Introduction

Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) is the umbrella organization for education in Auroville. Unique on earth, Auroville is an ongoing experiment in human unity where the aim is that residents let the Divine, the true core of individuality and of existence, become a living presence in all activities of life. Auroville’s charter emphasizes that Auroville will be “a place of unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages.”

SAIIER’s sub-units include schools for children of Aurovilians, schools for children from Auroville’s surrounding villages, centres for physical education, for study and for the arts, libraries, a Teachers’ Center, and various educational programs. SAIIER supports these units and their activities through a central administration, coordinating between them, responding to the needs of the community and carrying forward new initiatives in the field of education.

SAIIER receives a yearly grant from the Ministry of Education, Government of India, grants under CSR funds from Indian corporations, and private donations for continuous support of its sub-units. These grants support the schools’ activities, research in social sciences, new construction projects in Auroville, and interesting yearly projects proposed and carried out by members of the Auroville community.

This report covers the activities of SAIIER sub-units and projects over the year 2021-22, as described by the Aurovilians working there.
SAIER operates from an office building located next to the Auroville Foundation Bhavan in Auroville’s administrative area. This year the SAIER team included:

- Four executives: Ashoke, Divya, Sanjeev A., Sanjeev R.
- Office staff: Arun, Divij, Iyyannar, Kalai, Lijun, Ramu
- The SAIER Board: Ashoke, Chali, Divya, Jean-Yves, Jyoti K., Lucas, Manas, Sanjeev A., Sanjeev R., Sauro

The SAIER building offers a conference hall, two small meeting rooms, and desks which are utilized by education-related groups. The Teachers’ Center is adjacent, providing a meeting point and resource center for all teachers of Auroville and Outreach schools.

**Activities of the year:**
Auroville and India faced the second year of Covid-19 restrictions limiting the activities that could take place. Schools of certain grades could open for part of the year. The SAIER team carried on the work of managing grants and donations, coordinating construction projects, and supporting research projects and activities in Auroville when they could take place.

**Construction projects:**
SAIER oversaw the completion of the following projects in 2021-22 supported by the Government of India and private donors:

- SAIER Staff Quarters Phase III – total project cost Rs. 101.67 lakhs
- Auroville Sports Resource Centre stadium electrical room – total project cost Rs. 2.07 lakhs

Several other construction projects are near completion, including:

- SAIER Staff Quarters Phase IV
- SAIER Staff Quarters infrastructure
- Unity Pavilion toilet block
Auroville Pre-Crèche
by Auroprem, Tatiana and all teachers

The aim of the Pre-crèche is to offer the pre-school kids of Auroville a safe and harmonious atmosphere for being, exploring, and learning. The parents can find here a supportive place to meet and share their experience about raising children.

We have two groups: the Babies Group and the Toddlers Group. The Babies Group is for babies from 8 months old to 1½ year old who are accompanied by one of their parents. The Toddlers Group is for kids aged 1½ to 2½ years old to stay without their parents.

Activities of the year:

The school year 2021-22 started with two months delay due to lockdown, and four months later we had another two months of lockdown. This changed a lot our usual way of working. Children with colds were not accepted to come to school, so we had many of the kids missing often, and for an unusually long time. Due to the Covid restrictions, many of the kids had grown up without much contact with people outside the family circle. All these factors disrupted the process of adaptation, which took much longer than we are used to. For these reasons our work was a bit more chaotic and challenging than usual.

The babies group opened very late: only for the last one-and-a-half months, instead of seven months previously. But we were open for them 4 days a week, instead of 2 or 3 in the previous years. We had 19 babies who came to school with their parent or family member. Because of the hot weather and sickness of kids, the group was often small, but peaceful and engaging and the teachers could have better personal contacts. There was not much time to build the collective atmosphere between parents and the feeling of togetherness and sharing in the care for the kids, which is the very special feature of our baby group.

With the toddlers’ group, for a long time it was difficult to do many of the activities we used to do in previous years. As we started the school year a bit late compared to the other years, it was difficult for the kids to stay apart from their parents even for a little while. The circle time also took a long time to settle, but by the end of the year all the kids got used to sitting quietly in the circle and singing and being engaged.

In order to avoid the kids getting sick, we had to cut the water games, which normally give much joy and relaxation. For the first few months we spent our time mostly in the playground, so that kids were not in the closed spaces and had less chance to transmit sickness. Our access to the Matrimandir Gardens was limited due to ongoing works there. We introduced new outdoor games and activities, like watering the plants; the movable small slide became a favourite outside, and some concentration games we took outside.

There were restrictions on the budget too, so we had no possibility to get new materials, especially painting colors and other stationery. But we managed with what we had and we had to invent different ways to be creative.
Outcomes:

We had 22 kids in the toddlers’ group, and some could come only irregularly. The adaptation period this year again was very different and difficult as we had to explore new ways. We as teachers also experienced and learned new things. Some kids had a noticeable sense of insecurity in the new environment, because of the prolonged social isolation. As we had to allow only a limited number of people on campus, we separated our usual group into two, so kids were coming on alternative days and for a shorter period of time. Often we had less than the planned number of kids attending our program, due to signs of health uneasiness, and this reduced the chances for some of them to make friends and play freely. As a result, the adaptation period became longer and with set-backs. Normally in forming the relationship with each child we rely a lot on close physical contact, which this year was somewhat less spontaneous.

Conclusion:

Hoping and praying that we may not have to deal with similar situations in the future. But this emergency situation has taught us a lot, and we have grown as teachers.
The Kindergarten at Center Field is a school for children between the ages of 2 and a half and 7 years old.

**Activities of the year:**

We had 54 students enrolled this year. Because of Covid we could not start the year as usual in the beginning of July. We did not have permission to use the school campus, therefore we decided to use other venues in Auroville. We had done this last year also to some extent, but this time we spent several months working this way and went to more places. Only at the end of September we could return to the Kindergarten.

We were so happy to be back that we managed to stay open throughout an exceptionally heavy monsoon. When exploring the local environment we were not able to give children many skills such as hand-eye coordination. On the other hand we learned a lot more social skills and we become more aware of our surroundings. Exploring Forcomers Canyon was especially fun for the children.

In January we had to close the school again due to Covid. Because of this we did not spend time on our usual Open House / exhibition or other performances. Also, as two teachers went on maternity leave and another had to leave Auroville unexpectedly, we had less time to reflect and prepare. We just had to be in the moment and help where needed. Hopefully the upcoming school year will be more stable.

**Outcomes:**

Spending time at other venues in Auroville was a good experience and we want to integrate this into our future program. For this to happen the parents have to be in agreement, because they provide the transport for the children. We hope we can keep them enthusiastic about this.

**Reflections:**

The repeated lack of teachers was a drawback and we have invited several volunteers to help us in the coming year.
Nandanam Kindergarten
by the teachers

Nandanam Kindergarten is a space for experiencing and exploring Integral Education in the practical, psychological and other levels of being for the children, teachers and parents. Children from 2 ½ to 6 ½ and up to 7 years blossom in this beautiful, precious space, the 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 horizons each time. We essentially and strongly feel that the children need to have the freedom to explore the world within and around them and to grow at their own pace and in their own way, with the possibility of coming in contact with their psychic being and being guided by it.

We try to balance between free play and planned activities, and we also try to balance between group activities – where children learn to coordinate with their friends and develop social qualities – and individual activities where they have the freedom to do things in their own way.

Jalam group (ages 2 ½ to 3 ½):

- Facilitators and report writers: Prava and Bhavani
- Children: 10 children, 5 girls and 5 boys

This year the group of children was smaller compared to other years and it was well-balanced in nationality and gender. As schools were closed due to the pandemic, we chose to reach out to the parents and support the children in other ways. Following all the Covid protocols, we started interacting with small groups of children twice a week for two hours within the common community spaces like gardens etc. It was very challenging to do so as we missed the required facilities.

Initially we started in small groups of three children twice a week for one hour. Gradually we increased the number of children and the number of working days. This let us help the children to settle in. When schools were officially opened then we started working with the children in the campus. From the beginning we created free corners like sandpit,
blocks & Lego, puzzles, free drawing & play-dough and crafts where children could move freely to choose the activity that they like. The facilitators were free to move according to the children's needs. This year we also did a lot of regular sharing and collective games during the circle time; this space helped us to stimulate them for self expression and to develop spoken language.

This year our whole school did a projects on Mother’s Symbol and the 12 Qualities and on Auroville and its symbol. In consideration of the age of our children (2.5 to 3.5 yrs.), we chose to work on this project primarily on the physical and the sensorial level, allowing the magic of this beautiful project to enter into them through a direct experience, without too many mental explanations. We went once a week to Matrimandir garden to explore different flower gardens. Every morning during our circle time, we explored the 12 colours and their qualities. We did paintings with all the 12 colours, exploring different materials such as sponge, brush, fork, flowers and leaves, stencils, shapes, etc. We also dyed rice in some of the colors. Children also visited all the 12 Petals in the Matrimandir and deeply enjoyed seeing the rooms so beautifully designed, lit with different colors. They felt a magic in their bodies and as facilitators we observed that they were in absolute silence.

Prithvi Group (ages 3 ½ to 4 ½):

- Facilitators and report writers: Kiran and Usha
- Children: 13 children, 7 girls and 6 boys

When the school was closed, we met the parents once a week and gave them packets of activities like story books, craft material, games and puzzles to work with the children at home. As the restrictions began to be lifted, we met the children in community spaces to bond with them and participate in their growth in small groups. We did some activities based on sensorial skills like observation, conversation, many discussions, singing and playing.

Once school was regular, we set up creative corners in our classroom like storybook corner, cooking corner, doll house corner, games and puzzles corner, craft corner, play dough corner, sand-pit corner with easy access to water and nature, painting corner and outdoor games corner. The children explored other activities such as Blocks, Play of Painting, Awareness through the Body and exploring different musical instruments.

In the morning free play sessions, the children could happily explore in a safe and interesting environment an activity which engrossed them, where they could be in their own flow.

Circle time was utilized to bring the children together to explore songs in different languages, action games, group conversations, sensorial activities enhancing taste, touch, smell, sight and hearing, and creating mandalas of various types with different materials. Candle passing was one of the meditative activities in the circle. Cutting different fruit and making mandalas and fruit salad, making fruit juice with watermelons, hibiscus and lemons etc. were part of the sensorial activities of the circle.
We touched on physical activities like running, jumping, fun relay races, movements of different animals, swimming, going for walks, but there was not enough time to utilize these activities towards observable development of the children. We went for outings with our children to the following places for various small projects: Svaram (exploring different musical instruments and sounds and rhythms), Windarra Farm (to see cow, goat, turkey, chicken, ducks, dogs), Spirulina farm, Botanical Garden (to see different types of cacti, flowers, trees, shrubs and plants and go through the maze), Auroville Papers, Upasana, and different gardens in Matrimandir.

As per the interests of the children we also did a rainbow project with colours; creating and narrating their own story; farm and wild animals; along with shapes, colours, numbers, butterfly etc. While doing these projects they made their own colour book, number book, shapes book.

During the Auroville Week collective project, Prithvi group had light green (Gratitude), orange (Progress) and mauve (Goodness) rice grains to colour and to fill in in The Mother’s symbol. The children enjoyed the touch, feel and sensation of colouring the rice with paint. It flowed naturally from the rainbow project for us. We also explored the petals at Matrimandir, their colours and design but focussing on the colour and quality. We used Tsunamikas with The Mother’s significances to bring these qualities and colours close to the children’s heart by means of craft work. Each child chose a colour of their choice and made a flower with the colour. They made bracelets and necklaces of the colours to connect to the quality for themselves. It was beautiful to sing Bonne Fete to The Mother and to Auroville all together around Mother’s symbol.

To encourage children to speak their minds we requested them to create their own story books and tell these stories to others. Initially some were hesitant but soon they were full of expression, verbalizing their imagination and creations. We were very surprised at how soon even the shy children increased their vocabulary and how the children gave each other confidence and happiness. It was interesting to see that they made their drawings and then made lines where the text should be since as yet at this age they don’t know to read and write.
Vayu Group (ages 4½ to 5½):

- Facilitators and report writers: Pushpa and Jyoti
- Children: 15 children, 8 girls and 7 boys

Due to the pandemic Nandanam Kindergarten was closed for a long time during the school year. While we were closed, we began with supporting the parents as they took charge of their children’s education at home. We had regular individual meetings with them and provided them with educational materials and proposed activities that they could do with children at home.

As things relaxed a bit and it was allowed to gather in small groups, following the Covid protocols as always, we started regular outings with children in community gardens, farms and Matrimandir gardens. While children played freely in these open spaces, we also carried with us educational materials from school so that we could also do some activities with the children; but these were always limited as much of our setup cannot be moved from school campus.

What we chose to do early January was to take advantage of the situation and really focus on nature. We felt it would be good to focus on flowers as it was the perfect season for it, and to explore colors, though we also explored other thing like numbers and shapes, smell, taste and textures. We did various activities around these themes and also introduced to children some of the significances Mother gave to the flowers. Mother has given significances to some 900 flowers based on the vibrations of the flowers as She perceived them. We chose some whose significance children could relate too, like Courage (Calotropis gigantea), Perseverance (Calendula officinalis), Progress (Catharanthus roseus) etc. These are very common flowers and children understand their significance easily. We talked about how we experience them in our daily life and children spontaneously narrated simple experiences from their lives.

