aikyam) for their support. (Feedback from some of these people is included in the Reflections section along with my own reflections.)

I developed various learning-in-action modules during this year, which cover the topics of water, soil, plants and animals and their interactions with human environment. Elements of these activities were implemented through once a week classes in Udavi and Isai Ambalam schools, a module on water conservation in Aikyam School, a module on biochar in Transition School, as well as a class in Thamarai on water conservation and upcycling plastic. Details of these modules in each school are explained below.

Isai Ambalam school
Due to a water problem in Isai Ambalam school, water was the main focus of our activities there.

1. I began with the topic of roof water harvesting, which included measuring the roof water harvesting potential of one of the school buildings; the work of actually building the water conservation measures is going on (and will continue next year) with the help of Prathap and other teachers.

2. I taught the children two songs I wrote on water conservation, one of which they presented in the school performance day. Students also made a map of school campus, which showed all the elements and structures related to water in their school.

3. The next topic was understanding the contours of the land and how to work with them to conserve both soil and water. We used a wooden blackboard support already available in school to make an A frame, which was used to mark contours at the school. Students also learned about contour trenches and bunds and the use of contours for landscaping in general. A visit to Discipline Farm helped them see all these water conservation measures in action.

4. Wick irrigation and upcycling of plastic bottles was the next topic. Students made wick irrigation planters and used them to grow some seedlings for the school garden project they were doing with another teacher, Siva.

5. Students made a composting planter (a local variation of the Tower Garden available
commercially in the U.S.) using a large waste plastic bottle and other simple materials such as wire mesh. We went to the hardware shop together to buy the mesh, etc., which was also an interesting learning experience for the students.

6. I worked with Raghu on the topic of soils as part of his work on teaching students about geographical diversity. As part of this, students visited Earth Institute to learn about using soil as a building material, and Environmental Monitoring Lab (soil testing) to learn about soil and water testing.

7. During the visit to Earth Institute, Isis from Earth Institute conducted a great hands-on learning activity for students on earth building. Even though Isis has now gone back to France, I am hoping that this collaboration with Earth Institute will continue.

Some other topics such as gasifier stove, honey bees, etc. were also introduced briefly, but were not implemented due to time constraints. I am hoping to continue this work next year.

Udavi School

1. In Udavi, I mainly worked with 7th and 10th standard students once a week on various topics related to environmental conservation. The year began with the topic of honeybees and their interconnections with the environment such as pollination, their importance to our food security and future of bee-pollinated wild plants, impact of environmental pollution on honeybees and the need and ways to protect them. This was done by lectures and videos in the classroom, a visit to the natural beekeeping project in AuroOrchard farm, and installation of a beehive in the school with the help of Erik Jansegers.

2. Unfortunately, the beehive in the school was stolen very quickly, so the follow-up observations could not be made. So instead I asked the students to observe honeybees in their surroundings to learn about their behaviour. They were happy to find many hives of stingless bees in the school campus itself and enjoyed observing them. Some of the students also tried making beehives in their homes using cardboard boxes and pipes. Although these beehives didn’t last very long either, I believe it was a good learning experience for them.

3. Upcycling of waste to create various useful objects was done to learn different scientific and conservation principles on topics such as water conservation, energy efficient stoves, etc. The idea was to encourage their creativity and engagement in learning. Some of the things made by the students at home included a water-efficient planter and an airtight jewellery container made out of old plastic bottles, and a gasifier stove made out of old tin cans. One of the 7th standard students, Vishal, entered the stove he made in the Raman Young Scientist Award competition with the help of the STEM Land team.

4. Some other topics included wastewater recycling, building with earth and ferro-cement, climate appropriate architecture, and clean mobility. This was done through lectures in the classroom, videos and a visit to the Centre for Scientific Research (CSR) and Earth Institute.

5. I worked with another teacher, Payal, to teach a short module on soils for 8th standard students with focused on various functions of soil and its importance to nature and humanity. Once again, this was done through lectures, class discussions, videos and a visit to CSR and Earth Institute.

Aikyam School

Aikyam School was doing a special project on water this year, so it dovetailed very nicely with the activities related to water conservation. I shared the writeup of the activity on rainfall measurement with the teachers in Aikyam, and they used different variations of this activity with their classes. I also conducted a module on measuring the roof water harvesting potential of a building with the 8th standard students. The field visit to Discipline Farm focused on various ways of roof water harvesting, ground water harvesting and efficient water management methods such as drip and sprinkler irrigation. The involvement of teachers was excellent, and with their
encouragement, students also made a model of roof water harvesting of a building based on what they learned, as well as many beautiful posters on water conservation.

Transition School and Thamarai

I taught a short module on biochar in Transition School and another short module on wick irrigation and upcycling of plastic bottles in Thamarai. Both sessions were well received. However, the remaining elements of the learning-in-action modules could not be implemented due to various constraints.

Outcomes:

Following the feedback I received on my proposal (1. Greater engagement with students, and 2. Consider how to create the modules in such a way that they will be useful in addressing the issues regardless of which specific syllabus is being followed), I focused on developing activities that could be used for any syllabus and any school, instead of limiting my work to one particular syllabus. I also focused more on actually working with students, as described above.

I also wanted to ensure that these activities could be used even in schools with very limited funding or facilities, which is true for most of the rural schools and many of the urban schools in India. So in addition to following the methodology I developed the year before, the activities chosen also meet the following criteria:

1. Lowest possible cost in terms of money, energy and carbon footprint.
2. Use materials that are easily available in rural schools.
3. Use waste materials when appropriate, and encourage students to look at waste more creatively, as a resource.
4. Simple, and can be used for multiple learning objectives. The subsections in each activity provide opportunities for practicing different mathematical concepts and practical analytical skills for honing their observation skills. Subsections in some activities can also be used as art projects.
5. Help in making the concepts in the textbook relevant to the day-to-day lives of students.
6. Encourage the values of self-empowerment, resilience and joy of creativity.
7. Many of these activities are such that students can use them at home to provide a direct environmental benefit such as water conservation for their families.

Most of the work in designing the activities is now complete. However, due to some family/personal crises, I was not able to write as well as I had hoped for. So while the activities are written, they are not yet in a shape that I could be satisfied with. I am going to have to continue to work on them till I finish the handbook.

Reflections:

Feedback from others:

1. Raghu Prashanth Raja, Isai Ambalam School

We together worked on projects like Tower Garden, rainwater harvesting and geographical diversity projects.

In the Tower Garden project we faced many challenges, from getting the raw materials to designing the product. In every phase of the project from acquiring the materials to design to implementation, the efforts Deoyani has put are really great. Without her interest and energy level, the project could not have been completed.

Even though rainwater harvesting is an old concept, when we started to apply it to our landscape at Isai Ambalam we understood its complexity and the number of factors that are
involved. Deoyani took a lot of efforts with patience in addressing constraints and challenges from different perspectives, and planned the trench carefully with lot of precision.

As part of the geographical diversity project we planned many activities. We visited Auroville Earth Institute and Environmental Monitoring Laboratory. Deoyani helped us in planning, organising and helping students to understand the concepts. I really thank her for her energy, effort and keen interest in helping the children’s learning.

2. Siva, Isai Ambalam School

In our school, a water problem is there. But children wanted to do gardening; they wanted to grow at least one plant on their own. So Deoyani gave the solution called ‘wick irrigation’. She taught them how to do it, and children learnt quickly and they grew many plants which consumed a minimum amount of water.

During the rainy season, we used to have lots of rain but it could not be utilised properly. All the water went to the nearby Alankuppam pond, meanwhile taking all the topsoil of the school. So in order to avoid this Deoyani gave the solution of a trench. In this process she took the children to Discipline Farm to get more ideas and to learn the importance of the trenches. She introduced the A-frame to identify the appropriate place to make trenches.

Deoyani introduced a stove which works with wood. It emits low smoke and the wood will burn completely, so it is a very useful and efficient stove. She demonstrated this to the children and connected this to pollution and global warming. I could see this when they went for the exhibition in a train organised by ISRO, they were able to answer many questions regarding global warming.

Deoyani taught a song about the rain which was written by her. Children loved the song very much, understood the meaning of the song and they performed it at their school performance day. This is the first English song they learnt apart from the rhymes.

To understand about the earth, we went to Auroville Earth Institute which was amazing. Children learnt about what is soil, the types of soil, how to make mud houses, how to make sand bricks, etc. With the reflection of that they made a stair step in school using only sand and mesh, which has good strength and stability.

Deoyani though she taught many things to children, she never behaved like a teacher. She never forced the children to do the project, but the projects have been done. I couldn’t answer the children if she is absent, that much love she showered towards the children.

3. Davaselvy, Udavi School

We at Udavi School greatly appreciate Deoyani’s effort as a teacher here. She puts a great effort in promoting the awareness of conservation on water and soil. In the previous year she has been working with 7th and 10th graders once a week. I have seen the students were eager and expecting their turn. She creates a very good learning atmosphere for the students, and she also uses modern technology while teaching. So it has been a good learning experience for the students.

4. Mary Kapur, Transition School

The students seemed inspired and we have had a preliminary talk with Deoyani about doing this work again with the next year’s eighth grade. The eighth grade students worked on a project on bio-char as part of their Environmental Science unit. It was a great success. The students were inspired by the topic, and Deoyani presented in a really engaging and informative manner. First the students saw a slideshow presentation on bio-char, its benefits, applications and its manufacture. The students were also introduced to the use of bio-char in Auroville and to comparative data on the yields with and without charcoal in some Auroville farms. They also watched a film on the discovery of “Terra Preta” – black earth – which developed from the use of
a form of bio-char in Central Amazonia, built over hundreds of years by the pre-European native Indians.

5. Bridget, Thamarai

Your session on well-being of the environment through mindfulness of waste was important for us. It was wonderful to see how creatively a plastic bottle could be transformed into something purposeful and beautiful; your presentation opened our eyes to the huge array of possibilities from a simple bottle and the realisation that it is a resource and not waste. The children were very enthusiastic, most made planter bottles and the next day brought compost and seeds to plant. One boy told me he has made many more at home.

The most critical part of these activities (in my opinion) is understanding the mechanisms and principles involved. While I was teaching or working with teachers, I could do it using gestures or rudimentary diagrams, etc. I could also tailor the contents to the students' background, school location and resources, and other contextual factors to help them see the connections. However, developing written content for a wider population is in fact a lot more complicated and demanding than I realized. Explaining these things using text and even the schematic diagrams meant a lot of pages that teachers probably won’t have time to read. So I am now considering other ways to convey this information. One of the ways could be use of animated graphics or videos that explain the various principles concisely and visually. I am not quite sure how to go about developing these, but this is something I will be working on next year one way or another.

I also found some other practical constraints that I had not considered before. For example, my initial idea was to install a beehive in the school and have the students observe the growth of the hive throughout the year. Unfortunately the hive was stolen in one week! In case of the beehives made by the students at home, the bees left the hive for reason or another. This made me realize that this would not be a good activity for inclusion in the handbook. Another challenging activity was making the contour trenches. When I started, I thought this was the simplest activity. While it is simple, I saw that doing it with children in a school environment brings a lot more considerations and challenges.

Conclusion:

I enjoyed developing and implementing these activities. I realized that actual engagement with students and teachers on these conservation related topics (co-teaching) is something I cherish even more than developing these activities. So I am hoping to continue and expand this kind of work. I would like to thank the SAIIEER Board for their feedback on my proposal, which encouraged me to do this.
“Seeds of the Sacred Groves”: Presentation at the Madras University International Conference

by Bogi

The purpose of the project was to discover and establish connections between Auroville activities and the academic world. The Hungarian Pavilion got connected to Mr. Ervin László in the beginning of 2017, and the meetings with him and his associates have inspired us to work with academics and to start to share about Auroville with the academics. Cooperation was initiated with the Szent István University of Hungary, and Bogi was requested to prepare various researches for national and international academic presentations. As part of this work the Madras Conference seemed to be a valuable opportunity to participate.

Description of project:
Bogi participated in the conference “TECHNOLOGY, RELIGION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY, An Exploration from Comparative Multi-Polar Perspective”, which took place on December 13-14, 2017, in Chennai. She made a presentation named “Seeds of the Sacred Groves: Auroville’s landscape rehabilitation”. The presentation was 20 minutes long, and there was also an opportunity for questions and answers.