This project helped us naturally move to our next project which was about the Twelve Qualities of the Mother’s Symbol and the flowers that relate to them. The Matrimandir Petals had been closed since long due to the Pandemic initially, then also due to some technical problems. Luckily when we were doing our project, the problems were almost solved and, at our request, the Matrimandir team opened the Petals for us to visit them several times. This was a very deep experience for the children and they wanted to go in again and again. One of the children exclaimed with magic in his eyes that “It was like going inside a flower!!”

By then it was mid-February and schools were allowed to open once more. Auroville’s birthday week was approaching during which we celebrate Mother’s Birthday on 21st February and Auroville’s on 28th February. So back at school we focused on this. We did activities to help connect the layout of Matrimandir’s 12 petals and the Inner Chamber with Mother’s Symbol. We had received from Upasana little Tsunamika dolls in twelve colours, related both to Mother’s Symbol and the Matrimandir Petals. These little Tsunamika dolls that the children loved told them stories of their Qualities and children placed them in the
outer petals of the Mother’s Symbol again and again, following the right order. Some children learnt the names/qualities of many of the dolls and connected to their favorite ones, made drawings of them etc.

There is a children’s storybook titled “What is This Auroville?” and through the help of this book children discovered many things about Auroville: when it was started and why, by whom and how we are part of this story. Thus, they connected Mother with Auroville and through the story and conversations developed deeper understanding of their own identity and purpose of life. They asked many questions and shared many insights.

We closed the school year making Papier Mâché with old paper which gave children also the value of recycling and upcycling. We sent a few days tearing paper into tiny pieces with a mix of patience, endurance and fun feelings. When the huge pile was finally ready, we played several games with it that children enjoyed thoroughly. It was so meaningful to play these games and to explore the pile of paper freely that we invited other classes to have turns to explore them too. We then went to visit a Papier Mache unit in Auroville called WellPaper where children saw how Papier Mache is made, the products that the unit makes out of it and they tried to make some things themselves with it. Back to school in the next few days, we prepared the Papier Mache with the children and they made craft to their liking. Thus this whole project was done in about three weeks time.

Agni Group (ages 5 ½ to 6 ½):

- Facilitators & report writers: Sarasu & Rabi
- Children: 14 children

Agni group focused mainly on creating a learning atmosphere where each child could find his/her own area of interest and express his/her uniqueness in work and grow integrally. This year also, as school was closed initially due to Covid 19 pandemic, we began with supporting the children’s learning needs at home by having brief individual meetings with parents twice a week, to receive the activities done by the children, discuss how things were going at home and also to proposed new activities and lend other educational material.

When the lockdown relaxed a bit and we could meet the children, we invited them in small groups at different community spaces in Auroville following the Covid protocol. There, they explored their surroundings & the nature. We also did some worksheets and art & craft activities.
When the school was finally allowed to open, children participated in the regular activities like learning alphabets: sounds, words, rhymes plus numbers and basics of Tamil language. They had ATB, Blocks, Play of Painting, Write Dance, music, roleplay in class and in the dollhouse, and many Montessori sensorial and practical life games in the Children’s House. Outings and nature walks were part of the program. We did three projects and alongside the above mentioned regular activities.

**Gardening project:**
Sensing the children’s physical energy and in order to give them a hands-on experience and to develop their love towards gardening, we worked on the ‘Gardening’ project. In this project we grew different kinds of vegetables. Children prepared the plot by digging with trowel and spade, making the soil soft, putting compost and mixing it with soil. We allotted individual space to each child, to grow his/her own vegetables. Children sowed the seeds of long beans, ladyfingers, corn etc. and followed-up every day by watering, weeding and observing the growth of their plants. It was a very surprising for them to see the stages of growth of their plants and the arriving of flowers and then finally of the vegetables. They collected and ate their self-grown vegetables with great joy and satisfaction.

**“My body” project:**
This project was taken up to bring awareness about his/her own body, its basic functions and how to take care of it. Children drew their own body on paper by seeing themselves in the mirror and did a bit of stitching around it. We also discussed and did some reflection on different body parts and their uses. Stories and interactions were the medium of providing information and developing their curiosity to know more about it. Questions and sharing about the outer body parts naturally led to the internal organs. Several questions were put forward to the group like, what happens to the food once we swallow it, what helps in the digestion process, function of the heart etc. We used pictures and stories to describe and to deepen their understanding.

Children measured each other’s’ height using different non-measuring devices like pencils, sticks etc. and then we introduced rulers to measure each other’s height. It was an amusing activity for them.

We had beautiful sharing on different hygiene habits and how to keep our body healthy and beautiful. Working on this aspect, we touched many areas like the value of eating fruits and vegetables, chewing food well, drinking good amount of water, proper sleep and sports, effect of TV etc.

**The Mother’s symbol and its twelve qualities:**
In this project our main aim was to let the children know each quality and to develop a deeper understanding of it. We created the environment by displaying the Mother’s symbol and the related flowers signifying each of the twelve qualities. Every day during
circle time, we introduced the Mother’s symbol, discussed and meditated upon it. Each child shared his/ her own understanding and how they relate with it by simple examples and real experiences. As some of the qualities were not easy to grasp for this age-group, we tried to use simpler words and to share instances in our life where we may experience these qualities.

Sensing the children’s enthusiasm and to deepen their connection with the qualities, we visited the Petals of the Matrimandir. Each child chose a petal they would like to visit. They concentrated inside the petal and observed the symbol and its colour. After coming back, they drew and coloured the petal which they had visited. Every day we did many activities and games around it to remember all qualities of the symbol and their colours.

During the relaxation time we used different coloured stoles to cover them to let them connect with the colour and the significance of it. To make the learning more joyful for the children, we took up a quality for each day and invited the children to wear that particular colour that day, and did various activities around that colour. Children’s interest spontaneously turned towards the flowers. They started bringing flowers related to the Qualities from their homes. They chose their flowers, observed them minutely and drew & painted them.

We did some activities on matching leaves with flowers and smelling flowers with closed eyes and guessing the significance of the flower. We involved the children in the whole process of growing flower plants inside the campus and collecting seeds and watering them and taking good care of them.

We concluded the project with a little presentation to parents and teachers through some movement and expressions.

This year we helped the children to learn single digit addition & subtraction both by writing and calculating in their mind, just as we did other related concepts. In English, by the end of the year most of the children could read and write small words and simple sentences. They have also improved spoken English.

Overall, children developed a sense of collaboration and togetherness as a class. They learnt to be sensitive to each other’s needs. They developed the capacity to understand and express their needs and emotions.

Outcomes:
Whether the school was open or closed, we always found ways to reach out to the children.

The facilitators learned to be flexible and creative in supporting the learning needs of the children, flowing with the circumstances in regard to the pandemic and making the best of it. They also built a closer relationship with the parents and partnered better in assisting the children. Parents had a closer insight in our work and developed a better understanding of their children.

With mutual trust and understanding, the year passed in a joyful growth for all.
Reflections:

What was meaningful this year was that in spite of instability in our school program due to the pandemic, we observed a stable overall growth of the children. This has been very rewarding.

The challenge has been in dealing with some parents’ reaction to the pandemic and to the alternative supportive solutions that we were trying to offer, outside of the school setting, following all the covid protocols. While some parents were hesitant to engage, others wanted more support. Being flexible and adapting to different needs and dealing with different emotional responses of the parents was a challenge and we learnt to be more understanding, supportive in each case. We never had such an experience before and it was a great learning.

Conclusion:

We have always considered the community as the learning environment for the children and have regularly, either invited some resource persons to the school or visited units and farms, often based on the project we were doing with the children. This really is a special gift of Auroville to the children. Yet it is through these last two years of the pandemic that we realized what a beautiful support system we have in Auroville and how the community helped us support the children’s learning needs despite the schools being closed.
Aha! Kindergarten
by Arati, Nandhini, Shilpi and Pranshula

Aha! Kindergarten is a school for children 2.5-7 years of age, following a self-directed, free-progress methodology of learning. Aha's methodology of free progress aims to provide:

1. A rich sensory environment, both indoors and outdoors. Nature itself is the best teacher when kids are fully immersed in their activity.
2. Freedom to explore without directed guidance.
3. Teachers that assume the role of facilitators who observe and create a space with love and trust and provide materials as per each child’s connection and interest.

Activities of the year:

For this school year July 2021- April '22 there were full government restrictions in place for schools from July-September and partial restrictions from January. So, Aha! engaged the children per their needs as well as we could while remaining compliant to the regulations. We started the academic year with 12 children, and the number grew to 16 children by the end of the year.

To ensure the children connect with each other, nature, and animals in a safe environment, we took them on many field visits like to Baraka, Matrimandir Gardens, Dehashakti and other outdoor spaces.

At Baraka children got a chance to observe and safely engage with horses, turkeys, hens, ducks, dogs, cats. Children quietly observed the horses and brushed and patted them. This interaction helps them get rid of the fear associated with 'animals' and also accept them as a part of life. As a result, the foundation for an empathetic relationship with creatures and nature gradually develops.

At Dehashakti children explored by bouncing and dribbling balls on various surfaces. They observed the difference in bounce according to the types of ball (football, basketball, large ball) and types of surface (sand, concrete, grass, hard). We had an example of how when children are given space and time, their creativity and spontaneity takes beautiful forms. The children worked together, digging with hands, to make sand tunnels. They decorated them with shells found in the sand pit area. The children also saw an injured rescued donkey at Dehashakti. The donkey was injured and bleeding in some parts. The kids were not afraid and showed a lot of compassion and patience with the donkey. They patted it and spent time with it gently.
Insects present a window for children into the animal world. Often when kids first come to Aha! they hold fear of insects, instilled through previous experiences. Here the kids are given a quiet space to be in the same space with insects in a non-fearful, non-confrontational way. The facilitators also hold that space of being comfortable with creatures. We observe that their fear of insects slowly decreases and they begin to develop curiosity and interest by observing the insects closely. Through this fearless observation their entire outlook towards creatures like insects, worms, centipedes etc. changes. There comes a time when they observe them for long periods of time from a distance, or gently hold them in their hand and let them go when their curiosity is satisfied.

Gopa’s presentation on Child Brain Development:

Every year we make an effort to help the parents be aware of developmental neuroscience perspective on brain development at different ages, with focus on kindergarten age. This year also Gopa Kota, psychologist and counselor in Mattram, made a presentation to the parents and facilitators. She explained the importance of an environment that is free of fear, competition, judgment, encouragement and discouragement. An environment that fosters love and care. Gopa also insists that we as parents and facilitators have to know our child’s temperament. Since the frontal part of the brain is not developed yet, too much logical reasoning or explanations don’t help. It is important to spend time with the child and co-regulate.

Outcomes:

Children engaged in multiple activities per their interest and expressed their creativity through various media like crafts, painting, roleplay, blocks, clay, sandpit and outdoor explorations.

The facilitators observed that their engagements are setting a strong foundation in academics like mathematics, science, languages and also in interpersonal skills like clear communication, teamwork, and problem solving. The children also learn about their feelings and emotions and learn to persevere through ‘failures’ to develop their capabilities.

This year the network of Aha! family widened with new students, parents and facilitators joining. This support system helps the parents understand and allows the child to have a harmonious experience between school and home environments. Mutual understanding between facilitators and children, facilitators and parents, and parents and children deepens and the group grows together.

Research highlights:

This year the focus area of learning was on understanding the ‘vital’ aspects of our being. There is no comparison between children, and they are given lots of space so that the child understands that it’s alright to be different and that they are unique. The facilitators don’t give approval-disapproval, encouragement-discouragement, praise-reprimand to the children. The facilitators provide an environment for overcoming borrowed stuff. Hence, the
children don’t do activities as a chore but for the joy of learning. They do the activities for many days, completely engrossed. They communicate, define their own wants and needs, holding their own interest and curiosity so that they do not depend on external guidance, but their own, for their learning and experience. Some examples:

- **Perseverance** - During outdoor play, two children were playing at the slide and monkey bars. One saw that the other children were going up the side of the slide with the rope. She tried multiple times but couldn’t do it. Similarly, the other child faced challenges while trying the monkey bars. She wanted to cross the full length of money bars but kept falling down. Both of these kids kept on trying by their own volition and driven by their inner drive to grow. The child on the monkey bars progressed slowly by choosing to do small steps. In fact, this allowed her body strength also to develop gradually. After many repeated attempts in their own way, they both did the slide and monkey bars, the way they had wanted to.

- **Self-regulation** - We observed that a child wanted to make a house with floor mats. He had to make repeated attempts to get the shape he wanted. This required a lot of patience and attention. We observed that he would put a few mats and then run in circles around the mats. Then he would make some more and repeat. We connected this to children’s inherent ability to self-regulate, if given the time and space. As this self-regulation developed naturally in him, he can use this experience as a reference point through his life.

- **Co-regulation** - We have noticed that often, if the children trust the environment, then even in conflict situations, arguments or accidents, they respond with sincerity and care. One child got hurt while playing. The facilitators asked him if he would like to lie down. He lay down on a cushion to rest for a bit. Slowly the other children also came one by one and lay down around him on cushions. This co-regulation between the children was very helpful. The child who got hurt felt better also having this connection and company with his friends.

**Reflections:**

We give a lot of freedom and space to the individual child, and to know each child’s temperament, nature and way of doing and learning can be a challenge for facilitators. Getting to know them is at the same time a beautiful experience and an opportunity to progress together as facilitators and parents.