The interest on the work of Auroville was genuine among the academics. Good connection was established, and since then members of the Madras University have visited Auroville. Bogi had also received some pamphlets and materials from Auroville Outreach Media, 50th Anniversary Team, and she distributed these at the conference.

Reflections:
It was interesting to experience the difference between the Indian and the international academic conferences. It was noticed that participants of such conferences are not only well informed, but also often people who interact with various decision-making persons and bodies.

Conclusion:
The Hungarian Pavilion plans to continue to explore further the options for collaboration with the Indian and international universities and researchers.

Seeds of the Sacred Groves:
Auroville’s landscape rehabilitation

Boglárka Nagy,
Hungarian Pavilion of Auroville, Szent István University of Hungary

Over the past decades tremendous development happened in science and technology. This was originally intended to help humanity create the utopian future where peace and harmony flourish. Since the Industrial Revolution through the steps of consumerism our civilization has been heading towards alienation that maintains a false image of self and reality. Destruction of nature,
pollution of the environment, wars, famine, poverty and lack of safe water characterize a good part of the world today.

Governments, citizens and organizations from all over the world joined forces and assisted the foundation of Auroville in 1968 on a barren plateau of Tamil Nadu, South India. Auroville aims to find solutions to the problems of our age, by integrating ecology, spirituality, community movement, science and modern technology. In the past decades among the various achievements one of the most outstanding is the landscape rehabilitation.

People from around the world have come forward to build Auroville, “the city the Earth needs”, answering the call of the Mother, head of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The heavily eroded land was covered with red earth, which became slippery mud during monsoon and fine dust in the dry season. To create the basic living conditions, shade, water and vegetation, suggestions were asked from experts including botanists. It was advised to seek the indigenous plants that grow well in the local conditions.

By this time most of India had been deforested, only the Sacred Groves, religious sites where once gods were seen among the trees, preserved small residual forests through strict religious and cultural taboos. The Aurovilians visited various Sacred Groves, dispersed throughout the Coromandel coast, and collected seeds and shoots. They set up nurseries and botanical gardens, and soon millions of trees, bushes and creepers have been planted, so the very rare TDEF (Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest) landscape has been gradually redeveloped. Unfortunately over the past few decades the number of Sacred Groves has dropped dramatically due to the change of cultural and religious life. Many of them were wiped out to create new cultivation areas or other private developments. Knowing this, the reforestation work that was done in the past 50 years is even more important. It has not only contributed 4% to the total area of TDEF forest, but also saved the offspring of the once worshipped sacred trees.

The paper will present the landscaping work in the light of integral yoga. The tremendous landscape rehabilitation work was often discouraging and challenging. Science and technology was a support, but Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga was the guide through all the ups and downs. ...
Survey of post-Tsunami Eco-Restoration efforts by Auroville in three villages along the coast

by Nina Sengupta

This project follows up on eco-restoration efforts undertaken after the Tsunami of 12 years ago. Nina as part of an Auroville Coastal-Area Development Council (ACDC) project had initiated planting of trees in strips along the coast to create a thin protective tree-line which was essentially a mix of diverse species of both indigenous and exotics species. In that it was an unique effort since typically coastal (non-mangrove) planting involves planting only a single or a few primarily exotic species.

This project measured the survivorship of the trees by sampling 1% of the planted area in three villages along the coast: Anumanthai, Chettinagar, and Nochikuppam.

Description of project:

This project initiated under the Auroville Coastal Area Development Center – post-Tsunami some 12 years back was the ONLY example in the whole of Coromandel coast that had attempted to use a multi-species planting in the coast line in the post Tsunami period. This is a unique situation where a mixed plantation of Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest (TDEF), non-TDEF, and exotics were introduced in hostile barren coastline that survived now more than a decade and have since been subjected to two additional calamities (the deluge some years back and the recent drought). The effect of this on the plantation needs to be documented and shared with the scientific community for understanding and future replication.

The proposed survey was conducted in December 2017 by Nina Sengupta, Santo and a group of volunteers over a period of two weeks.

Outcomes:

It was immensely rewarding to find all three planting areas intact and thriving. It is currently a treasure trove of information of which plants ultimately survived and/or flourished once life-support system in form of weekly-watering stopped a couple of years after planting.

Conclusion:

The project will benefit any individual or group interested in creating a green line of mixed species along the Coromandel Coast, reintroducing slowly some of the indigenous tree species that once existed on the coastline beyond the mangrove areas. As proposed the results need to be shared with the greater scientific community in form a formal poster presentation in a major scientific event.

Please find below a typical panoramic view of one of the three plantations: to note the coastline was devoid of any trees or natural vegetation seen in front when the project was initiated.
Arjuna Archery

The Archery Program was started in 2014 by Vladimir at the request of a number of Auroville youth.

With over 20 years of coaching experience Vladimir hoped that this project could be step in teaching not only the sport of archery to the youth of Auroville, but also a centered calmness and awareness of one's actions that the student could in turn take manifest into their own life.

Description of project:
Over the last 4 years of the Program there has been a continuous flow of support from in and outside of Auroville. This support has allowed for the purchasing of bows, arrows, targets, and other extremely essential materials that have allowed us to grow the number of students and continue with the upkeep of materials. There has been a storage space built for all the equipment, and a 70 metre shooting range put in at the Dehashakti sports ground.

Outcomes:
Our students have been Bronze, Silver, and Gold medalist in the last 2 state competitions in Pondicherry (to the great chagrin of its organizers) and seeing this growth and development of each student as they progress and succeed in their practice has been an extremely rewarding part of this project.
The 5th edition of the Auroville Film Festival (AVFF) was conducted from December 16-23, 2017. We screened films in four categories, meanwhile hosting performances and art exhibitions (in collaboration with the first Auroville Food Festival) in the Town Hall area.

Description of project:
The Auroville Film Festival is an activity of MMC/CP (Multimedia Centre/Cinema Paradiso), a city service. The team for AVFF ’17 was Tlaloc, Tom, Marco, Christoph, Sasikant, Krishna, Jurriaan, Umberto, Marie-Pierre, Magali, Nilen, Laxmanan, Aashay and others. Our collaborators were Anveshan (Aneeta Pathak) who organised the Auroville Food Festival in conjunction with us, and Centre d’Art Citadines who organised an exhibition in conjunction with us.

The film festival took place over 7 days in 4 screening venues. Music (and other) performances were held every evening. In conjunction with the festival were an exhibition of paintings by Dominique Jacques; a poster exhibition of the films; art installations; discussions; Kino Kabaret; and the opening of the AVFF carbon neutral fund.

Our supporters/funders/partners were ACUR (Town Hall) Management, SAIIER, Foundation for World Education, the Archives building team, Auroville Radio, Auroville Artists Group, Auroville Botanical Gardens, Miniature, Krishna McKenzie, Right Path Café, Solitude Farm, Well Café, Roma’s Kitchen, Centre d’Art Citadines, Autopilot, Meltin’ Spot, Sadhana Forest, Tanto Pizzeria, Naturellement, brainfever media productions, Auroville Outreach Media, British Consul Chennai, Kirti Film Club New Delhi, Green Moves, AVI Germany, Neem Tree Restaurant, Pokkisham Antique Jewelry, and all the people who donated through our crowd funding effort.

Outcomes:
• 274 films from 40 countries were screened benefiting audiences (Aurovilians and others) and benefiting the reputation/image of Auroville.
• A Kino Kabaret (making films in 50 hours) benefited participants and engaged Auroville in the world Kino movement.
• 149 films were screened in the category of ‘films that develop the theme of human unity’, benefiting audiences and Auroville by engaging the world in our research on human unity and fostering a deeper understanding of the aspirations of Auroville.
• 125 films made by Aurovilians, by students of Auroville, and about Auroville were screened, benefiting audiences and the community by engaging us with our stories, our journey, our challenges, and our image in the world. This created links of understanding between individuals and activities in Auroville.
• 3 non-Aurovilian judges were invited, benefiting Auroville with their professional expertise and creating links of goodwill. One of the judges has applied to become a Newcomer.
• Moderated discussions with 9 directors of films benefited audiences by turning film-viewing from a passive activity into an intimate dialogue between artist and audience. This also created links of goodwill with Auroville.
• 10% (Rs. 7,000) of the money raised through our crowd-funding campaign went towards the planting of trees in Auroville, benefiting Auroville and the world.
• Sadhana Forest planted 100 trees in support of our carbon neutral fund, benefiting Auroville and the world.
• The first Auroville Food Festival was hosted, with food from North and South India, vegan food, Mediterranean food, raw food, African food, Asian food, and European food, benefiting visitors and Aurovilians and enhancing the joy of community life in Auroville.
• 4 art installations – by Ok, Marco, Orly, Richa & Rrivu – benefited visitors to the venue throughout the week and added to the rich cultural texture of Auroville.
• 7 evenings of performances benefited visitors to the venue and brought joy to the community.
• An exhibition of posters for the films made in Auroville was created, benefiting filmmakers and audiences alike as well as informing and exciting visitors to the Town Hall during the week.
• The festival brought the residents of Auroville together, an occasion creating a sense of community and belonging.
• An exciting festival ambience was created, making Auroville a culturally richer place to live, celebrating diversity and fostering a vibrant community life.

Reflections:
Meaningful for us was encouraging the residents to take part in making and watching each other’s films. We are inspired to give a venue to children and young people to express themselves. Through the festival we work to create a more vibrant community life, celebrating diversity and generating discussion on human unity.
The most challenging aspect was raising money. We learned that we need to put in a separate team for crowd-funding.
Our experience this year showed us that we are ready to put in place more stringent values in selecting films for the category ‘films that develop the theme of human unity’. In future we will also limit the hours of films and the number of venues. Besides the external selection panels we set in place, we will have an additional internal panel to do a final selection of the best films.

Conclusion:
Work has already started on the selection of the films for the next edition and, as I type this, a film has just been downloaded and is copying to the computer. The first batch of films will be handed over to the first selection panel in the beginning of next week (May 2018)! We are lucky in finding a motivated leader who is applying to become a Newcomer and is fantastic in finding films and getting them.
Auroville Tinkering School

The Tinkering School at Udavi School has the aim to enhance learning in maths, science and logical thinking. With minimum guidance, children choose to make things according to their interest. The Tinkering Studio has grown into a dedicated space where children can conceptualize projects and carry out science experiments, using the model kits and materials that we provide.

It is remarkable to see the children’s interest, attention and power of concentration develop during these projects. The activities at the Tinkering Studio are mostly chosen by the students, although sometimes teachers guide individuals and work in small groups. Many students prefer to work alone and this has been encouraged too.

Description of project:
Students from Udavi and Deepanam schools experienced another successful year at the Tinkering School making various science projects and games. This year volunteers were also present with the children to provide minimum guidance during their tinkering activities. This proved helpful for the students when handling tools and unfamiliar materials. The space in which the students are engaged in tinkering creates an atmosphere of joy for learning and doing.

Over the past two years, with the financial assistance of SAILER, the Tinkering School has improved and expanded in many areas including:

1. The purchase of materials essential to the success of the program. The physical space of the studio is now more organised, with mini tools and science equipment enabling a rich variety of experimental work.
2. An outdoor space has been built to accommodate more students into the future.

Students from Grades 7, 8 and 9 used the lab twice a week as their chosen optional activity. Various resources, materials and equipment are made available for them to work with. Some resources come with instructions that the students need to read first: science kits, soldering irons, connecting switches. Wood in a variety of sizes and shapes is available to inspire a variety of responses (animals, boats). One student happily explored the inner workings of a DVD player for two days. He harvested a few motors from it and used them in the construction of a toy car.

During the year, two Grade 7 students who wanted to create animal shapes using available materials, finally made a horse. A Grade 6 student was inspired by seeing this work and wished to create something similar. Finally he decided to make other animals using similar materials. It was heartening to see how learning took place in an inspirational and sharing environment.

Two more students from Grade 7 wanted to make an “air cooler”. After watching a video of the project they made a list of required gadgets and devices (table fan, 12v water pump, copper tube, 12v adopter, water tank, switches, socket pin, wire, etc). When everything was in place, both of them started to assemble the cooler as they wanted to, adapting ideas from the video to suit their own purpose. After 2 days of improvisation, replacement and substitution they had successfully built their own air cooler.

Some 6th standard students took on a 3-week project working with simple circuits as part of their science program. They began by studying the functions of some circuit kits which had been purchased for the purpose. After gaining this understanding, this study led on to each student making a model of a different object using the same principle of simple circuits: lamp, buzzer, decorative light and bell. All the projects were displayed during the Open House at Udavi School. Sundar of STEM Land has been using the Tinkering Studio to carry out his lessons with 5th and 6th graders in the primary section of Udavi. A short report from him continues as follows.
1. **Building an Infinity Cube with the 6th graders.** Along with the 6th graders from Udavi school, the children wanted to build something as a model for their Open House. Then I remembered a lesson of paper folding introduced by Ravi in Isai Ambalam school a few weeks before, and one thing that really amazed me was an infinity cube he had built. This idea came to me and along with the children it was decided to convert their cubes to an infinity cube. The children started folding and cutting to get the job done. After a few sessions the infinity cubes were ready as they wanted to exhibit them during the Open House. It was a very good experience altogether.

2. **Building of name board with SSDs (seven segment display).** The idea of a name board for the class came to the mind of a few children in grade 6. In order to get this project completed, interested students were guided on the workings of a multi-meter, to check for the connections in the bread board and to test the SSD’s. Once the multi-meters were functional, we started to hack and learn the connections in the bread board by testing for connectivity. Then each child was given a CA (common anode) SSD and asked to bias them to find out the corresponding light settings for each segment. With the available information they gathered they begun to build the name boards.

**Reflections:**

The one thing that always stands out during the tinkering activities is the focused and fully engaged energy of the children, each absorbed to their highest capacity. The children were always ready to come to the studio at any time of the day, ready to engage with ideas. Perhaps the most important educational outcome that has been learned from working in the Tinkering Studio is how beneficial this hands-on approach is to the development of the whole child and how the inclusion of such a program into the whole school curriculum would be highly effective.

The students were engaged through many levels of learning: the development of gross and fine motor skills, the development of imaginative and inquiring minds, solution-seeking and creative thinking, investigative and problem-based learning, the development of questioning minds, being able to collect and collate data, being able to clarify and refine problems and to work independently and collaboratively. This approach to learning serves every child well, for each child has the capacity to work at their own level and to drive their own learning and development to the best of their capability. There are no rights and wrongs but rather a rich journey of learning.

Last year it was quite challenging to find someone with the teaching qualities prepared to commit to the rigors of the program. It was learnt that a person not only has to be committed, but also, like the students, open minded.

**Conclusion:**

We would like to see Tinkering Schools established in such a way so that each and every child has a chance to experience the beauty of diverse and open learning and realise its benefits for the future.

We would like to see within three years every school in and around Auroville establish a tinkering studio offering activities which will enable students to develop the life-long learning skills as promoted through this hands-on approach. We are already in touch with Deepanam and Aikiyam Schools with a proposal for tinkering projects starting from July 2018.

Finally, we would like to thank you very much for supporting the project and we look forward to many more successful years.
Awareness Through the Body

by Aloka

Awareness Through the Body is a comprehensive curriculum of activities and exercises that aims to raise awareness and enable both children and adults to become conscious of their own perceptions and abilities, so that they may become more self-aware, self-directed individuals.

By listening to the language of the body (sensations), the practitioner of ATB gets tools that will help her to expand the consciousness, explore the different parts of the being (mind, vital being, emotions, physical body and energetic body), discover the inner self, and eventually enter in contact with the psychic being (soul). By refining and internalising the senses we can become more aware of our own perceptions. When we use the senses in a more complete way, free from judgement and preconceived ideas, we are more able to better manage our mind and emotions, and thus determine how to steer our own life.

2017-18 program:

As in the past years, I have facilitated two regular weekly ATB sessions for adults, from August 2017 to January 2018: Yoga Nidra on Wednesdays and ATB explorations on Thursdays. Every year at the beginning of February I start with the preparations for the ATB intensive that occurs here in Auroville during the Auroville week, and later on in March I begin to prepare the materials and content for the ATB workshops that take place in Europe from April to the end of June. Along the year I did several ATB workshops with different groups.

Yoga Nidra

The Yoga Nidra sessions are open to anyone interested: Aurovilians, Newcomers, volunteers and visitors. Surprisingly this year there has been every Wednesday an attendance of 20 to 24 people.

The Yoga Nidra sessions offer to the receiver the opportunity to take a sensory stroll inside their body with their consciousness, sensing and experiencing the body from within. Once the participant reaches an intimate connection with his/her body, s/he is guided, through breath and visualisation, towards an expansion of consciousness and an awareness of her/his whole being which brings about a change of level of consciousness.

The focus of most of the sessions of this year has been to become aware of, sense and explore the subtle physical body.

* Sri Aurobindo refers to this part of the being using several names: ‘subtle physical body’, ‘nervous envelope’, ‘environmental consciousness’... depending on which part of the being he is linking it with. The following quotes from Letters on Yoga by Sri Aurobindo are just to illustrate which part of the being we were attempting to discover and explore:

“But if we develop the inward physical consciousness, we become aware of a subtle environmental physical atmosphere and can feel the forces of illness coming towards us through it....”

“We sense too around us a vital physical or nervous envelope which radiates from the body and protects it, and we can feel the adverse forces trying to break through it and can interfere, stop them or reinforce the nervous envelope. Or we can feel the symptoms of illness, fever or cold for instance, in the subtle physical sheath before they are manifest in the gross body and destroy them there, preventing them from manifesting in the body.”

“There is a subtle physical also with a subtler consciousness in it....”

“There is what is called the nervous envelope surrounding the body....”

“But as the subtle body penetrates and is interfused with the gross body, there is a certain correspondence between these chakras and certain centres in the physical proper.”
exploration of this same part of the being. It has been interesting to notice that approaching this part of the being through Yoga Nidra has given a different result. Because of the immobility of the body during Yoga Nidra it is easier to interiorise the consciousness, and the person can enter deeper into himself. Because the brain frequency goes into alpha wave, one becomes more open, more receptive. The intention continues to be to find ways to create a conscious bridge between the inner being (a state of being where we can sense and experience an expansion of consciousness that reveals the inner Presence), and the outer being or surface consciousness (the state of being with which we habitually function).

My idea is that if such a bridge could be rendered permanent and stable, our inner Presence, our psychic being, would be able to become more frontal and all our outer actions, outer life, our day-to-day life would change, becoming much more harmonious, compassionate and, above all, conscious.

**ATB explorations**

The Thursday group is composed of 24 people. The whole year was mainly dedicated to different explorations of the breath. The participants could observe that working with breath in one way or in another produces a very different effect in the being.

The most outstanding of the explorations of this year were 1) the practice of the *Prana Mudra* and 2) a session on Form where we explored with the body the twelve qualities of Mother’s symbol. These sessions are described below.

1) **Prana Mudra**

*Prana Mudra* is a special pranayama exercise which combines movements of the arms and hands with the breath.

It is composed of six stages. Five of them take place during the inhalation: Retention on void, Diaphragmatic stage, the “Rib” stage, the “Clavicle” stage, and the Retention with the lungs filled with air. The sixth stage happens during the exhalation. During the inhalation the arms travel in a continuous gradual movement in front of the body, passing stage after stage from the abdomen up to the head where they open sideways and up when they are in line with the head. After, during the exhalation, they come back down, slowly, to the front of the abdomen.

Prana Mudra is a valuable breathing exercise, known for its numerous benefits. This exercise enhances the capacity of awareness and control of the subtle energies. This type of breathing, associated with the magnetic force irradiating from the fingers generates an unusual state, characterized at the same time by an effervescent dynamism and an inner state of focus, and the balance of these two apparently contradicting tendencies leads to the desire to interiorize.

Due to the focus in the chest area, a powerful process occurs which awakens the consciousness and opens the possibility of experiencing our divine inner Presence.

2) **The Twelve Qualities**

The work with Form allows us to express with our body a feeling, or a mood or a quality, but it can go also the other way round. We might take a shape with our body that calls and emotion, a mood or a quality. In the following exploration we combined both types of work.

The session was divided into two parts: in the first the participants were working individually, and during the second part they worked together as a group.

We began the session by each participant taking, without looking, from a bag, a card with on it the name of one of the twelve qualities. Then, they looked at it reading the name and replacing the card back in the bag, so every time the bag was offered to a new participant all the twelve qualities were inside. I asked them to remember which quality had come to them.
When everybody had taken a card they settled on the ground, and after a short concentration I asked them to lie down. Next I asked: how are you feeling at this moment? And after some moments I invited them to take with their body the shape that would express how they were feeling. After a moment where they were immobile maintaining that shape, I asked them to go back to a neutral position lying on the ground again.

Now I began to announce each quality, one by one. With each card I was inviting the participants first to think of the quality, then feel it, remembering the emotion they experienced whenever they had come across this quality. Next I asked them to observe the energy that reflecting on this quality was eliciting, and finally I asked them to allow the body to take the shape that would express that quality. I proposed to them to stay in the shape for a while, adjusting it if necessary, till they felt that they were truly expressing with their body the quality mentioned. At that moment they stopped moving to breathe and absorb the quality in their being. This was done for each one of the qualities.

When the participants had gone through all the qualities, I asked them to remember which quality they had taken out from the bag at the beginning of the session. I told them: “Now I am going to announce the qualities again one by one. When I mention the quality that came to you at the beginning of the session, you come to the centre of the room and form a group shape where all the qualities will be present.” We concluded the work with a concentration when the whole group was there, united by Mother’s symbol.

YouthLink

At the beginning of December, YouthLink contacted me asking me to conduct an ATB session twice a week for a period of 6 weeks. These sessions were very rewarding both for the 12 young women and men who were participating and for myself. Their interest and commitment were very inspiring, and through these sessions a very strong bond was created between all of us.

Newcomers and volunteers

Along the months from August to March, the Aspiration program offers at regular intervals a week of introduction to Auroville. ATB is part of the program, and I am asked to offer mini-workshops to the Newcomers. This year they have introduced another programme, “Yucca”. This is an informative program for people who are thinking of becoming Newcomers. It is offered so the people attending can discover Auroville before entering in the Newcomer process. ATB is part of this programme too. So once more at regular intervals I am being asked to offer similar mini-workshops to, though shorter. And finally I am requested, also at regular intervals, to do the same for the Auroville volunteers program.

The mini-workshops for Newcomers are one-and-a-half hour sessions divided in two parts. During the first part I explain briefly how ATB originated here in Auroville and introduce what is ATB about, giving special emphasis to one basis of ATB: the different parts of the being as seen by Sri Aurobindo and the attitude of the inner witness. The second part is experiential: in it we explore how attention feels in the body and through the body, so the participants can experience that attention is more than a name: it entails a sensation. They can experience also that different ways of using the attention bring different sensations. Through very simple exercises the participants can sense and observe the different parts of their being, noticing how each one of these feels, and how they interact with each other. They become sensorially aware of how working on one of these parts has an effect on all the others. The exploration allows them to observe what is particular, in terms of sensations and perceptions, to each one of these parts when the consciousness dwells in them. After the exploration of each part, we conclude with a short guided relaxation where, by going deep within themselves, the participants can become aware of the inner Presence within.
ATB throughout Auroville:

About 290 children, 150 adult Aurovilians, and 60 children from the Outreach schools have been working regularly this year with ATB, attending weekly classes in one of the following groups:

- **Centre Field Kindergarten**: classes conducted by Natascha, Lison and Francesco
- **Nandanam Kindergarten**: classes conducted by Natascha, Lison and Francesco
- **Transition School**: first four grades, classes conducted by Patrizia and Francesco
- **Transition School**: last four grades, classes conducted by Joan
- **Deepanam School**: two groups, one guided by Rosa and one by Patrizia
- **Udavi School**: classes conducted by Suzie
- **New Creation**: classes guided by Sathyavani
- **TLC**: classes guided by Tamar and Aran
- **Last School**: classes conducted by Rosa

**Adult classes** conducted by Joan, Amir, Rosa, Stefania, Patrizia and myself

Several workshops on the different modules of ATB training are also offered regularly by Amir and Tamar or Amir and Aran.

ATB Intensive workshops:

Starting in September 2016, due to the demand from people, we started to add another Auroville ATB Intensive in the year. The enrolment lists for the ATB Intensive of February had grown so full that many people could not attend the workshops, and offering two intensives per year allows more people the possibility to experience ATB. The September workshop has the same contents of the one of that follows in February.