Very meaningful for us is the afternoon sharing/co-learning sessions among the facilitators about the day. These allow us to understand both individually and as a team the ‘free progress’ approach in light of our immediate experiences with the children. We refer to the book *A New Education for a New Consciousness*, which is a compilation of the work of Mother and Sri Aurobindo on education.
Lilaloka (“the universe of Play” in Sanskrit) is a Self-Learning Resource Centre for the Child. Lilaloka offers various activities based on self-discovery and spontaneous self-learning through Play. A place where she/he feels safe and accepted as she/he is, unique and happy with her/himself and amongst others without competition or judgment and allowing mixes of ages. The team of Lilaloka works in collaboration with schools and parents, considering each child as an evolving being.

Our centre is a space dedicated to the child, parallel to the schools, open to all ages and types of children, attending school or not, with or without special needs, beyond all categories. Here, all will meet and benefit from the energy born from these interactions, each individual being enriched through the differences of the others; where joy shows the path and play is the work. It is Lilaloka’s dream to become a resource centre dedicated to this, also a place where educators can meet and share their research and experience.

Activities of the year:

Due to the restrictions of the pandemic the number of participants on a weekly basis was constantly changing. Specially the amount of group sessions we could offer reduced a lot in number. There was an increase in the need for individual sessions. Some children got very affected by the instability of their routine. At times we could continue with small groups of maximum 5 children.

Individual sessions for children in need of respite and children with different abilities (Marianne):

Working with Shiatsu and reflexo therapy points are a means to connect with the children and gain their trust through a non-verbal communication. The session starts with a small meditation/concentration where we align ourself through different visualisations. The aim is to quiet the mind and focus on the body through breathing. The full session takes about 1 hour and happens once a week. The relaxation takes between 5 and 30 minutes. It can take 5 or 6 classes with active children to get to manage a 15 minute relaxation.

The rest of the session is tailored to the needs of each child through cognitive or physical games. The aim is to release the body of the day-to-day tensions and increase confidence. It also gives tools to the children to learn how to cope with their emotions. Improvements in the behaviour of the children have been noticed by parents and teachers. I also use some kinaesthetic tools like juggling, mirroring exercises and clapping rhythms, to help develop the body/mind connection. These exercises need concentration and focusing. It
shows them how to relate breathing and balancing in the body helps to focus on the task at hand.

“My Imaginary World” (Anna):

“My Imaginary World” originated out of the individual play sessions. I often got asked by the children to help them build their worlds and then they would ask me to play with them. I realised that if I’m going to let the child lead the seasons I should play, as that’s being asked, but how do I do this without imposing the way? So I started on a journey of how to do this work and discovered that it is an amazing tool to guide children to overcome their difficulties.

When the child arrives I ask them what the story plot is for today. They choose what materials to use like figures, tools, cloth, dolls, mats, tables, toy houses, books etc. We might have to go foraging for some ingredients in nature or need to make a prop. Then we build our world according to the story we are playing. Usually the story starts while building with lots of adaptations throughout the session (most children play with the same story base for around 8 sessions).

Playing with a child lets you into their world. I have found this an excellent way to gently bring awareness to the child’s feelings. First it is very important to not take/make the situation personal. Show personal identification and understanding of the emotion/feelings of the child. While playing you can take on the personality/role of one of the child’s difficulties or simply let the child know you hear/understand them but never analyse what they say.

Group activities focusing on social and emotional interactions (Jitta):

The group activities were reduced to 5 children per group. Before the pandemic we would have around 10 children per group, two facilitators and a helper. The children would come according to their choice of the specific activity offered. We offer a range of activities so the children can discover their interests and choose freely. The activities are based on teamwork: together we honour Mother Earth, each other and the world around us, explore our own abilities and learn how we can support each other. We focus mainly on the group process and development of social skills by offering an emotionally safe space to play. This involves a lot of indirect learning, learning through joy and playing.

There is nothing imposed on the child so if the child feels to watch or do its own thing they are free to do so. We will reinvite them to join the activity and let them know that whenever they are ready to join they are welcome.

The activities we play with include: art project space, experimenting with elements, small science projects, discovering life around us, story reading, acting, puppet show, theatre games, educational and physical group games, nature walks and yummy edible local
creations to add to our shared snack. During the preparation of this snack there is a lot of communication, sharing and team work. We share stories of our experiences. This builds trust among the children, we become aware of our inner self, about the other, and the world around us.

In general this year with the constant change in restrictions most of the group activities became a flowing-through of all the activities on different afternoons. For the individual sessions the work could continue on a regular basis especially with the children we have worked several years with.

We also had a request from the schools to help children with their schoolwork who could not receive help at home, so we organised sessions for this.

Lilaloka has participants who have been with us from the beginning. Some of the teenagers are interested in working with the children and learning about education, so we have been including them as helpers in the groups. It has been beautiful to witness the interaction, joy and playfulness between them and the younger children.

Outcomes:

It was a year of constant adjustments to the changing Covid regulations. This influenced strongly the character of our work and we were happy to be able to offer support to the children and schools during this time. Since each child is an evolving being and needs its own specific approach we had to use all our original and creative feeling to offer each individual the right space, tools and guidance.

Reflections:

Specially in the field of education for children with different abilities there is a big need for a different approach and understanding. It was a challenge to learn and find our own way with each child guided purely by observation and intuition, in collaboration with the parents. The positive outcomes of our experimental work with children with special needs led parents to open up and share the challenges they face. The sharing of our experiences and observations with the team helped us all to grow.

Conclusion:

According to the feedback we got we realise the importance of a space solely focussed on the child. We hope to grow Lilaloka’s team with motivated facilitators who receive a maintenance. We intend to continue with the apprenticeship program, to offer more workshops, invest in long-lasting educational materials, and answer the demand from families living in India.
Transition School
by Mary and Transition Team members

Inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the aim of Transition School is to help our children develop integrally so that each child may develop naturally to his/her full potential, to impart a solid academic grounding, as well as to foster human values so that Auroville children can become responsible individuals, dedicated towards human unity.

Transition School has been open since 1985 as a primary and middle school that serves the Auroville community. We now work with about 160 students, ranging in age from 6-14 (grades 1 through 8). These students and the adults who work with them come from many different countries and several states of India. This creates a stimulating multi-cultural environment that offers many opportunities for dynamic, creative teaching and learning experiences. It also exposes teachers and children to humanity's rich cultural heritage and diversity, as children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds grow together in an atmosphere of protected freedom and harmony, developing an understanding that we are citizens of one world.

Special care is taken that material used (books, videos, computer programs) reflects wholesome values. Our program initiates what will hopefully be a life-long process of individual development towards a balance of body, mind, and spirit. We work to develop and improve our program and teaching methods so that each child has the possibility to grow and develop.

The program includes long-established subjects such as reading, writing, math, science, computer, environmental and social studies, music, physical education, and arts and crafts. The languages of Auroville, French, Tamil, English and Sanskrit are taught at Transition. English is the medium of instruction, French and Tamil are taught as first and second languages. Awareness Through the Body (ATB) is a very important part of our program. ATB is a comprehensive curriculum of activities and exercises that aims to raise awareness and enable both children and adults to become conscious of their own perceptions and abilities, so that they may become more self-aware, self-directed individuals. It offers ways to discover the existing connections between mind, emotions and the physical body, and to integrate these different parts into a more harmonious whole, organized around the inmost centre of the being.

Our children learn subject matter, and equally important, they learn how to be together, to share, to express themselves, and to be responsible for their actions. We believe that this approach and focus help our students to become effective, self-directed learners who can function both independently and cooperatively.

Transition School does not use a traditional grading system. Teachers have regular meetings with each of their students to assess their learning and personal progress through portfolios and periodic reviews. Parent-teacher conferences occur throughout the year.
Our deepest aspiration is to prepare our children and ourselves to live in a higher consciousness to manifest a truer and higher life on earth. Sri Aurobindo and Mother are our guides and the ideals of the Charter of Auroville are foremost in our minds.

**Activities of the year:**

These past two years the students, teachers and the school have faced many challenges.

In March 2020, the school was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For over 18 months the students studied independently, with teacher and parental support, and online. The higher grades had live sessions on Zoom. In November 2021, the school was allowed to open. It briefly closed in January 2022, and then resumed in February 2022. Although we had been working with the children in many different ways when the schools were locked down, when we were able to open the schools and bring them back to school, children, parents and teachers were happy.

In discussion we agreed that school life is very important to the children. School experiences offer important lessons in terms of knowledge, growth development and other aspects of their being. Some say a good school is the most important part of our child’s life as it offers important lessons to the child in terms of knowledge, growth, and personal development. Life in the school also provides and reinforces awareness and behavioral patterns for being social and interactive with different people and aids in the awareness.

On the day-to-day practical level, we also experienced how much adjustment was needed for everyone and how much more productive and enriching it is to just see the children full time in school, instead of sporadically or online. Teachers and students were very happy to come back. The after-effect of school closure was noticeable in the capacity of holding attention for longer stretches of time. The children were often restless, and often it was not easy for them to hold sustained attention in the classroom. We had to build it up. Slowly and gradually we were able to meet them full days again. We saw a constant improvement in their energy level and their capacities to hold attention. Once the second term started, things became more relaxed and productive for everyone.

**Highlights:**

- **School Assembly:** In March 2022, we had our first all-school assembly in two years. Some of the younger children had never attended an assembly. The older students were happy and excited that assembly would be able to start again. It is a very important part of the school day. The assembly gives everyone the opportunity to start the week well. We begin with a greeting, and then share announcements. This is presented by the eighth grade students, and they learn to speak and hold the space with more than 180 people in the hall. This is followed by a concentration led by Joan. The exercises for the concentration vary, and they are followed by all the students listening to a selected piece of music with eyes closed. This small part of the
week, of about twenty minutes, is a vital part of our programme that we have missed during the pandemic.

- **Reading buddies:** Reading buddies are a very important part of the programme in Transition School, but they could not meet during time of the school shutdown. Every year, the middle school students listen to their younger buddies reading, and assist them. This is enjoyed by both the younger and older students. It fosters a sense of caring, and develops the feeling that we are all one community in the school. The older students remember how much they enjoyed reading with their big buddies when they were in first and second grade, and they look forward to having the chance to be a reading buddy for a younger child. The teachers of the first and second grade students really appreciate the individual attention that the older buddies can give the children. Occasionally, the middle school students have lunch with their younger buddy, which gives them the possibility to learn more about their lives and to become friends.

- **Values for Human Unity:** 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. This year the grade 8 students chose a theme for the school to be aware of: “United we Stand, Divided we Fall”. They found some Aesop’s fables and other stories and even historical events in which this was a theme, and shared with the younger children. Even though we were not able to work all together as much as usual, the children responded to this theme.

- **Projects and Presentations:** The eighth grade students were very happy when school reopened. They had been working online and in other ways, but this is what they needed – to be in school. They said this also. They invited family and friends to see a PowerPoint presentation which the students made based on their study of biomes of planet Earth. This was part of their science program. It was a successful and fun project for them. Additionally, a little later in the year they presented their school-leaving portfolios to their parents. This is the portfolio that they have been working on for 8 years.

- **“Auroville, Our Home”:** We continued with this project this year. After discussion, the students held interviews of many different Aurovilians and wrote a small report on what they had learned. This was independent work – they needed to make the appointments with the people and meet them to find out more about them and their life in Auroville. The people that were interviewed gave wonderful feedback; they appreciated the students and the students were happy. We also added events to the Auroville Timeline that students have been building on.

- **In February 2022, the 7th grade students gave a presentation to their parents.** Earlier in the school year, they had read several short stories about real-life heroes,
and they had enjoyed them. To develop the project further, they then each chose their hero to research their life and write a biography about them. Some of the heroes chosen included: Marie Curie, Emmeline Pankhurst, Albert Einstein and Sri Aurobindo. Before the students wrote their essays, the teacher set the parameters of the assignment with some leading questions, and the students were asked to organize their thoughts in prewriting exercises before they attempted their first drafts. The final outcome, after the students had written a second draft with the input of the teacher, was a five-paragraph essay. These essays were then adapted into two-minute presentations, which the students presented. This type of activity and many aspects of it had not been possible in the times the schools were locked down. The students were able to practice public-speaking skills, learning to speak clearly and to project their voices, while being conscious of their body language and the impression they were making on their audience. These valuable learning experiences could resume again once school reopened, and the parents were very happy to have the opportunity to watch the presentations.

- **The 7th graders worked on a science research project** from September 2021 – April 2022. The aim of the project was to explore the possibility of installing a solar backup project for Transition School. The first step was to map the school and identify the amount of electricity that would be needed to provide backup in case of power cuts, which are an almost daily occurrence here. This led to some fairly complex mathematical calculations. The next stage was to learn about solar energy and how it works. Then the students identified and measured the sunny roofs on the school campus. The next important step was to find out the cost of changing all the fans and lights to energy-efficient fittings, and the final stage was to identify the service connections on the campus. This research led to more questions, and it is a work in progress to find the answers with the help of solar experts. The students then made a PowerPoint presentation, and with the help of their science teacher, made a small play demonstrating what they had learnt.

**Awareness Through the Body (ATB) – Observations on the effects of lockdown on the children of Grades 1-8:**

For more than two years we have had the opportunity to observe and better understand the effects the lockdown has had on children. We would ordinarily work with children once a week, but during this time there were numerous breaks when a full lockdown was reestablished. What became obvious was that these disruptions, even of short duration, had a significant negative impact on the children. The children returned to ATB disoriented, imbalanced, and with kind of a mixture of stress and inertia in their bodies. The whole situation – coming to school, not coming to school, changing the timings – disoriented them. This outcome reinforced our understanding of the importance of routine and continuity for children. Structure and regularity help settle the children, help them to have a sense of direction, of balance, and provide them a sense of progress.
We also found that lack of regularity fostered unhealthy patterns in many of the children. Some of these patterns were: a reluctance to endure an effort and quickly giving up when things became a little difficult, detachment from body sensations, and a disconnection between their perceptions and sensations. During this time, children complained more about body aches and pains than at other times. A certain number of children gained weight. These discomforts could be due to a lack of activity during lockdown, losing touch with their bodies, and forgetting how to use their bodies effectively. Many children also had difficulty sustaining attention.

In ATB, what was most helpful for children during this time was finding back the sense of attention, practicing to focus their attention and bringing it to body felt sensations. This attention to body sensations changed the way that children felt and related to each other. It brought them back to their senses and into their sense of body which was beneficial. Coming back to their body and self-sensing was reassuring for them. Often quite suddenly something went quiet for most of them. The stress and tensions they had been holding could melt away.

During 2021 and 2022 we offered mobile circuits (all things move) and flying cloth circuits (cloth hanging and suspended from the ceiling). These are challenging to navigate and offered children many opportunities to learn, grow and be in their bodies. They learned not take anything for granted, to be attentive to what they were doing at each moment, to trust their bodies, and to find balance as a constant delicate adjustment to imbalance. They practiced paying attention to how they were using themselves, and finding different ways to use their bodies and their attention. They grew more confident in their bodies. As one 2nd grade student shared, “I don’t need so much help anymore!”

In the last few months when children were able to attend ATB twice a week, the benefits were pronounced. They had the sense of coming back to a group. Not only being with children, but a sense of belonging to a group and working with a group. And something within them relaxed further.

When we were able to meet children regularly over time and establish a consistent routine in the school (not only in ATB), children slowly got back on track. As they regularly practiced soft focused attention and developed their self-sensing, they became more present and in touch with themselves. They were more at ease and confident. These outcomes were quite noticeable.

Teaching Music Online (Grades 1-8):

Long before the current pandemic, lockdowns and the need to work from home, music education was naturally moving towards an online approach. With so much information available, and the idea that everything can be studied from the comfort of the home, often free of charge, things had started to move in this direction for quite some time. In the last years the role of the teacher changed completely. Traditional face-to-face classes started to happen less and less, and as educators we had to find new ways of meeting the demands of students.
In this particular case, not being able to meet students in person was not our own choice, but the upside was that we started to see online teaching in a new way. It accelerated the learning process, and because we had to do it, the advantages and disadvantages became very clear.

The most obvious disadvantage was for younger students. There was little or no way to teach the early grades music online. Younger children need to be in class with one or more teachers. They need support and guidance, and cannot be expected to study or do things by themselves. The onus then comes on the parents, which is a lot to expect when they themselves have many things to do.

With slightly older students there was some leeway, but not a great deal. This again relied very much on adult support and constant followup. With so many subjects being learned online, including the core subjects, it was a lot to expect to have students follow up on assignments, no matter how “fun” the teacher made them.

With the oldest children there was definitely some promise. Most were very technically aware and as long as a project was well designed, there was motivation and the possibility to carry out work. In fact, for some students who were shyer, online work turned out to be quite interesting, as they were able to explore things that they were not comfortable to do in class. Still, on the other side, much followup was needed in order to get things complete, and it was very easy for students to put aside music work in favour for other things, work or play.

Though adults are not taught in Transition School, it is worth mentioning that even here adults were unable to work online in a way that was as efficient as in person. Online work demands a big capacity for self-discipline, and not everybody has that. It needs to be developed and worked on as much as the music work itself.

The advantage of online work, for those who can work regularly, is that it can offer things to study that were not thought possible in person. With YouTube, music streaming and many other online platforms, there are literally unlimited ways to study, and some students definitely were able to take advantage of this. As long as there was consistent contact with the teacher, some students were able to try completely new ways of working.

All in all, though music can be studied online there is no substitute for person-to-person classes. Perhaps in years to come there will be better methods of doing so, but for now if it is possible; music must be done in person at least part of the time. The biggest losses were for younger students, but even older students who had the self-discipline and dedication to work, will have missed out on things that can only be shared face to face.

**Outcomes:**

The school year ended with a very enthusiastically attended and joyful Open House. Children met their parents and family friends and showed them their classrooms and their displays, and then took them to see the other classrooms. Many parents and other visitors were very happy to be in Transition School after almost two years of limited meeting.
At the end of the 2020-21 school year the Transition School team had a discussion on assessment. Assessment of the student’s progress is a very important component of education. If well thought-out and used appropriately, it can have a big impact on student learning and growth. Effective assessments give students feedback on how well they understand and on what they need to improve, while helping teachers to better design instruction. It is used as a tool to aid the student to become more aware of him/herself and also to help those who guide the student in his/her personal development.

We decided to make assessment a special focus of this school year, to learn from each others’ practices and to continue to progress.

**Description of project:**

At the beginning of the school year we met to initiate the subject. We scheduled some discussions and workshops to share our ideas and to help each other further develop assessment skills. Regretfully, because of the problems with the Covid-19 pandemic, we did not do as much as we planned on, but we did have some interesting discussions and worked to share and learn about assessment practices. We spoke about the difference between assessment and evaluation.

Transition School does not use traditional grading. We prefer assessment methods that focus on learning and enjoying. In discussion the term ‘authentic assessment’ was introduced. Authentic assessment is the style of learning that uses creative experiences to test a student’s knowledge. It allows students to apply newly acquired skills to situations and practice problem-solving. Authentic here means ‘realistic’, and authentic assessment means working on real examples.

In discussion we realized that we had been using many types of authentic assessment in Transition School. Some examples are:

- doing science experiments and write-up results
- conducting social-science research (like for our “Auroville, Our Home” project)
- writing stories and reports/essays
- conducting interviews
- reading, analyzing and interpreting literature
- solving math problems that have real-world applications
- giving presentations of many types

Related to assessment is Transition School’s Student Portfolio. The aim of the portfolio is to demonstrate the progress and development of the child over the year at school. The type of portfolio that we are aiming for shows the whole person, including the out-of-school
interests of the child. The portfolio is used as a tool to aid the student to become more aware of him/herself and also to help those who guide the student in his/her personal development. It facilitates an ongoing dialogue between the teacher, the student and the parent.

In creating their portfolios, the children learn to give feedback on their own work. Each piece included in the portfolio has an entry slip in which the child reflects on the work. We concluded that the Student Portfolios were good examples of applying authentic assessment.

Example from first grade:
“A few weeks into the school year, in July, we gave the students a worksheet where they were to write their name and make a portrait of themselves. These portraits were added to their portfolios.

In the last week of the school year we handed out the exact same worksheet. When the students had completed their assignments we showed them the work that they had done in July. We talked about how their handwriting had changed and improved and how they draw themselves differently now. The students loved seeing their own development.

As a teacher it was also very interesting to see how their skills had improved. One girl drew herself as a tadpole figure in July. When writing her name she reversed letters and was unable to stay on the line. Now her drawing is a figure with a body, arms and legs and she writes the letters in a correct way. Another girl was already at a good level when starting first grade in July. We could see small changes in her writing such as the placement of the letter ‘y’. Her newer drawing is also more detailed and precise.”

Example from Awareness Through the Body (ATB):
“Throughout the year children are offered cooperative games. The games are challenging and demand that children find a way to work together. These demands bring out all the difficulties within the group. We allow these difficulties to show and witness them. Depending on the group and what is happening, we may pause the game to have the children share what is happening. What is helping and hindering the group? We pose questions to help them reflect and sort themselves out, yet do not give solutions.

At the end of the class we always ensure there is enough time to share and debrief what happened. This provides time so children can recall what was working and remember to implement those things the next time they do a group work of any type. In this way cooperative games become a self and group assessment where the children begin to take responsibility for themselves and the group in order to work better together.”

Outcomes:
This year the students did many projects of different kinds. The teachers tried using different assessment strategies before, during, and after their lessons. Generally, teachers do not rely on only one assessment method. The children got feedback about their presentations, learned to write and summarize, made displays of topics that they had worked
on, and discussed with their teachers about what they had learned or what they did not understand.

Transition School teachers gained an understanding of ‘authentic assessment’. Students created their Student Portfolios with help from their teachers, learning how to reflect on their work. At our Open House, displays of the students’ work done throughout the year were shared with the parents. Students, teachers and parents were all in communication.

**Reflections and conclusion:**

In conclusion, assessments can range from simply asking questions during a lesson to class presentations after a unit of study. Assessment is not only a way we can measure student performance, but it is also a way for teachers to plan instruction and reflect on their own methods of teaching.

I plan to use assessments in my classroom that show progress over time, as well as assessments that allow the students to display what they have learned at the conclusion of the lesson.

Assessment is a way for students and teachers to evaluate their learning. Transition School does not use a traditional grading system, but we believe that using authentic assessment methods will encourage the children to learn, and this will be helpful for the future.
Inspired by the Integral education described by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, Deepanam School aims to offer the children an atmosphere of freedom and creativity which supports the natural development of children and imparts the joy of learning with independence and responsibility. Our ultimate objective is to help identify in each child their full potential and bring out their best. Each child is given a chance to develop at his/her own pace and children are divided into mixed age groups.

Deepanam is one of the three primary/middle schools of Auroville. As a small community school it aims to provide a balanced program of academic study, arts, play and exploration to children aged from 7 to 14 years. The subjects taught include: English, Maths, Science, History, ATB, Craft, Painting and Clay. The students work on different projects during the year allowing them to explore various areas and go on field trips within Auroville and beyond. Additionally, this year, the school aimed to include longer Math and Language sessions (1.5 hours) for the older group and build in some free hours to aid the creative process.

Activities of the year:
A teaching team of approximately 14 full-time and 5 part-time paid staff worked in Deepanam school this year. A further handful of adults from across the community come to offer specific activities with the children. The total number of 58 students was split according to different age groups: Light group (ages 7-8), Peace group (ages 9-10), Grace group (ages 11-12), Faith group (age 13) and Hope group (age 14).

Introduction of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) programme:
This year, we collaborated with Yuvabe, an Auroville unit to make Science, Arts and Math fun and meaningful for the children using various forms of media. We used a hands-on, project-based learning approach to instill soft skills such as research, perseverance, integrity, team work, responsibility and resilience. Here are the topics explored throughout the year by different age groups:

- **Peace group (3rd and 4th graders):** Building bridges and towers, marble run, marble maze, Archimedes screw, pinball, rubber-band powered cars, water wheels, free-form building.
- **Grace group (5th and 6th graders):** Tensegrity, center of mass/gravity, standing popsicle stick, spiraling toy, Calder mobile, pop-up cards, Hydraulic Elevator, Hydraulic Arm, creating ads using stop-motion videos.
- **Faith and Hope groups (7th and 8th graders):** Forces of Flight (experiments and rubber-band powered planes), Heat (conduction, convection & radiation; experiments
culminating in building a Solar Oven & Thermal Flask), Circuits and Electronics (building a simple circuit, lighting up an LED with resistor, automatic light using LDR, soldering components, SSD and building a simple motor), creating ads using stop-motion videos, Python programming.

The “STEAM Fest ’22” was organized on April 2nd to welcome the community and showcase over 30 projects along with fun, engaging and interactive stalls. More than a 100 people visited the school and many students from other Auroville schools also attended the fest. Some comments from the community:

- “I loved the fest with the interaction and map. Great job by all the hardworking kids and of course teachers!” – Honor Chance
- “This was awesome! I learnt so much from the kids. Looking forward to more science at Auroville.” – Gopa Kota

Setting up of the Science Lab:

The Science Lab was slowly developed during the year and is now well-equipped for students of all age groups.

- **Peace group**: With the students of 3rd and 4th grade, we started understanding the scientific way of classification by studying animals. We observe the different classes of animals, what is common in them, and also how each of them has its own particularities. We also learnt about evolution, adaptations, food chains, habitats, ecosystems, and most of all we tried to wonder about all the amazing possibilities that nature has and learn to respect all forms of life.

  To supplement the classroom learning, we watched videos, read about animals and their habitats, did personal projects with chosen animals, went on field trips to the Botanical Gardens, Crocodile Bank, and the school campus to observe and interact with nature.

- **Grace group**: We explored waves and matter as they are interwoven and spent time playing with the nature of sound and light. We learned about macroscopic properties of matter like density, weight, volume... and also through its microscopic reality, exploring atoms and molecules through videos, models, stories. We experienced matter through simple chemical experiments, and marveled at the changes produced when solid substances are mixed with water – this helped us go deeper into the concept of molecules.

  We experimented with waves through games of falling dominos, human waves, slinkys, and waves machines created by us. We learned the different kinds of waves: mechanical and electromagnetic, transverse and longitudinal.

- **Faith group**: With the 7th grade students, we explored motion through experimentation and reasoning with the background and support of Newton’s laws. We learned how to use precision scales, thermometers, test tubes, Erlenmeyers, and
other instruments. The students also observed different types of chemical reactions, exo and endothermic, acid and base, precipitation, sublimation, change of colors...and we tried to figure out what is a chemical reaction and what is really happening at the molecular level.

Theater as a Medium for Language Immersion:

- **Light group:** The children were trained and prepared for a presentation on the features of birds and the significance of birds in the ecosystem for the Open House celebrations. The children did a play about Forests and birds for the cultural program – the core message was about growing more trees instead of cutting them so more birds come and reside in them. The students learnt to pronounce and articulate well in Tamil through the process of preparation for this performance.

- **Peace group:** We read Sudha Murthy’s short story collection throughout the school year as a read-aloud and created and acted out a play of one of the students’ favorite stories. The kids were involved in making props for the story. The skills that were developed through this exercise were: discipline, teamwork, collaboration, presentation and public speaking skills. Several students improved on their pronunciation and vocabulary skills.