So in September 2017, Francesco and myself offered the basic intensive workshop to a group of Aurovilians, Newcomers and visitors. This workshop and the one on February 2018 are composed of ATB 1, ATB 2, Basic tools of ATB and 3 modules. The workshop lasted for 9 days. In February, Joan and myself offered again the same workshop to 24 persons (11 Aurovilians and 13 visitors from different countries). The workshops have been again an enriching experience that has fostered in the participants, as well as in us, inner centring and growth.

Every year in April I travel abroad to offer ATB workshops:

- At the beginning of April ‘18 I will facilitate in France an intensive of 9 days: ATB 1, Basic tools of ATB, and ATB 4.
- At the end of April ‘18 till mid May with Joan, we will offer in Spain an intensive of 9 days composed of ATB 1, Basic tools, ATB 2, and ATB 3.
- By the end of May in Ireland I will offer ATB 4.

ATB behind the scenes:

Since three years with Joan we are in the process of writing a book on the work of ATB at kindergarten age. In this book we expound the principles and objectives we have when working with small children, and offer the description of a wide variety of the exercises we have been doing there.

In the book we also approach how to build up on these basic exercises to get to the exercises that will be done later in the middle school. This will help the people who already have the book *Awareness Through the Body* to have a guidance on how to introduce ATB to a beginner independently of the age.

I have continued maintaining and updating the four ATB websites (English, Spanish, French, Italian). I also take care of the correspondence with practitioners abroad or people interested in ATB who want to participate in ATB workshops.
BHU / EARTH performances

The purpose of this project was to perform our show BHU/EARTH on February 8th, 9th & 10th, 2018 in Sri Aurobindo Auditorium, Bharat Nivas for the Auroville community and the surroundings. Our team includes 7 people: 6 dancers/actors and Philippe as director.

Outcomes:

a) Big success: We welcomed more than 2000 people on 3 evenings. The Auroville community and people from the surrounding could appreciate a beautiful performance of high quality free of charge.

b) Artistically and technically, it was wonderful. The level of the performance was really professional. We created an indoor version with wonderful scenography, light and sound. These benefited the actors who could get an experience of performing in a professional setting.

c) We revived and connected the audience to one of the lost form of art (Kalaripayattu).

d) A booklet was created to share the performance to a wider audience.

e) Some students of Last School and Future School collaborated with us for shooting and editing a video, making a trailer and taking photos.

f) We could also collaborate with a number of Auroville units: Auroville Radio TV, Auroville Art Service, Svaram, French Pavilion, and Lila-CIRHU.

g) Inspired by Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga and Yoga of Earth, these performances were an opportunity to transmit a message about the need of reconnection with Nature and Mother Earth.

h) The show brought awareness of high level physical education.

Reflections:

After 16 months of training, rehearsals and outdoor performances, it was very nice to create an indoor version of the show in a very professional theatre with professional equipment and a team of creative and skilled technicians. We were very happy to perform for the Auroville community with a full venue and to receive such a positive feedback from the audience.

For our performers, it was a necessary professional experience that helps them grow by understanding their responsibility as actors, dancers, musicians and as human beings.

For the audience, it was a real poetic journey of reconnection with Mother Earth and with the most ancient martial art, Kalaripayattu, in a contemporary way.

On stage, we told the story of a man full of anger who reconnected with himself, with his true nature and with Nature. Each spectator could identify himself with the story.

Challenges were of a technical nature: we had many power cuts and that affected the light setting and the planning of the rehearsals. Thanks to the professionalism and commitment of the technical team, everything went well.

Conclusion:

After these successful performances in Bharat Nivas auditorium, we are now ready to take this show born in Auroville in tour first in India then on an international tour.

We would like to develop a stronger relationship and partnership with SAI IER, as our work is increasingly oriented towards education and transmission.
Cooking program

by Laurence

This program gives Auroville youth an introduction to multicultural cuisine. It introduces students to major different cooking styles and dietary approaches. It also trains the students in basic kitchen technical skills and approaches to kitchen management. The course also stages some major catering events prepared by them.

The aim of this program is to expose youths to a wide range of different approaches so they can create their own cooking style and diet, and at the same time be able to work in any middle-range collective or restaurant kitchen as a commis.

Outcomes:

This year, 16 students initially benefited from the program spread in 2 classes.

Last year, some of the students who had registered for the program were interested in the job of cook. Out of 10, three of them are in a cooking school this year and two are working in the cooking business.

This year, the students who registered are almost all in Future School, 3rd or 4th year. They are interested in cooking as a hobby. We had to adapt the classes and the content of the teachings to something lighter than last year.

At the end of the year, 4 students remain. The others were lost on the way.

Reflections and future direction:

What we learned is that the program has to adapt according to the profile of students that register. And it is what we did this year. We focused on practise because we met no interest from the students in going further.

For the future, we are willing to try another type of approach for the students still studying, more integral. We want to make a program of one trimester (2 to 3 afternoons a week) where the students learn about food: multicuisine cooking practise, learning the economics of cooking (via the introduction to managing a restaurant in Auroville and PTDC), the ecology of it (through introduction to organic farming in AuroOrchard for example), sociology, ATB sessions on sensing food, Ayurveda and nutrition basics. We would run 3 sessions a year.

If at the end of a session, some students want to dive in deeper, we will organise a few to few program for them.

We still have to find a way of making the students stand for their initial committment.
This aim of the project “Divine Flowers” was to create a learning environment for children, Aurovilians and visitors and to connect with flowers in a deeper way. This was an innovative educational project whereby through contact with real flowers and photos/paintings, common names and messages by The Mother, many parts of our being got stimulated and became conscious of them on a subtle plane. To impact all the parts of the being: the presence of flowers in the Physical; color, shape, fragrance, beauty in the Vital; messages and significances in the Mental; and a beautiful atmosphere in the Psychic was one of the aims of this exhibition. In other words – Education in an integral way.

Since Mother took her precious time to give these significances, they have a spiritual meaning for all of us. So through this exhibition, we, in Auroville, the children and the many visitors who were here at that time, got the space and time to get in touch with this aspect of their heart space. It was an effort to create beautiful flower arrangements, involving the community to co-create a psychic presence in the atmosphere.

Description of project:

The exhibition started on the Mother’s birthday, 21st February 2018 and continued for 8 days, culminating on the 50th Birth Anniversary of Auroville on 28th February. About 70 different fresh flowers, with their common names and the significance given by the Mother, were arranged artistically in a variety of vases in the Square Hall of Savitri Bhavan. Paintings of eighteen of them were also displayed along with the flowers. Three different symbols (that of the Mother, Auroville and Sri Aurobindo) were made in flower arrangements in the centre of the room.

Single large exquisite Ikebana flower arrangements graced the lobby in front of the Square Hall. The colonnade had wonderful orchids with photographs of flowers. Around 400 flowers and green plants in pots were arranged from the main entrance up to the gate of the lobby, including the amphitheatre. General messages on flowers from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were put up at various places throughout the exhibition.

Special spots (two) were used to place the different varieties of the Auroville flower, Hibiscus, and various colours of roses. These too had the texts of Mother’s significance.

Flowers were collected every day in and around Auroville and from Ashram Gardens, and the pots were watered and re-arranged every day.

Meditation with Mother’s music, led by Shraddhavan and Kailas at 10.30 on 21st February, signaled the auspicious opening of the event. All the Auroville schools were invited but only Udavi and Isai Ambalam children and teachers could come. Others were on school holiday, but many came with their parents and friends. More than 100 visitors, tourists and residents of Auroville attended the exhibition every day. We had to extend the duration by one more day, to enable more schools and others to enjoy the exhibition.

Free gifts of flower-seeds, flower-cards and books on the Mother and Sri Aurobindo were distributed as souvenirs. Around 10 volunteers and 6 members of the core team worked from early morning till late at night. But all of them were highly motivated and delighted to work and contribute.

The culmination of the event was marked by the meditation led by Tara Jauhar, Head of the Delhi Ashram and her team. The programme ended with a meditation and thanks-giving in presence of Shraddhavan.

Outcomes:

From the verbal and written comments of the visitors, it is obvious that the atmosphere touched their hearts and they could feel the peace and the harmony of nature. They were able to connect
with the inner beauty of the flowers and their arrangements. As a team this exhibition helped to gain the detailed knowledge of and build a deeper relationship with the flowers. We learned about the places from where to obtain them. We also learned how to take help from unknown persons and organizations.

**Reflections and conclusion:**

The core team and the volunteers learned to work as a team. The core persons learned how to organize an exhibition with proper planning and execution through mutual discussion and understanding. We came in touch with the reality of these wonders of nature (flowers) and of life. Looking at the success of this adventure, we have decided to hold the next exhibition having more richness and more involvement of the children.
Educational Food Growing Programs at three Auroville schools

by Priya

The main aim of the project was to expose students to practical food growing activities and in the process teach them where their food comes from and what it takes to put food on the table.

Description of project:
In Udavi School the project built on the work undertaken by Buddha Garden over the last two years. At the end of the previous academic year we had created a dedicated school vegetable garden which we intended to develop.

In Deepanam School we decided to focus on practical food growing activities, and to hold our sessions at Buddha Garden where the work is organized within a broader structure and strongly focused on growing food for Auroville.

This was our first year working with Transition School, where the class teachers Moorthy and Cauveri are already teaching about the natural world. This activity enabled the students to combine theoretical and practical knowledge about plants.

Please see three separate reports from each school, attached.

Outcomes:
Vegetable gardens were developed at Transition and Udavi schools. Students from Deepanam school attended Buddha Garden regularly.

In all places it was clear that students learnt about the practical aspects of food growing and enjoyed what they did.

Reflections:
The most meaningful part of the project was to expose the students to the practical work of food growing.

The most challenging part of the work was trying to get them to relate what they learned practically to an understanding of their lives and where food comes from.

Conclusion:
Next year I think we will need to focus more on eating local seasonal food and what this means practically at meal times.
**Educational Food Growing Programs at three Auroville Schools: Udavi School**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

   It was very exciting at the start of this year to begin creating the new vegetable garden. For the previous two years we had been growing food on four beds in the central garden which restricted what we were able to do. We had often thought about creating a garden dedicated to growing food but this is only possible if there is someone from the school willing to take responsibility for it. Last year Ravikrishna from Udavi School joined the team and was willing to take that responsibility.

   By the end of last year the area for the vegetable garden had been fenced and we had marked out some beds. We were ready to go.

2. **THE TEXT BOOK**

   During the last year it had been noticed that for some students the food growing session was perceived as a time when they didn’t have to focus or bother about learning anything. They seemed to find it difficult to engage their minds with practical work and at the same time reflect on what they were doing. For some the garden work was no more than a series of activities that didn’t require any thought and just had to be completed in the allotted time. We had tried a number of things to counter these expectations; worksheets were given out but were rarely completed, discussions and question and answer sessions were not very successful as students seemed to use it as an opportunity to mess around rather than engage in serious discussion and listening to each other. It was clear that another approach was needed if the goal of getting students to think about what they were doing was to be achieved.

   During the Summer holiday, Priya created a book which combined a text book about how to grow your own food and a diary to be written up of what had been completed and what they felt about their work during the practical session.

   The practical classes were then rearranged to include a short time at the beginning to talk about what they were going to do and a time at the end when they reflected on what they had achieved. They sat down and spent some time reading the text book, writing the diary and discussing any questions that anyone had.

   This seemed to work very well. Most students could remember to bring the book and a pen and writing in the book soon became established part of the whole session. At the beginning some students had great difficulty in writing about what they did, but gradually everyone learnt to do this. The diary also included pictures drawn from life.
3. THE STUDENTS

This year we had a Grade 7 group consisting of six boys and nine girls. It was good to see from the beginning that the girls tackled all the jobs, even the really heavy ones like carrying the granite pillars from our original garden to the new garden. The class spontaneously split into three groups, two of girls one of boys. From the beginning one group was responsible for each of three beds. By the end of the year each group had taken ownership of their bed and took decisions about what/where they would plant and for the organization of the work.

4. THE WORK

The first job was to move the beds from their original place in the flower garden to the new area. The groups learnt that most jobs can be accomplished if the group works together.