- **Grace group:** To commence Sri Aurobindo’s 150th birthday celebrations, we prepared and presented a short skit on 15th August. The students had been reading Sri Aurobindo’s life story in the class, and a theater artist volunteered to help them understand the basics of a stage performance through games and reflective circles. Together, the facilitators and the students chose to enact four key episodes from Sri Aurobindo’s life that touched them deeply. A script was written to suit the class dynamics and the nature of the students and in a short span of 8 days, the class was ready to perform. The children thoroughly enjoyed learning about Sri Aurobindo’s life and formed a connection with him through this process.

   Towards the end of the year, Grace group also presented a comedy in Tamil about “Paramartha Guru and his Foolish Disciples”. Spoken Tamil was alien to many students when they started preparing for the play. In a few weeks of immersion into the language through actions and repetition of dialogues, they were able to understand and follow the story easily. They worked well as a team to deliver the final performance on stage during the Cultural Program which was well received by the audience.
Faith and Hope groups: Theater is a salient feature of Faith and Hope groups. A full length play (1.5 hours duration), “The Mysterious Benedict Society”, was performed for parents and the community. It was very well received by all and the children were very happy with the outcome. Their solid teamwork and hours of practice culminated in a superb performance on the given day.

Projects to Develop Multiple Intelligences:

Peace group:
- Forestry Work: We had a day out with the kids to plant saplings at Nine Palms Forest. The children developed a connection with nature and learned about the importance of forests and conservation.
- Story Writing: The kids wrote book reports biweekly to develop reading skills and sequencing. To enhance writing skills, they worked on creating comics and short stories with illustrations. This helped develop narrative writing skills and improve their vocabulary.
- Geology Project: When we walked to Matrimandir, the children observed pebbles and were curious about the crystal in the gardens. We decided to learn more about rocks and minerals and did hands-on experiments to identify rocks and minerals, grew Borax crystals and made a chandelier for the classroom. We also made three types of rocks – igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic using crayons. To add to their understanding, we visited the Fossil Park as a field trip and observed petrified rocks. They developed skills in observation and scientific experimentation through this project.

Grace group:
- An annual magazine, THE COCOON: We devoted the last 6 weeks of the final term to the creation of a magazine, THE COCOON, from scratch. All of them thoroughly enjoyed working on the project – coming up with the name, designing the masthead creatively using typography, typing using the computer, designing their page, making it look and read better, helping one another and finishing the project in time for the Open House. In the process, they gained real life skills – project planning and tracking, taking ownership for their bit, coordinating and collaborating with one another and engaging in teamwork. There was a sense of achievement felt by the group when the magazine was printed and ready to be shared with their parents. They couldn’t believe they could manage to create something involving so many steps, of course with a lot of support from the facilitators.
Faith and Hope groups:
  - NaNoWriMo (National November Writing Month): The challenge to write a novel in the month of November was very useful in developing skills of working on a focused goal, creative writing, and cultivating the discipline to write everyday for a few hours. A presentation of their experience was shared at the end of the month with the parents and teachers.
  - Gratitude Café: This year, Economics was introduced to the 8th graders. In order to gain practical knowledge of finance and management, the students of Hope group handled the operations of Neem Tree Café for half a day. Right from welcoming guests, taking orders to preparing the brunch and serving, they took turns to experience different areas of work and gain real life skills. An ambience of gratitude was created with people writing what they were grateful for on a board. More than a hundred residents dined on a Sunday and were delighted with the initiative.
  - Kaleidoscope Magazine: The Kaleidoscope magazine is in its fourth year of publication and is well managed by the students this year as well. They were able to improve their writing, project management, coordination and teamwork.

Art & Craft to Connect to Themselves:

- Light and Peace groups: Children were taught to create images using poster colors on a wet chart and continued to learn the traditional art form of connecting dots to create patterns and create a “Kolam”. We did an experimental project successfully to paint the topics and theme of Poems written by the children.

- Grace group: We began with an exploration of different media and painting & drawing techniques. We gradually switched to the structure drawing method, which is ideal for observation drawing as well as imaginative drawing. All the exercises given aimed to improve understanding of the form and drawing skills and to develop students’ painting and drawing skills. We tried a variety of approaches for drawing landscape and still nature in order to expand skills in observational and expression techniques, and understanding of pictorial compositions as a part of visual communication.

- Faith and Hope groups: We focused on building practical relations and applications of different media and painting and drawing techniques. In class studies included landscape, still life, botanical forms, manufactured objects and the human figure. Students also explored the structure drawing method, which helps master life drawing. Use of line, value, proportion, movement and texture, for the purpose of representing three-dimensional forms on the two dimensional plane. They observed the role of symmetry in art, drawing the other half of a given object or face. Students began to apply strategies for layering in the drawing process, concepts of negative
shape, etc. All the exercises given aimed to improve understanding of the form and drawing skills and to develop students’ painting and drawing skills.

As a craft, students learned bookbinding. They made a single signature notebook and multiple signature notebook with hard cover. For the graduating students of Hope group, Faith group students realized the souvenir albums intended to receive the photographs and the congratulatory notes from all the teachers. Although not an easy project, it was well received by the students of both groups. They showed motivation and were creative.

- **Origami:** Grace, Faith and Hope groups created beautiful origami decorations that were displayed in PTDC from time to time throughout the year. The students were very proud of their creations and happy to make them. We also believe this gave the students a sense of community in Auroville. There were many beautiful papers donated by parents and some Japanese friends this year, so the students had many options to choose from. The students suggested making a “Thank you gift”, with which they created a small message card and wrote their message. They were all tied to ribbons and gifted to others. The students developed concentration, fine motor skills, swiftness and better memory through engaging with complex paper-folding techniques apart from giving expression to their creativity.

**Conclusion:**

It was a challenging year in terms of regularity due to Covid, but we still managed to do quite a few meaningful projects and presentations for the community.
Deepanam school wants to offer a complete and experimental curriculum for science, for students from 8 to 15 years of age. For that reason we have rehabilitated a space previously used for Life Science, with aquariums and terrariums. To give quality experimental teaching to the different ages we need some materials and proper storage places. In our school there was not a consistent and progressive science curriculum and we are trying to develop it.

**Description of project:**

In Deepanam school we have 4 groups, in each of them we join two grades; 1&2, 3&4, 5&6 and 7&8. In each group, 18 is the maximum number of students. The students start to have the science program in grade 2. This means that approximately the number of kids that will benefit from a better science space is 63.

Normal science classes include demonstrations, experiments, explorations, games, discussions, projects, exercises, discoveries and some outings to places relevant to the subject we are exploring.

The total money approved for Science Space this year was Rs. 84,200. Only about 10% of that money really came to us. We stopped buying the rest of the materials because the money was not available. We hope to be able to spend the rest of the approved money next year, to keep on improving our possibilities.

This year I could start feel the ease of having things at hand and be able to use more hands-on materials. But still there is a long way to go, because basically I started to create the Science Space from scratch. The most challenging part was a big investment of time in cleaning the room, organizing and finding materials with a very low budget.

The building doesn’t have UPS, so when there is no electricity there is not enough light to have a normal class. These are some of the occasions where I have to change completely the course of the class and do something different that can be done with dim light, or we go out of the building to a table that is in the outside (if it is not raining), and also outside we have to deal with mosquitoes. Humidity is also a big issue, as the building was not made to be a proper classroom but a space for reptiles, fishes..., so it has not proper foundations.

**Outcomes:**

Proper furniture gives the possibility to organize the materials. Having models, lab materials, chemicals, balances, magnifiers, microscopes,...allows us to have rich and interesting explorations.
**Research highlights:**

My investigation goes in finding the balance between structure and consistency in the curriculum with a playful and dynamic way to explore and go deeper into the subjects. Smaller kids are more into hands on activities and as they grow they are exposed a bit deeper and more analytically to the subjects, but without loosing their active participation.

I usually try out different activities and strategies and keep record for future years of what really made the kids understand, remember, learn and enjoy.

Using hands-on materials, experiments and demonstrations are much more effective than just giving explanations or worksheets, but a bit of the last ones is also important to settle and structure concepts.

**Reflections:**

To be able to give interactive science lessons, it is essential to have a science room with all the different materials (lab materials, posters, laminated photos, games, building materials, atoms, molecules, models... ) In that way, if the dynamics of the class require it, I am able to adapt better to the mood and circumstances because I have resources at hand. Even if I always have a plan for the class, I can improvise when it is needed. That fluidity is important to keep the wonder and the interest on the subject.

**Conclusion:**

At the moment I am able to facilitate more dynamic and interesting classes. It has been a big improvement since I started teaching science in Deepanam 3 years ago. It is still a “work in progress”, as it is still lacking some important materials and furniture.
Educational research is at the core of our work in TLC, as we strive to find ways to implement Integral Education. Everything we do is research-oriented and innovative. A philosophy of education with so much depth, as described by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, will require a long and conscious journey. TLC is an intentional learning community for families who reside and work in Auroville. We currently work with children aged 6-13 and their parents. We aim at implementing a living and growing research into Integral Education as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Sri Aurobindo’s three principles of education guide us in this process, and the children show us the way.

**Activities of the year:**

During this academic year we worked with 19 children and their families.

**Evergreen Explorations:**

During the first months of the academic year, several of TLC’s younger children met twice a week in Evergreen community for a morning of free exploration. Activities emerged naturally, following their interest and flow. There were no planned or predetermined activities, rather a variety of materials and games were displayed, which the children could explore at their will. Apart from the materials, the children came up with many activities of their own, using the inside and outside spaces according to personal interest. Evergreen Explorations offer the opportunity for the children to self-direct and flow with their individual rhythms and interests. There is a lot of space for vital expression and for interpersonal dynamics and relationships to be expressed and explored.

When we were permitted to return to the TLC’s Base Camp in November, we decided to keep one morning a week for the free exploration in Evergreen, as we had seen the benefit derived from these mornings and the importance of the experiences that evolved.

**Base Camp mornings**

We started to use Base Camp (our TLC campus) after lockdown restrictions lifted. First we worked with the older children in small groups, bringing presence to our campus after the long absence. The campus needed a lot of maintenance work, cleaning, unpacking and fixing. The children were also involved with this, putting much time and energy to recreate and repurpose the spaces that have been empty for the past year. The children also used the computers in the Magazine Headquarters, to work on the next issue of their magazine project.
When we could fully open, we worked to bring all the children together, and find our individual and collective rhythm after the time apart. For the younger children we worked on foundation skills in language and mathematics, as well as project work on the “Great Story of the Universe”, article writing, and work in the math lab. There was great joy to be together in the campus again, and the children chose games that could involve everyone of all ages during their after-lunch play time.

After two months the lockdown was implemented again and Base Camp activities had to be stopped. Thereafter children meet in small groups in different communities: the older children in Gaia for mornings of math exploration, arts and crafts, writing, basketball and badminton, and the younger children in Evergreen and Anitya communities.

Physical activities:

The children’s individual physical activity schedules continued as best as they could, in this year of varying lockdown restrictions. Individual sports training like horse riding could continue, but team sports like football could not always happen.

Swimming is a skill that we encourage all the children in TLC to master. With pools being closed, or operating under restrictions, we explored other possible avenues. During the monsoon when the ponds in Auroville were full, we went in small groups to swim, accompanied by a swimming teacher. When the waters receded in the ponds, we attempted to take the smallest children to the small pool at the Botanical Gardens. That worked until the weather became too cold. Later, when restrictions eased, our older children could go again to La Piscine, and classes resumed, but for the younger kids we had to find a small pool elsewhere. Our swim instructors have charmingly adapted to the situations and have been encouragingly available to continue to teach the children swimming whenever and wherever possible, showing much commitment and adaptability.

“Seeds of Nature” – gardening project:

This year we continued to explore nature through the project “Seeds of Nature”. During the lockdown periods we used the Anitya community space in small groups, and in the period of November and December we returned to Base Camp. The main activity is that of the vegetable garden through which with children we learn the rhythms of Nature, the seasons, patience and the many secrets of plants. Through direct observation and the method of spontaneous questions guided by curiosity and interest, we explored in the field. Through free observation we got to know the botany of plants, their names and their uses, both medicinal and nutritional.

The direct contact and experience in the garden leads the children to have more responsibility towards the environment and more care of every form of life. Satisfaction and
gratitude at the time of harvesting a fruit or vegetable is the most beautiful moment to live, which makes us happy and consolidates the feeling of feeling part of the whole and co-participants in the cycle of life.

Theatre:

One of the highlights and main focuses of the year was on theatre. Most of our children participated in a large-scale theatre performance created and directed by Johnny and Jesse. This project elicited much learning in the children. For many it was the first time that they had appeared in front of an audience and they were faced with managing their self-consciousness and overcoming shyness, working on the quality of Courage. Group work and collaboration plays a huge part in such processes; children need to practice patience, and accommodate the needs of others in the group processes. Mental capacities are worked on through memorizing scripts, songs, movements etc. Creativity and personal expression are given space through prop, set design and costumes. The project was hugely inspiring and rewarding for all children and adults involved and was beautifully received by the Auroville community.

Immediately afterwards, some of the older children plunged into yet another theatre project, working towards a play which was to be performed at the Christmas fair at the Youth Centre (YC). The children wrote the script themselves, created the characters, designed costumes and sets and the process culminated in a wonderful performance at the YC community event. In addition, our younger children participated in a one-day theatre workshop with a visiting volunteer who worked with them on theatre games, collaborative exercises and self-expression.

Humanscapes math:

This year, during the lockdown period, we once again had the opportunity to use the Humanscapes hall once a week. We were able to store most of our mathematics materials there, to use for these math explorations. Most of the material that we are using is Montessori-based material, which gives the child his/her own individual mathematical experience. These materials allow the children to create a concrete knowledge of the often abstract concepts in maths. Sometimes the session would start with a group presentation, while sometimes the presentations are given to only one child at the time. This enables the child to have all the time s/he needs to explore a new concept, without feeling any pressure and without creating any sense of competition with the rest of the group.

From November, as we were again allowed to use Base Camp, we integrated maths into the daily routine of the kids.

Fertile mornings:

Our older children spent two mornings a week working at Fertile community with Johnny and Omid. The children focused on creating wooden hand-crafted boxes which they will use to fundraise towards an aspired trip to the “Summerhill Festival on Self-Directed
Learning” which will take place in the UK in August 2022. Other children are working in Fertile on individually inspired projects with the assistance and facilitation of Johnny and Omid.

**Canva – graphic design:**

Canva is an online, free graphic design platform and publishing tool which empowers children to explore design. As a basic version of Photoshop, Canva doesn’t require extensive photo editing knowledge, but allows the children to make posters, invitations, flyers, business cards, etc. The children started by using templates with multiple constraints (type of font, number of images...) to gradually become familiar with the tool, master it, and be able to start creating.

From individual work during the first sessions, the children started to work more and more in a cooperative way on the joint creation of designs. To do this, they had to learn to listen to each other’s points of view in order to tune their aesthetic sensibility and come up with a collective design.

**Philosophy:**

In teaching philosophy to children, a reflective approach to certain texts is promoted in order to launch a properly philosophical effort. Conversations that follow a reading are guided through questions and according to specific needs. These sessions were based on research on the conditions that allow children of different ages to enter the field of philosophizing.

The Mother wrote in 1972 a list of twelve virtues: Sincerity, Humility, Gratitude, Perseverance, Aspiration, Receptivity, Progress, Courage, Kindness, Generosity, Equality, Peace. Each of these twelve concepts has its own evolution in the moral theory’s history and each of them is part of the history of philosophical ideas and ethical theories. We worked through a “3+1 programme”: each value was explored in its social and individual dimensions during three sessions. Then the fourth session was held at the petal room of the Matrimandir corresponding to the quality which had been studied. This final experience allowed the children to let the concept infuse and the mind to calm in a bath of silence.

**Outcomes:**

Both children and adults benefited in many ways from the lockdown that occurred this year. It gave time and opportunity to think out of the box, be creative, and take even more charge each of his/her learning journey. We moved out into the community in small groups, which gave freshness, and also different days in different places offered a variation and sense of community.

Our children were easily able to adapt and take initiative, as our pedagogy builds on self-drive and adaptability. We could see that in a new real-life situation our methodology proved itself to be very effective, and children were not so dependent on ‘school’ for their ‘learning’.
As many families in Auroville were struggling with their children at home, we were able to integrate several non-TLC kids during the lockdown. This was a lovely opportunity for inclusion, as children are often separated in our Auroville schools when they have their regular schedules. This was appreciated by both children and parents.

We also began working with a few younger children who were not able to attend their kindergarten programs due to lockdown restrictions. This was a wonderful experience for the whole of TLC as we have held clear the belief that this work in Integral Education should start long before children start ‘school’ at age 6, when patterns and learning systems have already been imposed or set in. We aim and dream to work with children from a much younger age, and this period gave us the opportunity to experience the benefits derived for all in having younger children in our midst.

**Research highlights:**

Research has always been at the heart of the work in TLC, and as a result each year has brought with it new explorations, new questions and deeper experimentation. We strive to better understand our work, to more actively question it, reflect on it, and also deepen our understanding of what Integral Education is, not just in theory but in practice. This aspiration led to an in-depth research spanning two years, involving children, parents and facilitators. The results of this research were deepened practices, many profound conversations and reflections on education, two university research theses, a full-length research documentary premiering at the Auroville Film Festival (“Learning from the Intangible”), as well as a research exhibition at Centre d’Art, Citadines in March to share our journey with the Auroville community.

**Reflections:**

TLC is not a school, yet we are categorised / seen as such by many. TLC was created as a vehicle for adult growth – to use the children’s education as an opportunity for deep introspection, reflection, unlearning and relearning. To try to become free enough to enable the emergence of something new in the field of education. We are not here to perpetuate the old and outdated.

Many years ago we realized that we need to start working with parents as early as possible in their parenting journey, before they fall into patterns of past conditioning and fears that are later hard to shift. We need parents fully on board and in alignment to be able to experiment with a new education. The request to welcome younger children and their families has now been approved by SAIIER, and we are looking forward to working with the families who are interested to join our nursery project.

**Conclusion:**

In the coming year we aim to deepen the work of Integral Education through our pedagogical projects – defining the projects more thoroughly and involving the children fully.
in the entire process, from start to finish, thereby developing and fine-tuning the interdisciplinary and hands-on / real life implementation.

We aim to encourage the ‘less-is-more’ approach – with fewer areas of focus, in order to go deeper into the interdisciplinary projects and foster more depth, continuity and understanding of each project.

We aim to place more focus on campus development and the field of aesthetic beauty of our surroundings, developing food gardens, creating more flow between the different work spaces, and possibly working on a new construction project in Base Camp.

Co-education of TLC adults has always been and will continue to be a focal point of our work: working on communication skills to improve community interconnectedness, the toddler group which works with parents to encourage early implementation of the TLC values and Integral Education approach, regular meetings, sharings, events to keep ourselves learning, re-considering and always growing.
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 program, anchored in Sri Aurobindo’s vision, offers a curriculum designed to develop each child integrally through their mental, vital and physical selves as well as to help them grow inwardly, and to introduce the students to the richness of Indian Culture and its relevance to the world.

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

Activities of the year:

This year it was possible to resume our normal activities after the period of Covid epidemic. We had 34 full-time students, from 14 to 18+ years old, spread in different groups according to their level in each subject. Five more students came part-time for specific activities. We also received students who knew beforehand they would be with us for a few months only. One was with us for 3 months, as a transition to going to university. And the other two were with us for 2 months, as part of their exploration of Auroville. These additions to our school and pool of students were very rich for all.

The program of Last School includes literature, visual art in all its forms, social sciences, natural sciences, philosophy, mathematics, physics & chemistry, languages, 3D modelling, design and photography. Physical education is very much insisted upon as well as extra-curricular activities such as dance, music, theater, so that all the parts of the being are awakened and developed. This year, sign language was introduced as an experiment.

Every term begins with a one-week intense ‘Workshop’ which brings together all students and teachers around the same activity. Based on feedback from the students and our observations, these workshops seem to be turning points in the progress of the students. They are also a great tool to build concentration, endurance and a sense of the collective. The first workshop of this year was ‘Lines and Light’, an exploration of the individual and the collective. The second was ‘Who am I’, which helped the students to come out of their shell after two years of Covid and find again the capacity to interact.

For years, Last School has been using research publications done in Auroville. This year a compilation called The Aim of Life served for a comparative study of religions through the lives of their founders, and the compilation The Good Teacher and Good Pupil for Indian cultural ethos.

We encourage the study of several languages so as to acquire a flexibility of the mind and experience different world views, as well as understand how language shapes our
perception of the world. Languages currently offered are English, Tamil, Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, Russian, International Sign Language.

In Social Sciences, History is approached to awaken an understanding of human adventure, to shed light upon its meaning and main issues, as well as to give a sense of its cycles. An initiation to sociology was experimented with starting July 2021, which triggered a lot of interest. Many of the students chose to work on individual projects and written assignments in this field.

This year saw an increase in questions from the students in the theme of “Why Auroville?” and “Who are Sri Aurobindo and the Mother?” This led to an exploration of Sri Aurobindo’s books (The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, The Ideal of Human Unity, Savitri, Poems, Thought and Aphorisms, Essays on the Gita) and some of Mother talks (Questions and Answers, Commentaries on the Dhammapada, conversations from Mother’s Agenda about Auroville). This theme was spread between several classes and different teachers, always as an exploration and occasion for discussion and debate rather than as a didactic teaching.

The school year concluded with an exhibition of students’ explorations of mandalas over the past five years.

Outcomes:

This year’s first exhibition, A Walk in the Clouds, a graduating student’s final project and offering to the school, was opened to the wider public of Auroville.

Sri Aurobindo’s vision and aspiration was permeated more strongly in the atmosphere of the school. It has created a basis of discussion for the students, allows them to assimilate better the deepest foundations of Auroville and helps them to make sense of their being here.

Many of the classes were organized around centers of interest and not by age group. This encouraged the students to interact out of their age group.

Research highlights:

For decades now Last School has insisted upon beauty as a very basis and prerequisite from which to work. Care for every corner of the physical school environment sets the standard for an aspiration for quality in all we do. We have found that it is this physical harmony which allows for much of the rest of the work to be done. Every year we seek to deepen this quality.

‘Workshops’ of this year:

The workshops proposed each term set the tone and the research direction for the school. Older students are now so poised in concentration during this time, that it is a true initiation for new students coming in; they are immediately challenged by this standard, as any child learns through imitation. New students (and teachers) endure, until the calm they are seeking becomes natural.
The July workshop ‘Lines and Light’ sought to break us out of our ideas of what is ‘nice’ or ‘pretty’ or ‘well done’. We were invited to draw using our non-dominant hand. And learn to co-create on a single piece of paper in silence. Inspired by Andy Goldsworthy, the last two days found us working on land art in groups of three and four.

The second workshop ‘Who am I’, reached out beyond the walls of the school: we met at CRIPA every day for sessions using theatre, body and voice work to explore the masks we habitually wear, and via the neti neti method slowly made our way towards finding that which lies behind all aspects of personality.

The third workshop, ‘Patterns’, arrived after a time of unease within the Auroville community, in an attempt to create a space of beauty and understand the liberty found within tight confines. We worked for three intense days on the theme of patterns. Limited to sheets of A4 paper and following strict instructions, we experienced and observed how diverse creations can arise from limiting circumstances.

**International Sign Language:**

The introduction of International Sign Language this year came from the challenge we faced in offering better tools to one of our students who is hard of hearing. We found two teachers, one hearing and one deaf, and proposed to all the students of our school to sign up if they wished to. The classes, attended by fifteen students and three teachers, are conducted in silence, all students wear ear plugs. It is important to note here that all of the students apart from one have no hearing difficulty. The students and teachers who signed up, did so for the genuine interest in another language and culture. The shift is from a hearing culture to a visual culture, which is far more direct and demands great mental precision. The syntax of sign language differs from any other language insofar as it is set up as a stage: one cannot translate, but must clarify the context: when, where, who, what, before entering the action. Acquisition of vocabulary comes secondary to syntax, facial & physical expressions.

We observed within weeks that students began signing among themselves, communicating more expressively through their facial features & bodies. Some of our students, greatly lacking in confidence when using the spoken word, found their medium and borrowed tools they discovered through sign to help them in oral situations.

If we look at this experience from the angle of our student wearing a hearing aid and being impaired in her hearing, she discovered and learned the international sign language along with all the other students, discovered new vocabulary, and started concretely being introduced to her specific apprehension of things. She saw her friends communicating amongst themselves and with her in sign language. This allowed her to step into a language adapted to her, not singled out, but along with the rest of the school. At an age in which they are transitioning towards independence and looking at their future, this allowed this particular student to learn some very important tools for her future independence and integration into other types of educational institutions, whether colleges, universities or anything else.
Reflections:

Whereas for many years Sri Aurobindo’s vision was an implicit part of the program and found its ways into different classes, this year there was a direct demand to know more of Sri Aurobindo and several hours a week were dedicated to the exploration of his work. His books are not easy to read and comprehend but they are very stimulating because of the questions they raise, the new prospect they open, it is like a journey of endless discovery that touches many subjects and aspects of life. We will certainly continue in this direction.

The conflicting situation that occurred at the beginning of December in Auroville around the Crown Road was challenging for some of our youth. These events brought a disillusionment regarding the behaviour of adults in Auroville and their way of using Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Something has been imprinted in the students and has been only partly processed, so it is a little early to identify the outcome. However, what we can say is that it triggered a lot of questions in them, about integrity and authenticity, and intensified the need to make sense of Auroville as well as the wish to know by themselves, first hand, about Sri Aurobindo, The Mother and Auroville.

Because Last School does not prepare for any diploma, for years very few students from the bioregion chose this path of education. Since a few years, we have seen an increase of the local population joining our school at ages 14, 16 or even 18. This has brought a change in the cultural atmosphere of the school which we greatly appreciate. It has also confirmed that an experiment may take time to anchor itself as an attractive option in the collective mind. The environment of Free Progress, and the importance given to Indian culture within the school, has encouraged some of them to develop qualities of self-confidence and leadership which they demonstrate both within and outside the school. Several have opted to follow the National Indian Open School Program alongside their full schedule in Last School as well as their sport program, with good results. Every student who does well becomes an inspiration and an example for others.

Future direction:

In July we will begin with a Last School Workshop focused on visual & non-verbal communication, body language and the role of sight and sound in our lives. We aim to do this through an introduction to sign language (engaging the students who already have a base to support the newer ones), science experiments, drawing, clay and other varied exercises we are still dreaming up.