The students then planted ladies finger, beans and chillie seedlings, these coming from the Budha Garden nursery. Compost, which included a sack of organically certified compost from Tata gifted to the Farm Group, came from Buddha Garden. The students were completely responsible for doing all the practical work which included planting seedlings, weeding and harvesting the vegetables. When the rain arrived it was too much for some of the bean plants which got covered in pests and black mold. This often happens the first time a bed is created. It disturbs the existing ecology of insects so that pests can flourish, especially when there are events like very heavy rain which stress the plant.

One problem this year was that there were insufficient funds to set up a proper irrigation system. To begin with all the watering was carried out with watering cans which is a heavy job. This has the advantage, however, that students are very unlikely to overwater the plants and it led to some interesting discussions about water conservation. When the rains stopped it was clear that some sort of irrigation was needed so we created a system using second-hand irrigation lines from Buddha Garden which we fixed up to a nearby tap. This meant that the water pressure was not very high and was insufficient to water the backs of the beds properly. They needed to be supplemented by water from watering cans. We are hoping that this year that there will be sufficient money to install a proper system which will include an underground pipe connected to the general water system. This should provide sufficient pressure to water all the beds evenly.

One of the boys, while working in STEM land made a device for automatically watering the beds. It consisted of a solenoid and a battery and a timer of some kind. We never managed to integrate it into the system as we couldn’t find the right connectors and even if we had the water pressure would probably have been insufficient for it to work properly. We were, however, very pleased to see the creativity and bringing ideas from a different subject (engineering) into another (growing food).

At the end of the monsoon we were able to plant a wide range of different plants for the cool season. We were also able to gather some seeds from the plants we had been growing. Despite some discussion about this we got the feeling that the students didn’t understand what an important job they were doing. Although they did start to grow some of the seed, the seedlings came mainly from Buddha Garden.

It was at this time we started to see the groups really start to take ownership of their beds. In one session after some seedlings had been delivered from Buddha Garden the groups shared out the seedlings, decided where to put them and worked together to get them planted. All this carried out very harmoniously without needing Priya or Ravikrishna to tell them what to do.

The amount of vegetables produced at the end of the cool season from this second planting was very good indeed. There were enough vegetables to take to the school kitchen as well as there being enough for everyone take some home to their families.

5. LESSONS LEARNT FOR NEXT YEAR

- The text book worked very well and it will, with some additions, be used in the same way next year. At the same time it was clear that despite the information they received and the
practical work some of them don’t understand about seasonal local food. The most glaring thing was that they don’t understand about the different seasons here and the limitations as to what can be grown. Several of them told me they wanted to grow strawberries next year! The textbook will therefore need an extra section about seasonal food in Tamil Nadu.

• In the coming year we hope there will be sufficient funds to install a proper irrigation system that has sufficient pressure to water all the beds evenly. This will require an underground pipe connected directly to the water system.

• We didn’t make enough compost and we hope next year there will be sufficient funds to build at least two compost bins. We have saved quite a lot of seed this year which they can use in the coming year for growing their own seedlings.

• Next year Ravikrishna will be working in the school half time. This means that he will be able to run two class sessions as well as an after school session. Priya will be unable to attend all these sessions but will come regularly for sessions with the new 7th grade and will be on hand to help as needed with other sessions.

• It is planned to create at least four more vegetable beds and a bed for growing seed plants as well as planting a range of food-producing trees. Once compost is being regularly produced and seeds are being grown, the garden will gradually become more sustainable and need less financial inputs.
Educational Food Growing Programs at three Auroville Schools: Deepanam School

1. INTRODUCTION
In the previous year Buddha Garden had worked with Deepanam School on a cereals project. This consisted of a series of classes where they learned about rice and other cereals, two visits to Annapurna farm to look at rice planting and harvesting, and a practical experiment in the school garden where they planted rice and varagu and compared their growth.

The main problem was that despite getting a lot from some aspects of the course (the trips to Annapurna were particularly enjoyed) the students did not on the whole connect the classroom and practical work very well. Based on this experience, it was agreed that for the next year the focus should be on practical work and for this to be the basis of work in the classroom.

2. THE PLAN
Sixteen 9th grade students came to Buddha Garden on Wednesdays for ten weeks starting in mid October and finishing in mid December. They came during the normal work time of 6.15 – 9.00am Monday to Friday and were accompanied by Mahavir (head teacher), Honor and Adele (Deepanam teachers) and Ingrid, an experienced volunteer Waldorf Teacher from Germany. They worked with the Buddha Garden team of Priya, Rajan, Giri and Mani together with any volunteers staying on the farm.

This gave them a structured opportunity to learn practically how to grow food on a working organic farm. In each session, as well as helping with the farm work, an activity was planned about some relevant topic such as soil fertility, plant growth etc. This was further developed in the classroom where students were encouraged to make their own examples of what they had learnt using a variety of media.

3. THE WORK
During the work time they undertook any and all of the work necessary to grow food in Buddha Garden. This included making vegetable beds, composting, mulching, planting, clearing beds. They also carried out work in the nursery, on the vegetable beds and in the various orchards.

During each session the students first carried out general farm work. For the last half an hour or so there was a talk about an aspect of farming as well as having a question and answer discussion. They were shown around the farm so they could understand how the different parts of the farm support the food growing process in a holistic way. We also looked at soil from different parts of the farm, talked about how to preserve soil fertility and looked at plant growth. The students constantly reviewed the work they did and were able to see how their different plants grew and developed during their time in Buddha Garden.

This group were interested in the work and worked well with the other volunteers. They probably found it easier to get down to the work when they were surrounded by others doing the same thing. What they learned in these practical sessions was expanded on in their school lessons with their teachers.
Educational Food Growing Programs at three Auroville Schools: Transition School

During this year the students studied ‘nature’ in its broadest sense. The year’s work consists of a module about the stars and planets together with modules about plants and birds. The aim of setting up a garden and growing food was to give the students practical experience of dealing with plants and natural processes and to integrate this with the classroom lessons. It was hoped that it would also provide them with the opportunity to find out and understand where their food comes from and the work it takes to put food on the table.

The work took place over two ten-week semesters:

1. Thursday September 28th – Thursday December 7th (11 weeks)
   The main session was first period on Wednesday mornings when Priya tried to attend the class. When this wasn’t possible, Priya attended the second session on Friday which was the other session in the timetable earmarked for this activity. Priya advised the students while they did practical work in the garden and answered their questions. From time to time she also gave a short talk on some aspect of what they were doing in the garden. Each student also got a copy of ‘Growing Your Own’ a small booklet about how to grow your own food written by Priya.

   Buddha Garden arranged for the fence and gate to be put up around where the plants were going to be grown.

   The students were divided up into four groups of five and each group was responsible for making a raised bed using granite pillar pieces. Since some of the pieces were quite heavy, the help of the school gardeners was much appreciated. The groups worked harmoniously together and generally seemed to really enjoy working in the garden.

   Each bed was prepared by loosening the soil and then putting a thick layer of compost on top. This compost came from Buddha Garden and included some proprietary TATA compost gifted to Buddha Garden.

   A layer of mulch was put on top of the compost after which seedlings (which also came from Buddha Garden) were planted. Having made four beds the students were keen to make four more beds with the granite pillars available. A tap and an irrigation system was installed on all the beds in the garden by Buddha Garden.
The first seedlings planted were onions, lemon grass, chillies and ladies finger. Later a few lettuces were added.

In the beginning the plants struggled a lot as they were obviously being pecked by birds – probably the peacock that lives in Transition School.

A large net was purchased to cover the whole of the garden and the difference was immediately obvious. As they were not being pecked the plants started to flourish and a modest harvest of ladies finger and a few small onions were produced.

2. Thursday January 4th to Thursday March 14th (10 weeks, during which time a range of cool season vegetables were grown)

The interest in the garden was sustained and even increased during this second semester when the four groups took more ownership of their beds. Seedlings planted included beans, tomatoes, lettuce, brinjal and chick peas, which apart from the chick peas all produced a very good harvest. We had a problem on one bed where the beans got attacked by aphids, but apart from that the plants were mainly pest free.

After each harvest all the produce was weighed. With the help of the teachers students decided how to share out the produce so that everyone felt they received a fair share of what had been produced.

Next year there will be a new group doing this work. The students finished the year by clearing all the beds and making compost out of those plants and leaves from the school grounds. This will be watered over the Hot Seasons break for the group who will be working in the garden next year.

LESSONS FOR NEXT YEAR:

- This year there was no time to make compost so most of it came from Buddha Garden. It is hoped that next year the work will be organized to make time for this very necessary part of working in a garden.
- The seeds that were collected this year will be used to grow their own seedlings.
Film Making Apprenticeship

At « No School Productions » we are teaching film making. The teaching is done following the principles of Free Progress. Through a project-based learning process, the competences, skills and knowledge are tackled through practice. We are also working on independent film projects under the name “Auroville Pictures”.

The team is Claire and RV. Claire taught Film Making and Art at Last School for 3 years. She teaches cinematography and editing, and directs and produces movies through Auroville Pictures. RV, Sound Technician, worked several years in the cinema industry as a location manager. He also ran a record company. He teaches sound recording and sound post-production, and directs and produces movies through Auroville Pictures.

Apprenticeship program:

The filmmaking apprenticeship program covers the areas of pre-production, production, and post-production. It’s an individual tuition, where each student writes, shoots, directs and edits his/her own film and contributes to others projects on specific areas.

The apprenticeship is opened to students after High School, who are motivated and have a project. The duration of the apprenticeship depends on the pace of work of the student and on his/her needs. What matters is for the student to explore different kind of works and to increase the level of difficulties and requirements; therefore the program has been elaborated with a minimum of knowledge and skills to be acquired. They work on different kind of projects: Artistic, Narrative and Documentaries.

Each term/year the study projects become technically more sophisticated, more considered and more complex in their ambitions. We specify the required skills for each project. We provide the equipment and train students in each of the various craft skills. Students make all aesthetic decisions, while solving problems. The work is constantly assessed. Students learn by applying themselves to aesthetic and practical problems generated by the actual process of filmmaking. Students gain experience by directing and shooting their own films and serving as crew members on others students’ films. In their different projects, students take on roles such as directors, cinematographers, writers and editors. They experience what it’s like to be a part of a film production.

This year we have been teaching 5 students:

• One student participated to the pre-production and shooting stage of the movie we have produced for SAIIER on SAIIER. It was his fourth year of apprenticeship with us. He stopped for personal reasons. His previous work “Dehashakti the documentary” was screened at the Auroville Film Festival 2017 and at the SAIIER conference hall. Another previous work, “Shradanjali a unit of Auroville” is online on Shradanjali’s website.

• One student is still working on her full length documentary about single mothers of the bioregion that she started last year. She is in her third year of apprenticeship with us. Her previous work, “Awakening matter”, was screened at the Auroville Film Festival 2017 and received a lot of positive feedback from the public for the quality of the work and the aesthetic approach.

• One student completed two short movies, one on waste, and one on Eluciole Circus, both screened at KINO Auroville. She is in her first year.

• One student completed two short movies, one on Svaram (“Le chant du métal”) and one on embroiderers of Srinagar. She is in her first year. Both movies are online.

• One student didn’t complete any movie as she had to stop in the middle of the school year for personal reasons.
The number of hours each student spend with us per week depends on the student's schedule, his/her pace, and the stage of the project. The time is divided in studio time (pre/post-production stage, feedback and accompaniment of the teachers, teachings, editing), outdoors time (meetings, scouting for locations, shootings), and personal time (pre-production stage, shootings, logging, editing). For the shooting we can be present if the student needs/wishes; in practice the more the student is advanced, the more complex is the project, the more he needs assistance during the shootings. In total, this year 20 hours per week was spent in studio for the 4 students working on their own projects, plus the outdoor time and personal time (not calculated).

This year there was no project collaboration between students as 3 students of 5 are beginners. One student worked with us on our shooting for the SAIIER video, and one has punctually assisted.

Auroville Pictures:
We make movies for Auroville. Our projects can be on our own initiative or at the initiative of other Aurovilians.

• We completed the movie on SAIIER for SAIIER, in total 2,413 shots, 66 hours of shooting, 43 hours of logging, 218 hours of post-production. It started in July 2017 and was completed before SAIIER feedback on February 2018. We are currently working on the modifications asked by the SAIIER Board, and the movie will be completed at the beginning of April.

• Our Doc-series “Inner Dialogues” was screened at Auroville Film Festival 2017 and received the Wisdom Award: Jury: “… for its honest, direct, simple and sensitive approach to some deep experiences about Auroville. The film was successfully able to balance conviction, vulnerability, uncertainty, discovery of the interviewees and present them in a engaging narrative while visually limiting itself to just the facial expression of the interviewees.”

Reflections:
Thanks to the support of SAIIER, this year we opened the program for more students. We did an announcement in the News & Notes, and reached out to Auroville Campus Initiative (ACI) and Youth Link. (At this time, we had no answer from ACI and Youth Link.) Our selection criteria were: Aurovilians only, adult, no age limit, people ready to work on a project-based learning process, autonomous, motivated. Most of the applications we received were coming either from non-Aurovilians or from Aurovilians above 45 years old. We received no requests from Youth of Auroville.

This was the second year of our program, and it is confirming to us that working within the frame of a project-based learning process and with a schedule that is not based on teaching ‘subjects’ but rather flexible and based on the project and student’s needs is an appropriate way.

The main challenge is still the same as last year – that is to say, to be flexible as there is no fixed schedule. The program is designed based on the students needs, priorities, and own schedule. We have to constantly adapt ourselves, readjust and reorganise.

The experience of making the movie for SAIIER was very enriching. it was a great experience to observe and to film Aurovilians in their activity. We also could observe that involving an apprentice in this kind of project is challenging as this is very demanding for the apprentice in terms of work and time.

Projects for next year:
What came to us:
• We met with ACI in March 2018.

We wish to start this summer in collaboration with Jean Yves the writing of an educational documentary on the Vedas, first of a series, based on an original idea of Jean Yves.

Our projects:
• We have quite a lot of footage we did in the schools for SAIIER’s movie; we would like to work on two short documentaries of 5 minutes for two schools of Auroville for this year.
• We have a new documentary project: “Why Auroville?” a full-length documentary on the
raison d’être of Auroville. The script is written, we are planning to start the shooting after the summer.

- We postponed the shooting of the season 2 of our docu-series “Inner Dialogues” to give priority to SAIER’s movie; we plan to re-start shooting during the summer.

Feedback from the students:

Corinne Chana Devor:
To start with, the film making apprenticeship has brought a complete new world to me not only just about initiation about film making but even more important: about the way I see the world. That’s to me is the real success of this enterprise.

As everything was completely new to me, I will just state basic techniques like the holding of oneself and the camera, choices of frame, the light, background light, zooming, link between one frame with the other, beginning of editing and more.

Claire and RV have proven to be extremely patient. Their méthode is clear and concise. They are resourceful, gracious, and mostly extremely pleasant to learn from and with... great teachers indeed.

Rena:
My name is Rena from Angiras Garden, I am one of Claire’s students teaching me in Filming Apprenticeship, since August last year.

Claire has a great knowledge about all the secrets for making films and videos, like shooting, editing and much more.

What I really like on her is that she offers her passion, her knowledge, sense of beauty and precision to me just as a gift on side of her technical teaching.

I feel privileged and graceful having this opportunity being one of her students.

Thank you dear Claire for your passion and endurance.

Thank you SAIER for your generosity to make it happens.

Smiti:
I have been learning film making with Claire for the last few years.

I am very happy to have been introduced to film making as it gives the possibility both to say something/give a message through a medium that is accessible to most people today and also have a search for beauty in the way you say it, through the images, the sounds, the words and the weaving of it all together.

Satyavan:
My name is Satyavan Bhatt and I had been an apprentice in the film making apprenticeship under RV and Claire. The project was to make a film on SAIER for the 50th anniversary of Auroville on the request of the SAIER Board.

I learned the technical aspects of film-making like setting up the camera, getting the right settings to obtain optimal images, taking interviews which required me to learn to work with sound recording equipment.

Naturally I learned new ways of filming objects and people, to adapt to the subject in the focus of the camera, storing the images and interviews we did.

I really benefited from this experience since RV and Claire’s approach on teaching is very flexible, they allowed me to try my ideas and would always be there to guide me whenever necessary. They are very demanding when it comes to the quality of the work we are doing and this was the most important thing I learnt.

Through this film making apprenticeship they taught me the importance of organisation, to plan the whole filming schedule, communicate with the concerned persons and gradually be able to visualise what the film would look like and work towards it.
At a certain point I could no longer be part of the apprenticeship program since I had other commitments regarding my work which took a lot of time and energy this lead me to realise that I had to make a choice.

RV and Claire were kind enough to understand this and I decided to stop.

Ann:

Since a few months I’m Claire and RV’s student, they are very complementary for the teachings. With them I’m learning shooting and all this techniques, editing, and the construction of a documentary, which was my dream since long time. Thanks to them.

All that is a hard job and I put at test severely the patience of Claire, but she handles with patience and humour. I’m a beginner in this field that makes me very happy and I do not want to stop until I have the mastery of the camera and editing.

I am really enjoying this learning.
Innovative Open Source Developer Training

Through this project, Blue Light was able to support an intern to actively participate in an Open Source project with a focus on its Blue Light implementation.

Description of project:
Aarnav Bos worked full time at Blue Light under the mentorship of Xavier Maysonnave. His focus was on OpenWisp, an open source solution to build and manage wifi networks. Every day a formal technical meeting of 30 minutes ensured the follow-up of the project. Once a week a meeting was organized with the other Blue Light team members.

Through this internship Aarnav participated actively with OpenWisp online communities, reporting defects, submitting patches and helping others on the project mailing list. This interaction will help Blue Light to work closely with communities who provide Open Source software used in our infrastructure.

Outcomes:
Aarnav delivered two components of the Hotspot project:
1. Image builder
2. Embedded captive portal

He participated under the umbrella of OpenWisp in a Google contest opened to young people between 12 and 17 years old. Xavier was a mentor during this Google contest. Thirteen projects were competing. In January Aarnav won a prize as he was the highest task performer in his project. He finished the first among 779 students. In June 2018, he is invited at the Google headquarters to an event where the Grand Prize winner will be rewarded.

As a summary Aarnav delivered two useful components and integrates well in a distributed open source project. He is now an active participant.

Reflections:
• The Google Code-In contest was a great event and very stimulating for Aarnav. Beyond the reward to be invited by Google in California, he joined an Open Source community and participates in project who benefits our community and the Open Source community. His work bridges the gap between communities.
• The initial budget was not fullfilled, and we struggled the all year round to provide the proper environment for Aarnav. He still does not have a suitable desktop to work.
• Projects are funded with GOI funds and as such projects have a fiscal year scope. We’ve been notified for a partial funding support at the beginning of July 2017 with a scope ending in March 2018. We lost two month of funding as Aarnav started to work in June 2017.
• We do not have any higher study environment in Auroville. It could be interesting to organize apprenticeship in a different way. Rather than a full time professional environment, it could be part time. The rest of time, an apprentice could take remote courses with universities. The coursus should be defined collectively (by the apprentice, SAIIER and Blue Light).

Conclusion:
Aarnav has been hired at Blue Light as an apprentice until he turns 18. He is integrated in our team and will continue our projects.
Mandala Practice

by Rosalba

Mandalas are an ancient tool. I approach them from the view of Jung as a therapeutic path to help integrate the different parts of ourselves, and to touch upon and manifest our inner being. Every one of us has a different comfort field: some find expression and alignment through writing, others through physical activity, others... through mandalas. The purpose of Mandala Practice is to offer students of Auroville a functional tool of support to help them pass through the difficult transitional time which teenage can be, with its hormonal changes, identity crises, etc.

Description of project:
The project for 2017-18 was about working with youth of Auroville and Outreach schools, through Mandalas. The mandala can become a diary of experience, development and transformation. The idea was to propose this activity to all schools in Auroville from kindergarten to high school level.

Courses this year ran from December to April at Last School and Deepanam School. In January I started a day course about Mandala at Baraka open to all, and several people are coming regularly. The link with Mattram, emotional support group, was established at the same time, as I was part of it. Thanks to this link the work about prevention is easier, and a functional service is building up.

All that meant around 40 hours weekly of work, between the regular classes and the preparation of it, the various consultations I offered, and the obviously meetings related to the cases: difficult students, difficult times and plans for organization.

Outcomes:
The benefit was for both students and the school as whole:
1. Students facing difficult moments opened up to me, they came for Bach Flower therapy and for mandala sessions. Feeling supported they receive the benefit of the fast relief that Bach Flowers offer and centering which Mandala practice offers too. Additional support and sessions were offered out of school hours, free of cost naturally.
2. The schools received a professional support, much needed when they faced special cases.

This year has also been used to set up contacts, offer and explain the system I use to work with mandala as a therapeutic tool, to the Auroville and Outreach Schools. Further courses are set up for next year.

Reflections:
I found most meaningful the creation of a bridge of trustable relation between teenagers and the "adult world". Teenage can be a difficult time, each individual struggles for different reasons. Using the tools I have, I support this transition. I have found this can help the blossoming of our youth.

I have also seen how Auroville is becoming more open, sensitive and supportive about emotional shakes, which are something normal sometimes, especially during transitional moments of life, like that of teenage.

It was and it is challenging to enter into the real Indian culture, which is not Auroville, but much older... and it looks like something is opening also in me... happy for it.
Conclusion:

I saw a great potential in term of service required and already welcomed by a few schools. My collaboration is offered through teaching mandala practice and also Bach Flower Remedies.

Through this work together the students open in receptivity, grow more conscious, and find autonomy within themselves, to overcome difficult moments using light and smooth tools without risks.

At the same time, in cases of more serious difficulties, Mattram is ready to receive, evaluate the case and provide support.

For next year I will continue with two courses at Last School, one about mandala and one about Bach Flowers; three courses at Udavi about mandala with the little ones, the middle age and the eldest ones; plus one full morning at TLC for mandala course.

In addition to the weekly open sessions about Mandala in Baraka, I would also like to propose a course about the practical use of Bach Flowers open to all.
Mira Cultural Group

We believe that music and dance can envelop and go beyond the barriers of any religion or cultural differences and embrace all differences within. We would like to integrate bio-region people, especially children and women, in the Auroville cultural life by teaching them dances, vocal and instrumental music.

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

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

Besides, as a team, we also benefit, learn and grow as we love to create a place that encourages and promotes collective spirit.

Activities of the year:

Every year there are more students. In 2017-18 the numbers were:

- Classical Music: 27 children, 1 woman
- Folk Dance: 7 children, 4 women
- Bharata Natiyam dance: 27 children

The four teachers are professional and qualified music & art teachers. The classes take place on weekends at the SAWCHU building in Bharat Nivas. The students are from Auroville and surrounding villages, aged from 6 to 51 years, including boys, girls and women.

Outcomes:

We have more students attending and benefiting. 9 children come from Auroville and the rest come from the bioregion. We evaluated the classes in different places like Bharat Nivas and Edyanchavadi village. The coming year we are planning to start classes in two more places, Irumbai and Kottakarai, for those children to also benefit.

All the students presented live performances in Folk dance, Bharata Natiyam and Classical music vocals. The performances took place at:

- Diwali festival function in October 2017 at Solar Kitchen, Auroville.
- Tamil New Year, 14 April 2017 program at Bharat Nivas.
- Sangamam festival at Football ground, Aurodam.

Reflections:

Most meaningful in our activities is sharing the Auroville free spirit. The education pedagogy and level is different in Auroville from outside schools. Teachers from outside who come and teach to Auroville children learn about alternative styles of education and free progress classes. Also the outside children benefit from this approach.

Nowadays teachers typically charge per student instead of per class. But for our classes we find the teachers who are willing to teach without concern for the number of students. That way more students can benefit from our program.

Children are very eager to learn and want to progress. But we realize that some disciplines like Raga in classical music, and also dance, require very regular if not daily practice. So we realize that weekly classes are not enough to allow for proper follow-up and development of advanced learning in these fields, or that further encouragement needs to be provided, such as more classes.
Conclusion:

We are working in the name of togetherness and interconnectedness. A couple of the villages offered their spaces for us to use for the dance and music classes as well as for educational spaces – some expressed they would like to learn English so that they can find work in Auroville, others that they would like to learn maths so they can better manage their household budgets. Their interest in collaborating in this way inspires us to keep working together.

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

by Francesca

The purpose of this project was to buy a large collection of photographs of the Mother from Loretta, and donate them to the Auroville Archives. Those photos will be used to make exhibitions in Auroville.

The trade happened the 22nd of August 2017.