During the last week of school some students were asked to take a look at Last School in the next 5-10 years and present to their peers: 1) what changes ought to be made and how to do that; 2) what are some of the pitfalls we should avoid; and 3) what are the existing elements which we should hold sacred and safeguard going forward. Some of the propositions were very interesting and so were the discussions that followed. Next year we hope to work actively towards harvesting students’ ideas about the development of the school. The older ones will be engaged to mentor students coming in and overall to contribute more consciously to organizational aspects within the school.
Chrysalis: A Transformation Program for Youth
by Auromira Parks and Nadia Farahani

Introduction:
Chrysalis is a curriculum being offered to Auroville children aged 9-16 with a view to extend the age range in the coming years. It is a unique integral well-being program covering puberty, menstruality, gender, mutual respect and sexual education tailored to the specific needs of Auroville youth. Our program has a grounding in clinical science but goes beyond conventional curriculums to include a breadth of integral knowledge including nutrition, herbal medicine, movement, art and awareness of the entirety of our being from the physical to the subtle.

Description of project:
During the reporting period 2021-22 we offered our program in three Auroville schools covering ages from 9 to 16: Deepanam, Last School and TLC (The Learning Community), teaching over 40 children in total. We also provided in-depth training for four additional school facilitators (Angelo, Célia, Georgia, Samrat).

We taught three intensive courses (given biweekly on Mondays and Wednesdays) within the schools during 2021-2022:
- Deepanam: 18th October - 10th November 2021
- Last School: 22nd November - 20th December 2021
- TLC: 2nd February - 14th February 2022

In addition to regular weekly Friday morning team meetings and bimonthly theoretical meetings (covering subjects such as anatomy and physiology), our intensive practical facilitator training took place on these dates: September 11th, October 9th and November 6th 2021, and January 18th, February 24th 2020.

Outcomes:
This was our first year teaching within the school settings. In order to implement the Chrysalis program effectively we held several meetings with each school to understand the specific needs of each group of children. During this process we were able to make good connections with the teachers and to better understand the culture of each school and how to address the individual and collective needs of the youth. A network of support has started to emerge between our work within schools, teachers and parents so that the children’s needs are fully taken into account. We have also continued to create and expand our curriculum and the materials we use so that we can easily adapt it to various needs depending on the circumstances. For instance taking into account whether we have a mixed gender group or not and if there are certain sensitive personal histories or needs that need to be addressed carefully.
Reflections:

The benefits of this past year were multiple. The children benefited greatly from the courses and all gave very positive feedback at the end of each course. The network of care between the parents, teachers, Chrysalis facilitators and other services such as health care providers, Awareness Through the Body (ATB) teachers and Auroville Child Protection (AVCP) has begun to create a wider security net for our youth and we hope this will only strengthen over time.

By far the most meaningful part of this project has been seeing the how much the children enjoyed the courses, how they grew in confidence and blossomed. Knowing that there is an ongoing connection with each child we have taught, seeing their smiles as we greet each other in the community, gives us all the encouragement we need to continue what we are doing.

We have had several challenges this year. Covid regulations slowed our schedule and we had to pause our work in schools for some time while they remained closed. Previously our courses were held at the Tibetan Pavilion so this year we also had to adapt to a school setting meaning that we needed to fit our program into a shorter time slot and find a way to create a relaxed and private setting in the classrooms. Due to various other circumstances such as having a transgender child in the group or having only one or two boys in class of girls, we had to be creative in how we grouped the children for the classes in order for everyone to feel welcome. This required some rewriting of our existing curricula and brainstorming with the teachers in order to come up with appropriate ways forward. Whilst this process had its challenges, it made us more flexible and allowed our program to expand in multiple beneficial ways.

Conclusion:

We very much appreciate the support of SAIIER for this crucial year in order for us to begin to establish our work within schools. We hope that next year Chrysalis will continue to grow and support more Auroville youth.
Waste to Product (W2P) Initiative
by Jorge Ayarza

The circular economy is the process where we transform waste into new products avoiding the use of new plastic and cleaning up the environment of waste plastic. In this training program we organized courses with youth in Last School, Thamarai and Auroville Institute for Advanced Technology (AIAT).

Description of project:

- **Weekly training at Last School:** During the school term at Last School we gave weekly training programs where youth learned about the circular economy and invested time and effort in the collection of waste plastic both at home and at school. This training included first an understanding of the Indian realities as well as organized visits to EcoService, to recyclers in Chennai and to Minvayu Fablab workshop in TerraSoul.

- **EcoService visit:** An EcoService visit was done August 18th where we received a lecture by the staff regarding the types of materials collected, what materials are sold to traders (including plastic waste) and what materials are not being recycled. There is a significant amount of unrecycled plastic that includes polypropylene containers and most plastic bags. At present they shred some packaging which is used as filler material for foam cement bricks.

  Currently Eco Service sells us (Minvayu workshop) their un-sellable plastic including yogurt containers and toothbrushes to be processed into new products. These are washed, cataloged, ground and in a final step they can be extruded into rods or pressed into sheets to make finished items.

- **Chennai and Pondicherry recyclers:** A site visit was done to a recycler in Chennai that processes neighborhood waste. The business receives collected hard plastic made up of unsorted plastic parts which are cataloged by materials and colors. This process is done mostly by women which sort the plastic components and once they finish sorting the material is processed into ground flakes and packaged for sale. The price of sorted and ground material varies depending on the market rate which varies every month.

  The recycling business in India is made up predominantly of informal sector workers and businesses which according to government studies are recycling about 60% of plastic. The majority of plastic being recycled is what is termed ‘hard plastic’ such as bottles and hard plastic toys. Lighter plastic such as bags are not being recycled as efficiently since they inherently have a lower weight and value. A significant amount of plastic waste is ending up either in landfills or ocean, especially in coastal areas which includes Auroville and the bioregion.

  We have located a Pondicherry recycling business made up of women entrepreneurs located one hour south of Pondicherry. They offer plastic ground into pieces which they collect from Industrial partners as well as post consumer waste that they wash and grind.
Typical recycled material from local recyclers: With our students we did a site visit to EcoService to learn the local realities of plastic recycling. It brought into perspective the difficulties in both collection, segregation and processing of the material. Once we understood the challenges we decided to start collecting waste plastic at Last school.

- **Waste Collection and Informational Poster:** The students organized and prepared a recycling system for Last School. The effort included preparing a poster that is installed by the kitchen area that is visible to all the school. The poster was handmade and explains the purpose of the waste collection.

  The collection of waste was focused on the types of materials we could process during this semester: hard plastic, masks and selected items including shampoo bottles, water and soda bottle tops, miscellaneous hard plastic components.

  The collection of plastic is focused on the most common and recyclable plastic that can be transformed into new products. The most common plastic products are:

  1. Polyethylene (HDPE, LDPE, LLDPE)
  2. Polypropylene (PP)

  These two plastics are the lowest cost and commonly found plastic used in single use plastic waste. They are very commonly found in bottles and bottle tops, bags, masks. Depending on the use their characteristics vary and their hardness also changes.

  Once you collect and segregate plastic you need to determine the type of plastic it corresponds to make sure you don’t mix different types of plastic. This can be done by selecting the plastic beforehand and grinding the plastic into flakes. Once they are reduced to a common size they can be washed in water and the material that floats is PE or PP while the plastic that sinks are other plastic materials.

  To select additional materials we use other processes of identification including by function, with markings, odor and flame. These methods are better left to professionals and with the students we focus on the float system.

  Once material was collected at the school we transported it to the Minvayu workshop space that has the machines that can transform the plastic into shredded material and subsequently into sheets, rods and products.

  Students organized the collection of waste plastic and thought of products that they could make. They learned to select plastic and understand the challenges faced by single use plastic waste. They now understand that many types of plastic are difficult to recycle such as PVC, chips bags and foam while other materials need to be CLEAN in order to have a high value for recycling.

- **Beach cleanup:** We organized beach cleanup drives with Last School students and additional volunteers to collect single use plastic, bottles, chappals and other debris that is washed onto our beaches. Sadly a lot of plastic reaches the ocean via dumping of plastic in waterways and ravines which during monsoon along with the drainage water brings into the ocean plastic waste.

  Ocean waste is generally considered unrecyclable because it has been degraded by the sun, sand and other factors. In small amounts we can recycle our local ocean waste, but
it is more difficult to process since it is UV degraded and full of sand.

By mixing cleaned ocean waste with Auroville waste we can produce products that have sufficient high quality to be used for a long time. The items that we collected were primarily: glass bottles, plastic bottles, chappals, rope (yellow polypropylene), fishing net (transparent nylon), drinking cups (polypropylene), bags (PP/PE).

- **Machine Design and Manufacture:** With the assistance of volunteers and AIAT students we were able to build several machines for processing of plastic waste. The machines were based on open-source designs from around the world which we modified to suit the available materials in India plus the needs of the training program.

  The most complex and largest machine we have built was a grinder. It is the single most important piece of equipment to reduce the size of plastic into smaller sizes which allows us to process the plastic. We started with a 3D model of the machine which served as a basis for the assembly. The original design was done in a FabLab in Austria so some modifications were made to fit our needs here in India. The equipment was made of steel sheets which were laser cut by a Pondicherry company. Once we had the items laser-cut we proceeded with the assembly which included welding, drilling, grinding.

  The whole process to build the machine took a full semester since it took some time to get the raw materials including the specialty hardened steel knives, and laser cutting also took some time. Once all the parts were in place we assembled the parts step by step with students and volunteers at the AIAT mechanic workshop (where they train students in welding, mechanics and electrical fields).

- **Design:** At Last School we used the computer laboratory to teach 3D modelling principles using open source software. We used Sketchup as the initial software that can run on any basic computer system and focused on 2D and 3D capabilities. Our task for the students was to start thinking about what products we could make. Among the ideas brainstormed they came up with: hooks, bench, stool, solar lamp, boxes, sheets, planters.

  The next step was to focus on the easiest parts to make after the brainstorming. We started by drawing some ideas on 3D modeling software so we could consider building those parts. Limitations on the fabrication relate to the different types of materials we can process and our manufacturing capabilities.

  The first step in the product fabrication was to make the first product that is the basis of all other products. We made a 1m x 1m sheet of recycled plastic which can be cut into different shapes or made into a product on its own. If we decide to produce something from a sheet we can design the shape according to our design and make a product such as a piece of furniture for example.
Outcomes:

Through March 2022 the students successfully manufactured plastic sheets of 1m x 1m in size and rectangular rods of 1m length. Sheets were made to produce doors and different color schemes were selected. Rods can be used as part of an assembly.

Two other products were the grinder and extruder which were fabricated with students and volunteers. These machines took approximately 6 months to manufacture. This length of time is needed as with limited time assigned for this activity the preparation and assembly of the machine takes some time. In addition it was our first machine and was made more complex because of the high precision required for assembly.

Our course schedule currently is dedicated to beach collections and 2D and 3D modeling of products which will be manufactured by April 2022. The aim is to produce boxes of different sizes once the designs are finished.
Reflections:
For the upcoming year we plan to focus more on preparing materials ready to be used by students instead of having them design products from scratch. In order to keep students engaged we need the activities to be less dependent on them coming up with designs but rather show them how already made designs are designed and assemble them. In addition our plan is to engage the students more on the possibility to make a product that the school can use, such as furniture for example and at the end of the term that item can be used for the benefit of all.

A challenge has been the funding mechanism through which by February/March we did not get refunded for expenses presented. We understand there have been challenges in this regard and hope they will be solved soon.

Conclusion:
We are very happy and grateful for the opportunity to launch a recycling project with the collaboration of high school students who become collectors, recyclers and manufacturers of products.

We would like to continue into next year with regular collection of plastic and with training students in how to recycle materials and what we can make with them. In addition we want to expand further the activity to older students who have either recently graduated from college or are thinking of pursuing future studies in engineering, art, sciences, architecture, design.

We want to thank SAIIER for allowing this effort to happen and look forward to further improving and expanding this activity.
Inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the vision of Future School is to develop an educational environment in which Auroville’s adolescents and those dedicated to their education may reach their potential through a balanced development of body, mind, and emotion. Underlying this integral approach is the development of faculties that will allow us to pursue the unfolding of our inner truth in harmony with the world around us.

We aim to discover the essence behind our diverse cultural, ethnic, and individual heritages while reflecting the international character of Auroville. Our deepest aspiration is to progressively develop our consciousness to prepare the youth and ourselves to manifest a truer, higher and more joyful life on earth.

Our goal for the school year was to discover and see the Truth behind apparent life happenings and events.

The primary activity for this year was adapting to the changes brought about by the continuing Covid-19 waves, and keeping the school running.

**Activities of the year:**

Future School is currently offering a high school equivalent education to primarily Aurovilian students. This year there were 52 adolescents/young adults from different nationalities enrolled in the school. We actively assist our students through our mentoring program, in finding interests in different areas to progress and grow. Students are generally expected to stay in the school for 4 years.

The school incorporates many different teaching/learning methods and environments: projects, independent research, traditional lectures; small groups, large groups, one-on-one approach, peer teaching, work experience and self-study. In this way we hope to meet the needs of each individual, and we feel that the combination of required areas of study with choice of particular subjects gives the students the chance to get in touch with new areas of knowledge and at the same time to explore their own interests and needs.

Future School transitioned back to in person classes from online with the end of the school lockdowns. This school year we incorporated new electives such as Latin and Coding. The student council recommenced an old tradition of having movie nights in school – where the student body along with teachers gather on a Friday evening to watch a film together.

**Outcomes:**

We managed to see the pandemic as a test allowing us to find greater ingenuity and flexibility in academic life. The school closures and resultant need for change lead to a moment in which existing structures collapsed allowing us to get closer to the core of what holds the school together on an academic, administrative and institutional level. The greater requirement of flexibility on an administrative front led to us questioning and paring back
many habits that the school had evolved beyond. Particularly in the field of communication the dynamic has changed in favor of informal and direct conversations rather than bureaucratic and formalized methods of discussion.