Since Loretta decided to stop her exhibition activity with the Mother’s photographs, I will try to replace her within the limits of my experience. This will happen during 2018-19 in Auroville.

I waited first for the new Auroville Archives building to be ready. I am still studying how I can make it happen. I am a different person from Loretta. It will be a different way to set up an exhibition. Being my first time, I am still in the decisional process on how to make it happen.
“My Creative Satsang” is an educational and cultural project born during the summer of 2017. It is a project for individual and collective investigation of the creative heritage as yet unknown in us. So far the project has been mainly focused on creative writing, but is also planning to manifest theatrical productions and wide-ranging creative and artistic collaborations in the future.

Description of project:

Francesca is the creator and leader of the project. The activities during the year were:

• Creative writing classes.
• Creative writing playgrounds.
• Savita’s Rani solo “R.I.P.” performance at CRIPA (promoted by My Creative Satsang).
• “My Creative Writing” newspaper (We came out with issue 0 and issue 1).
• Interviews with performance artists, which will be put online.
• A future collaboration with Auroville Radio on the theme of creative processes in the arts
• Participation in “Auroville Art for Land” fundraiser at Unity Pavilion.
• Participation in the DRIFT independent theatre festival in Dharamsala with a creative writing playground.

Outcomes:

Many different people have gone through the Monday creative writing class experience or the playgrounds. Many cultural events were created – more than I expected. I went through all this with the freshness of a new experience. With ingenuity and the help of a Force that organized everything despite the fact that I had never been a creative guide before.

Some of the people who attended my groups now are writing their first book. It makes me happy to know that the work done together is giving real results. Working in groups with other people to unlock creative potentials has a strengthening effect. The atmosphere that the group creates is tangible, and has a positive effect on most of the participants.

When the adventure of “My Creative Satsang” began, it had another name. The project then went through different phases, tests, adaptations. It is still in a continuous process of identity formation. Personally, after a year of experience of groups and teachings I am now beginning to have clearer ideas and the project itself is becoming more concrete. But My Creative Satsang is not just about writing. It deals with education, promotion of cultural events and theatrical productions.

Reflections:

This work has beautifully put me in contact with the true part of all the people that crossed my experience. We connected deeply on a meaningful level.

The challenging part was that all this was totally new for me. As an artist, I have always been attracted to the path of personal research. But theatre apart, I have never guided other people to connect themselves to their creative being. Not on this level. That was beautiful and sometimes scary. And I always had the support of sudden inspiration to guide the groups in the quest of their unknown creativity. So I learnt really a lot and I am sure I am not completely aware of all the implications of this experience yet. It will take some time.

Conclusion:

The coming working year is pretty challenging. My Creative Satsang will offer a range of educational activities which are varied and new in Auroville, in line with what was begun this year.
Stewardship for New Emergence

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.

Description of project:
Three distinct programs were held in the last year (2017-18). These are: i) Stewardship for New Emergence Stage 1, ii) Amma-Appa Program, iii) Practitioner Coach Training. The Stage 1 program consists of a series of 3 workshops, spaced apart by 1-2 months each. The Amma-Appa program, a four day program in two parts, is for Auroville employees from the bioregion. Its aim is to nurture change-makers from the rural areas surrounding Auroville. The 5-day Practitioner Coach training program was held in order to support individuals that are interested in serving as Practitioner Coaches in the near future.

<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&lt;br&gt;Session 2&lt;br&gt;Session 3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22-24 September 2017&lt;br&gt;27-29 October 2017&lt;br&gt;1-3 December 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner Coach Training</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31st August - 4th September 2017</td>
<td>Practitioner Coaches are being trained to facilitated future Stewardship for new emergence Programs at Auroville, in the bioregion, India and internationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ama Appa Program</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>April and May 2017</td>
<td>Eighty one people, from 18 different villages surrounding Auroville and 8 Auroville units took part in two, two day sessions in April and May 2017 of Stewardship for new emergence leadership and capacity development program. Practice is continuing monthly in groups with trained stewardship practitioner coaches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some outcomes / break-through initiatives by participants:

**Stewardship for New Emergence 1:**
- Manifestation of Line of Goodwill
- “Let’s Talk Trash”
- To promote disaster-resilient housing using locally available natural materials like bamboo, mud, etc.
- To make local agriculture in Sunderbans more resilient to floods and natural disasters
- Course on ‘stewardship for sustainable business’ as part of the MBA program in my institute
- Setting up a non-profit organization to promote the cause of child-centric systems design in society
- Giving communications workshops, working to empower teaching team in school
- Creating “Name and Symbol of Auroville” protection group
- “Dancing as Love”
- Not really a project, but put elements in my daily life.
- STEM Land, iSMART classroom, teacher training (upcoming)
- Neem Tree restaurant
• Auroville Library of Things
• Shared Transport Service
• Trying to get a gallery NOW for Auroville artists
• Building a learning center for co-creative cross community initiatives that will support unity, wellbeing and full potential of Anna Nagar and surrounding villages and relationship with Auroville
• Solar Village aiming at providing reliable, quality, clean power supply to local villages
• Creating Healthy life styles through awareness of health consciousness and natural healing

Amma Appa Program:
• Beautification improvement of village and work places
• Increase efficiency in housekeeping and materials at my workplace
• Improve production schedule (multiple participants)
• Development of clear accountability, responsibilities & creating cleanliness and beauty in workplace
• Development of the garden and water system in workplace
• Inter-village student exchange program
• Peace project – improve communications at work between departments (multiple participants)
• Overcoming difficulties and developing Unity in work (multiple participants)
• Street light project at village
• Team capacity and self awareness (multiple participants)
• Reducing partiality and improving communications between all workers and management

Some feedback from participants:

Stewardship for New Emergence (“What can you do now that you were not able to do before?”):
• “I have courage to co-create, I can see large picture and act small, I judge much less, I trust emergence, and anger is something that I’ve left behind for good!”
• “Being able see the invisible systems; being able to name my fears and transcend them by standing on my wisdom profile; deep listening; enroll others.”
• “Feel empowered and take responsibility for my action.”
• “I can see myself in others therefore stopped judging others, see my capacities so learnt to become myself.”
• “Embody changes, see other’s needs.”
• “Able to break the ice partly and work together.”

Amma Appa program:
• “I stand for love for myself and others. I never talked on stage like this, now I have the courage. In my work also I have learned to adjust, my fears have reduced, I listen from my inner values with an open heart. And I am doing my work well.”
• “Courageous actions can be done when I’m assertive.”
• “I learned there can be lots of ways to achieve my goal, I need to know where I am aiming for and there are multiple ways of getting there. I learned about unaccountable costs and power to the people and the importance to inspire others.”
• “Usually I do incomplete work, so I have seen from these tools how to see my gaps, be in integrity and complete my work.”

Future direction:

We are committed to continue the work in anchoring Stewardship for New Emergence in Auroville and around India. For the coming year the following activities are being planned: Alumni program, learning programs in Education, Stage 2 workshops, workshops for specialized groups, and assessment/evaluation of the team and program toward envisioning the future.
The Unicorn Collective – Season 2

The Unicorn Collective creates experiences as magical and ephemeral as a unicorn sighting at an unexpected moment. Season 2 of the Unicorn Collective strove to bring more artistic happenings into the community of Auroville at large.

Through 3 different plays, presented under the name of “La compagnie SDF”, the collective engaged with all ages and languages to bring high quality theater in the community in outdoor spaces through the 2017-18 season in Auroville and Pondicherry and actively worked for upcoming events.

Description of project:

The main head in the Unicorn Collective activities has been Celine. She was actively supported by Christophe in all the projects. A group of more than 25 Aurovilians, guests, volunteers and Newcomers where also involved at different times of the season including 3 kids from Transition School and 3 students from Last School.

- **The Great Procession / Le grand Processus** was the first surtitled performance in Auroville. It presented an original setup of the second chapter of *On the Way to Supermanhood* by Satprem. It was performed by four Aurovilians: two of them had a previous experience with me and two of them were new as actors. For all of them it was a great experience as well as for the audience. “The Great Procession” was performed 3 times in Visitor Center in September 2017. Audience is eagerly waiting for the following chapters.

- **Ubuntu** was performed in January 2018, twice: once in Pondicherry, once in Auroville by three kids from Transition School and myself. Kripa and Christophe helped us with feedback and technique. It was a creation based on two traditional tales and one popular French song. Part of the script was written by the students. Their commitment was very intense and joyful.

- **State of Siege / L’etat de Siege** by Albert Camus was a site-specific setup of a French play performed in its original language with English surtitles for 3 evenings in March 2018. It involved 20 Aurovilians including three students, video and audio soundtracks, a spinning stage and 15 actors on the stage. The audience expressed its amazement and joy of witnessing such a show in Auroville regarding the space occupation, the surtitles, the fluidity of the performance and the global high quality of the performers and the show itself. The huge success met by the audience was a great delight for the all group after more than a year of process and 4 months of intensive work and hundreds not to say thousands hours of preparation. For many performers it was their first or second experience on stage but everyone was at its best, fully dedicated and determined to present an unforgettable event to the community.

- More projects were about to be done but due to various reasons (lack of human resources, funds or time) it hasn’t been yet achieved. For example the alive-large-scale Chess game needs not only funds but also to be turned into a precise scenario / story board in order to facilitate the casting and the rehearsals.

- The fish puppets were re-use in the 2018 Trashion Show.
Outcomes:

Created:
- 1 surtitled performance closely connected to Auroville’s aspirations.
- 1 show with 3 kids and 1 adult performed in Pondy and Auroville.
- 1 surtitled play, site-specific show involving 20 Aurovilians and volunteers, including 3 Last School students.
- Reflection and maturation of 4 to 5 new coming projects

Beneficiaries:
- The Auroville community: benefits include delight, wonder, imagination, self-reflection and deepening of Auroville’s ideals for the audience and all. Those that performed gained new skills, including voice training, self-confidence, perseverance and working together to achieve a high quality project in the allotted time. The kids increased their knowledge in French and French culture to the biggest delight of their parents.
- Visitors and guests to Auroville: benefits include beauty, a sense of Auroville’s cultural scene, a surprise and good value for Auroville artistic landscape. Some people expressed their amazement in finding such a high quality of art in Auroville. A visiting art critic compared the quality and originality of the play she just saw to one of the most famous festival in France!

Reflections:

The most meaningful part of this project was bringing Aurovillians that never performed before to their best shape on the stage. Each one was extremely touched by and grateful to receive so many positive feedback on their performance increasing their level of self-esteem and self-confidence which are undoubtedly very precious for our life in Auroville. The inner way of each individual during each work is definitely the most meaningful aspect.

Receiving support and enthusiastic feedback from so many people from the audience including professional artists from Auroville and aboard was also very meaningful, especially from non-French speakers enjoying a full show in French with the help of the surtitles.

It was very difficult to fit to the goals set up in May 2017 as events, creation and opportunities are very changing. For me it was difficult to keep separated my theater activities; even if I can clearly see to which collective they are related to, I cannot push myself into a direction that seems not pleased the divine will. I have learned to let go and allow the creation to be its own master: If a certain project has more funds and more people to be part of it at a certain point, it makes sense to achieve it and change the plans. People are coming and going, bringing inputs, ideas, skills and possibility. Creation is a very unpredictable process which requires great flexibility. Creation with the divine will makes things much easier when you follow its voice and not the human desires or forecasts. That is why we end up doing these 3 shows as the other projects were obviously not ready on the divine plan.

Conclusion:

As long as I (Celine) will be the only project holder for Unicorn Collective and SDF (the French Theater group), I will present only one proposal including many performances possibilities and theater propositions fitting in both projects, and continue to follow my inner guidance to achieve what is feasible and ready at the time.
“Veil: Two Sisters”

by Hartmut

This was a project of fine arts including film, dance and piano music. New York choreographer Cynthia Berkshire, Hartmut von Lieres and Madaa collaborated in February 2018 to produce “Veil: Two Sisters” in three parts:


• **Part 2**: A further development of the movie as a live-dance performance, choreographed by Cynthia, Madaa (Aurovillian) and some guests, with music by Hartmut.

• **Part 3**: Piano concert from Hartmut with his own compositions.

Around 200 guests showed up to the performances in CRIPA. We got good feedback, and of course the artists benefited from the performance. It was lovely.

**Reflections:**

The most meaningful part of this project for me was to work with SAILER the first time, to be for the first time a project-holder with all the responsibilities which were connected to this. And to work with so many people. It went well.

Second, there was a deeper meaning of the story of the two sisters. It might have touched one or another with his own family-story.
The ‘White Peacock’ creative space offers guided classes as well as ‘open space’ activities for all age groups – from 3 to 90 years. This is the 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; focus is on the joyful process of self-discovery and research on hand building clay techniques. We offer regular classes, occasional workshops, and participate in Auroville festivals and exhibitions in the spirit of unending education and openness for the new creative ideas.

Activities of the year:

Anna and Saraswati are the teachers (Anna is working with adults while Saraswati is mostly focused on children), with the help of Fedor (technical support – kilns servicing, exploration of the most effective ways of firing). Our activities take place all round the year (including school holidays), based at the ‘White Peacock’ clay club building, Kindergarten compound, Center Field.

This year we held the regular classes:

• Adults – 2 times a week (7-10 participants)
• TLC school – 2 times a week (5-7 participants)
• Sunday class (up to 30 people)

Other events of the year included:

• Final exhibition by four graduating children (Masha, Hye Yoon, Bhavio, Narayan) at Savitri Bhavan in April 2018 (with the general theme of Scripts, Signs, Letters)
• Methodical support for Kindergarten clay class (ongoing)
• Consulting representatives of educational institutions on how to start a clay workshop (on request)
• One week workshop for Tibetan students visiting Auroville (10 people participated)
• Workshops for visiting students
• Teachers training workshops

Reflections:

This year we explored many new techniques and deepened the knowledge of the old methods with our students/club members.

The four students who gave the exhibition held the tasks of arranging the exhibition all by themselves, learning on the go all the accompanying skills of the artists: communication with the gallery, transportation of the pieces and pedestals, visual design of the exhibition space, etc.

As a venue for the event they selected a mysterious garden room of Savitri Bhavan that has an “Alice in Wonderland” spirit.

The exhibition was received very well, and the Savitri Bhavan team invited White Peacock club to do more exhibitions in future.

Goals for next year:

1. To continue conducting regular classes. To explore further the endless possibilities of clay work.
2. To work towards an exhibition at the end of the school year showcasing the works of the children and adults. Most of the students will be making solo as well as team projects for the exhibition.
3. To participate in fourth annual Auroville Potters Market (end of January 2019). Apart from
being the main fundraising event, this Festival dedicated to Pottery gives amazing feeling of being a part of the professional community, gives the opportunity to interact with the other masters and to learn from them. Students and teachers of ‘White Peacock’ bring some life to an event too, offering clay related activities at the spot.

4. To involve more people in teaching – volunteers, interns, guest artists while they are visiting Auroville.

5. To purchase and install all the equipment for the Raku firing, and to start a successful Raku learning process with the elder children as the main force and younger children as involved observers.

6. To celebrate our 10 years of the existence of White Peacock studio. In fact, we completed 10 years in March 2018, but we had to postpone a celebratory event for one year because of too many things happening in winter 2018, Auroville’s 50th birthday.

7. To include in our process 6-year-old children from Kindergarten and Nandanam. This will be our living experiment on bringing up our potential students from an earlier age.

**Conclusion:**

We are ready to share all the experience we went through while putting up an educative clay studio – from fundraising and choosing the right equipment to the professional techniques and materials available. At the moment we have a request from one charity organization working with AIDS victims on helping them to improve their clay process and product design. We will invite the representatives to Auroville in October for one week intense sharing program.
Yoga awareness and demonstration in ten bioregion villages of Auroville

by Thambidurai

On World Yoga Day, 21 June 2017, Auroville took the initiative to celebrate in Auroville and its bioregion. This project was aimed at introducing some simple asanas to bioregion villagers to practice in daily life.

Description of project:

- 25 yoga students from Auroville’s Arulvazhi School demonstrated asanas in 10 villages.
- A 20-minute film was made of the event, and Pondicherry DD and other local channels broadcast it for one week.
- A leaflet with images of asanas and instruction text was distributed.

The children and adults of these ten villages were exposed to simple asanas and their benefits to health and life. We sought to give insight about a holistic approach for overall health.

Reflections:

The challenge was to get the villagers’ attention in the age of television and smartphones. Through this cultural activity demonstration we could bring the people out of their houses.

We would like to conduct yogasanas annually or quarterly, and arrange for Yoga teachers to lead classes where it is requested in the villages.
“An Integral Education for Growth and Blossoming”

by Fabrice Dini

The aim of this project is to offer to teachers of Auroville and outreach schools and parents a practical guide to implement integral education. To offer insights on how to implement integral education in the light of Mother and Sri Aurobindo and the latest research all over the world.

Description of project:
This project involved translating into English (by Divya through Avitra) and printing (by Prisma) the book by Fabrice Dini, Une éducation intégrale pour grandir en s'épanouissant. The French edition of the book was published in 2016 by Faim de Siècle, and was very well received.

Chapters of the book include:
1. Physical education
2. The senses, aesthetic sense and discernment
3. Emotional intelligence
4. Fundamental qualities of being human and character strengths
5. Mental faculties
6. The subtle mind
7. Ethics
8. Turning one’s gaze inward
9. The role of the adult
10. The future of education

Outcomes:
An Integral Education for Growth and Blossoming was launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, in February 2018. It is being distributed through SAIIER and Auroville channels, as well as through some Ashram-connected organizations in Pondicherry.

Teachers and parents in Auroville and anybody interested in Integral Education can now purchase the book. The children of Auroville will also benefit from it. Some educational projects have started following the reading of the book; I know of such a project in the Ashram School and in Auroville.

Reflections:
I think the fact that the translation was made in Auroville, by an Aurovilian was very nice. The printing process and organization has been challenging; I will do better next time with this part.

Conclusion:
I feel very grateful towards SAIIER to encourage with its support the translation and printing of the book. Let’s see in the coming months the impact of the book and the interest it brings.
“Jalaja the Gentle Fish”

by Jyoti Khare

I have written and illustrated a story where a little fish, through her courage and compassion transforms the competitive and aggressive nature of all the creatures in the pond, and establishes a happy atmosphere of unity and solidarity amongst all.

The purpose of the project was to find ways to create (write and illustrate) beautiful books for children that inspire them to be strong and deep human beings.

What I was researching was to find a way of making the illustrations speak directly to the children’s hearts, while the text speaks to their minds, so that their whole being feels elated and inspired by the book.

Reflections:
Every time I illustrate a story I attempt to do it in a style that will suit the mood of the story and will take me a step further in my own learning. As this story is set predominantly in a pond, I had for the first time to work on underwater scenes, keeping the fluidity, transparency and depth of the pond. This was the challenge and the learning for me.

In a beautiful pond where all kinds of creatures lived, a little fish named Jalaja had her home with her mother.

One beautiful spring morning her mother told her, “My dear child you are big now. It is time for you to explore the world on your own. See if you can find a nice little corner where you would like to live.” “Alright mother,” said Jalaja obediently. Deep inside her heart though, she did not feel all that big yet.
“Mango Tree”

by Nathalie Nuber

This project was to create and publish “Mango Tree”, a children’s book written and illustrated by Nathalie Nuber. The layout was done by Olivier Barot, and the book was printed by Auroville Press in 2018.

Outcomes:

“Mango Tree” is a hardbound, illustrated children’s book which tells the story of two newly hatched owlets that venture from their home in a mango tree, and are in a hurry to discover the world that surrounds them. As they meet new friends along the way, they learn about some simple yet essential qualities that will help them through life — patience, love, detachment, collaboration, generosity, courage... — that eventually lead them back to where it all started: their nest. There, a ripened mango, that had been mistaken for an egg all along, awaits the very hungry owlets.

The mango was named by Mother: ‘Divine Knowledge’.

The book should be out this month (May 2018). A book release will follow when the schools in Auroville reopen in June, this summer, along with the mango season.

Reflections:

Much like the owlets in my story, I’m still learning about patience, love and letting go, collaboration, generosity, courage and so much more. Also much about technical difficulties and challenges encountered when working with water colours — a very difficult medium indeed. I am very critical about my own work and much aware of my shortcomings and I have to deal with the frustration of not reaching the quality I had hoped to achieve, mostly regarding the illustrations. My friends advised me to simply let go and having learned much from this experience to do better with my next book...

Conclusion:

I am grateful to SAIIER for trusting me with this project and hope this book will bring joy and a smile to those who read this simple story.
“The Smile of the Acacia”

The purpose of the project was to make a beautiful book with drawings and text of quality for the children to discover the trees of Auroville, especially the “work tree”, *Acacia auriculiformis*, which is a pioneer tree used by the first foresters in Auroville to re-create a green landscape in Auroville. Through the story, you discover the hidden symbol of Mother’s name for this tree: Work.

Text and illustrations were made by myself, Marie Demont. Several people were involved in the corrections and feedback. It is a book of A4 size, with 24 pages in color – 2 languages French and English – with a hard cover in color and laminated.

The books are printed and ready for distribution. Out of 400 copies, I was planning to give 50 copies to Auroville Press for distribution on their bookshop, 30 copies in the schools of Auroville, another 40 copies in the different places of education in Auroville, and sell the rest of the books. But first, the book launch has to happen after the heavy summer in July 2018.

Reflections:

It was very interesting to be able to share some knowledge through story and drawings, and learn always more about the trees which are surrounding us. Never think that the beautiful forest we have around is an established fact: it is a gift which we have to take good care. The good care comes very often by the education.

I would love to see SAIIER founding as a real help and push for more Aurovilian children’s books. In order to support the writers, the team who decides and follows needs to be more present, listening and encouraging. It can become a real publisher’s unit and help the distribution in the schools, create events in the Ashram, make a children’s book fair and promote the books through India...

As a conclusion, I would like to thank all of you for the manifestation of this book: “The Smile of the Acacia”.

Translation of “Petit cahier d'exercices pour accompagner nos enfants à écouter et transformer leurs émotions par la méditation”

by Marie-Claire

This project aims to help children from 5 to 12 with tools to reach inner peace through exercises developed in my practice as a teacher and as a psychologist. This will be the base for a book, “Lucy is Looking for Peace”, an initiatory tale. The idea is to have the exercises throughout the year as a regular practice for centering and overcoming fears and sadness, through the journey of a little girl in search of Peace.

Description of project:
I already published in France (through Editions Jouvence) two little books for self-development: “Petit cahier d’exercices de stimulation des forces de guérison par l'amour” (“Small exercise book to stimulate healing forces through love”), and “Petit cahier d'exercices pour accompagner nos enfants à écouter et transformer leurs émotions par la méditation” (“Small exercise book to help our children listen and transform their emotions through meditation”), which includes a CD. The book with audio exercises for children is the basis to write the new book next year.

Now the exercises have been translated into English, and I am planning to use them at first for teachers who want to use them, but secondly to use the most relevant ones with the support of a story, as a progression towards inner peace and dialogue with the Self.

The French book was a success and I experimented it in France in some classes. The idea is to develop it here as a tool for regular awakening exercises in Auroville classes.

Reflections:
What was most meaningful in this project was to develop with children and refine the exercises according to their reactions.

The challenge will be to implement the exercises in a regular schedule so that the children have a daily practice.
“Yusuf and the Little Mouse”

“Yusuf and the Little Mouse” is a story which Mother told to young students in the Ashram school. This project is to publish the story in a picture-book form which would be interesting and informative to readers. The project was initiated by SAIER, who commissioned illustrator Ruchi Mhasane (writing below) to create the illustrations.

Description of project:
The story told by Mother was to inform young people of the discipline and self-control required over one’s own mind before one can achieve any form of enlightenment or wisdom. The protagonist of the story fails in his simple task just because he has allowed the wandering of his mind to undermine his rightfully held belief.

The story is light, but the message profound. It was an ideal story to put in the form of a picture book and bring to life through illustrations.

Reflections:
This project is currently in progress and this question will be better answered on its completion. However, some of the process can be shared.

It was very important for me as an illustrator to keep the focus on Yusuf and his spiritual dilemma and to take away focus from any religious aspect of the story, like the background of the characters, their clothing which may suggest a specific religion or community, or even ethnicity, even though obviously the story belongs to ancient south India (with the reference to river Neela). Working in black and white is hugely liberating for this reason.

Another crucial part of the book was to include Mother’s introduction before she began the story, which helps the reader to better make sense of the message of the story.