Both students and teachers benefited from the return to physical classrooms, as classes were more appreciated, ran more effectively and with greater capacity to explore the material in a flexible manner. The addition of new electives gave students an opportunity to explore more subjects. Movie nights helped to rebuild a sense of belonging and simply being together as one school.

Research highlights:

In the last year we moved as a school towards a more informal and fluid method of communication. We pared back the number of scheduled meetings, shifting from a weekly teachers’ meeting to teachers’ meetings only when needed. Simultaneously we made the decision making process in the school more democratic by inviting the student-council to all teachers’ meetings for the entire meeting. The student council has picked up more responsibilities this year, being in charge of school IDs, and mainly the older members of the student council have been organizing our movie nights. The increased fluidity of communication made the school run much more efficiently compared to previous years. We will definitely be continuing in this direction; furthermore giving the student council greater responsibility enabled them to be more proactive in creating their school environment.

Reflections:

One of the biggest challenges we faced this year was that the incoming 9th graders had experienced a very disrupted last year of middle school due to the pandemic. Especially in Mathematics they had suffered. We handled this challenge by increasing the number of Math classes per week. This provided the students with the opportunity to a certain extent to bridge the gap, but efforts must continue to deal with the reality of the impact of years of disrupted classes due to the pandemic if we don’t want to endanger the students’ reaching their set goals.

A secondary challenge we faced this year was a lot of changes in the team: we’ve had several French teachers and changes in administration. However these changes have allowed team dynamics to shift. Next year we are aiming to be more stable.

Conclusion:

Our goal for next year is to grow as a school, increasing the student body. This is likely to happen as we have more applicants than in previous years. Another goal would be to build a sense of stability. We would like to further integrate new members of the team into daily school life and responsibilities, creating a system where all teachers and staff are equal stakeholders in the school. We would especially want more teachers to be chosen as mentors rather than it being the same five core members of the team being chosen by the majority of the student body. This would create a more balanced and resilient team, as we have found a
general tendency for teachers with mentees being more aware of the wider impact of education and their role in shaping the school. Finally we would like to continue transferring decision making power to the student body via the student council, through facilitating activities they have planned, encouraging their participation in teachers’ meetings, and giving them meaningful responsibilities.
This year we were able to re-start regular lessons in November with the lifting of corona restrictions. Throughout the year we also conducted lessons online as best as we could thanks to the cooperation of parents and students.

**Activities of the year:**

Classes were conducted online for students in grades one through eight. Various process explanations were implemented through WhatsApp and Zoom. For example, animations of simple scientific processes and geometry concepts were sent to the students. They used these concepts in their homework which was then delivered to school by parents or other adults. The homework was then evaluated by the teachers and sent back to the students.

In November the lessons could resume at the school. Subject-related games were introduced to encourage the students.

At the end of December, mid-term examinations were conducted for the students. Parent-teacher meetings were held on that basis and the students’ information improvement report was also given to the parents.

Students worked on their Microprojects with great enthusiasm this year. Their work was scheduled to be released to the public on January 26, but due to corona restrictions this could not happen. Instead the students decided to put their work in front of parents and public on the school’s Annual Day, 28th April 2022.

For the kindergarten students, lessons could not be conducted until February as per government order. But the kindergarten teachers conducted classes online, using the specialized training they received last year to create a better environment for students to learn in before they came to school. As soon as the classes for kindergarten started, the students enjoyed the classrooms with games for them.

Students could not be taken to the book fair to buy books this year; instead the school librarian bought a number of thought-provoking books at a subsidized prices and made them available to the students.

A special programme on child protection for teachers was conducted by Auroville Child Protection (AVCP) this year. In particular, the Posco Law was explained.
Isora conducted Awareness Through the Body (ATB) classes for 1st to 4th standard. The teachers accompanied the students to these classes so that they could gain in psychological understanding of the students.

Computer science classes were given for the 4th to 8th grades. Topics included slide presentations, logo design, colour concepts, design ideas, digital painting, web browsing, computer assembly, computer troubleshooting.

Other subjects outside of academic classes were: clay craft, art, carpentry, basic sewing, singing and dancing.

**Outcomes:**

We consider it a good sign that the exchange of information between students and teachers through communication devices continues even when the school is functioning as usual.

**Reflections:**

Establishing a learning environment in the classroom was challenging for many teachers as the students came to school after a long break. However there were some benefits to the disruption in regular school and how we had to adapt. For example, the bond between teachers and parents increased. We made better use of video technology. And the students are now used to learning at home as well as in school.
Isai Ambalam School
by Kavitha and Sanjeev R.

Isai Ambalam School is there to support children and teachers to reach their highest potential. Its aim is to bring innovative learning methodologies that allow joyful learning in an environment which is free of fear. This includes research on activity-based learning, natural language acquisition, and innovative STEM education through real-life challenges.

The special goal this year was to teach the English language through ‘Total Physical Response’ (TPR) and storytelling as a new activity of STEM Land.

The students also learned why some of the festivals are celebrated. They learned through stories and role-plays in drama that expressed something traditional related to these festivals.

Activities of the year:

1. During the Corona period we had online classes for grades 1 to 8. In addition and for those who did not have good access to online facilities, the parents came to school once a week and collected exercise sheets from their students’ teachers. In November 2021 we reopened the school for the whole day.

2. After the school reopened we did projects on maths like Tangrams, and the angle-sum property of a triangle in Geogebra. We helped them understand the concepts by connecting to their real-life situations.

3. We did Education by Design projects (EBDs) like “Palm Trees”, “Kulasekaraazhvaar Pasurams”, “Karthigai Deepam”, and understood the stories behind these topics. Children learnt all the 10 pasurams and gave a performance about the life of king Kulasekaraazhvaar and his service to god Perumal. They made the hill Thirumalai with clay at the prayer hall.

   Children learnt the story behind the Karthigai Deepam festival through a Tamil play. During sleepovers, they made costumes for the play with help of teachers before the day of performance. They also learnt to make the “Maavali” and learnt songs while they spun it.

4. The teachers and the children started research on breath meditation (Anna panna). We did a baseline survey and have started the activity and hope to learn if it reduces their fear, anxiety and tension and helps them be calm and concentrate their mind on studies. It helped the teachers to understand themselves and give an insight into the workings of their own minds and distractions.

5. We started Suryanamaskar with the help of Velmurugan for grades 5 to 8 grades for celebrating the sub-god as part of leadup to Pongal.

6. We started Yoga for the children. Carla and Muthukumari conduct the program. It enhances their concentration and increases their memory power. Also the Yoga improves strength and focus besides motivating the self-esteem for the children.
7. A new project was started by a volunteer, Shiva, about “Vasudev kudumbam”. Through this project, the children learn that all living beings are one family. They learn the values and respect all the living creatures and the plants. We could see a shift in attitude of children towards the various beings around the school from insects, to cats, dogs and even the school calf.

8. Children had difficulty in telling the correct time. We took it as a project and taught them how the sun was related to time in the olden days. Also, we showed the children a few videos about how time-keeping has evolved. We differentiated the time between India and US to make them understand that it happens because of the rotation of the Earth. When the children learned that in the olden days people used sundials, they wanted to build their own sun-dial. They learnt about the angles, degrees, latitude and longitude, also about sectors to split a circle. Finally, they made an actual sun-dial using cardboard.

9. The children learnt about the concepts of force and pressure by doing experiments. In the first experiment, a balloon was tied with a water tube at one end and at the other end, it was opened to fill it with water. They filled it with water and observed that a water column that has more height creates more pressure on the balloon area at the bottom. They also learnt that pressure exerts in a downwards direction: pressure in a liquid is different at different depths and pressure increases as the depth increases.

10. On the occasion of 150th Birthday of Auroville, Sanjeev put together story cards about Sri Aurobindo which contain 53 passages of his life history (based on the book Sri Aurobindo: the story of his life). He took few classes with the children telling about Sri Aurobindo and the cards have been translated by the teachers into Tamil.

11. To make the children aware of Auroville they celebrated Mother’s Birthday and Auroville’s Birthday. They watched a video about Auroville, decorated Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s symbols with flowers and took part in various events during the birthday week including the Endangered Crafts Mela and the Divine Flowers Exhibition. The children were also given silent activities of concentration and beauty.

12. We held sleepovers during which the children learnt origami and different types of stitching.

Outcomes:

We had parent-teacher meetings for grades 1 to 8. Out of 108 students, 82 parents attended the meetings. In the past, we had had less than 50% of the parents attending the meetings. This indicates the positive attitude of the parents, as they gradually understand their responsibility towards the school and the children.

In the past, many children were coming to school from over 4.5 km away. We have been making an effort to be accepted better in the local villages. This year our entire Creche was from local villages.
Research highlights:

We researched acquiring English through Total Physical Response (TPR) and Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) and finally created our own English book. During the Corona break, the children lost their English skills. This research book helped us to bring them back to their original level.

We found a gap in the English reading skills of the children and created story cards on Ramanamaharashi and his animal friends. We also organized a reading competition and assessed participants in multiple parameters including voice coordination, fluency and phrase reading. 6th to 8th-grade children participated in this and found a remarkable improvement. They did the reading practice individually and in a group reading.

We have started researching Indian mathematics systems and their current applicability in making mathematics visual and practical for children. We started with Rajju Ganith (rope mathematics) that explores the flexible nature of the rope e.g. for measuring the perimeter of a circle.

Intentions for next year:

We would like to hold the “Transformation of Leadership” programme for 6th to 8th-grade children to know who they are, what they stand for, find their universal values, be efficient and ground themselves. This we hope will give direction to what the children care about and would like to accomplish, and will guide the themes and activities in the coming year.

We hope to make progress with Indian mathematical systems and their applicability for children at the school.

We have leased a path of land next to the school and we hope that a nice vegetable garden will come up there with each of the grades (and children) taking responsibility for their own patches.

We will continue our Anna panna meditation and see at the end of the year how things may have changed for the children and if this had an impact.

We will continue our work of helping children connect to Indian culture in different ways, to ground them and develop a sense of understanding of it.
Oli School
by Sangeetha

Oli School is a Montessori-inspired kindergarten for children of Auroville’s surrounding villages. We are located at the former Last School campus in Aspiration community, next to Kuilapalayam village. Four Aurovilians are an active part of the support group of the school, and there are twelve teachers. Normally we have 120 kids aged 2 to 6 years.

Activities of the year:

During the year 2021-22 the school was closed for the children, and we limited enrollment to 50 students. The teachers prepared worksheets for the children to work at home.

It very difficult for the children and also for the teachers. The direct involvement of working with children was missing. Most of the children were bored at home. We heard from the parents that children were spending most of their time on cell phones.

During this time the teachers created some new materials for the classroom and also attended some online training and classes.

Reflections:

Even though it was a difficult year we had a good time learning new things.
Kuilai Creative Centre
by Selvaraj A.

Kuilai Creative Centre offers extracurricular activities especially for school going children who do not have these opportunities from their schools. During their leisure time like evenings and weekends, they don’t find such various activities all together in a single place. Our centre functions as a platform where they can participate in these activities.

**Description of project:**
Classes in Silambam, Hip-Hop, and Bharathanaatiyam were offered, as well as School Tuition for children above 5 years. These activities took place in the evenings and weekends. The activities restarted from October after the relaxations in COVID lockdowns, and were conducted till February in a regular manner.

Around 70 children participated, from Kuilapalayam, Bharathi Nagar and Lakshmipuram. They had various possibilities in gaining help and support for their school home work and in their studies.

**Outcomes:**
A well organized learning environment has been created for the children who are in need of a peaceful ambience to learn and practice. Children are our primary beneficiaries, since they are not able to avail these skills and facilities at their home or school. Tutors and trainers are also mutually benefited as they contribute their skills and share their knowledge with children, to witness their growth. All our programmes are now welcomed by the parents and the participants keeping it a regular ongoing learning environment.

**Reflections:**
- This project has been a hub to connect people who are in need and resources ready to share their knowledge and time.
- One single room for all indoor activities sometimes brought timing conflicts for our activities which are scheduled according to tutors' and students' availability.
- This year we were allocated less funds than expected and it was very hard to manage and ensure that we could run all the activities.

**Conclusion:**
Our project is welcomed by people of our neighborhood, and we wish to maintain a continuity as a sharing space of skills to all of our participants to witness their growth and a positive change in their lives.
Life Education Centre (LEC)
by Devi Namasivayam

Life Education Centre aims to:

- Offer a learning space for young women from the villages where they can be provided opportunities for personal growth and livelihood.
- Provide activities that can 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:

- **English language classes**: Shaheen, a volunteer offered English language classes to the women once a week.

- **Aviva**: Weekly classes to exercise the pelvic region were offered by Rajalakshmi.

- **Group discussions**: The women shared their experiences during the week, especially happenings that they felt happy about as well as those that posed difficulties. Discussions followed with narrations of similar experiences from the group along with suggestions of handling difficulties in future. A time that is cherished by the women, the discussions are facilitated by Yelena and Devi.

- **Stretching**: Qi-gong exercises that stretch different parts of the body were taught once a week by Sharon. Translation by Devi.

- **Expressive Arts Therapy**: The women explored expressing emotions through spontaneous painting, movement, acting theatre scenes and team-building games. This is a time when they explore the inner child. The sessions are facilitated by Mrinmoyi and thoroughly enjoyed by the women.

- **Tailoring and embroidery**: Women continued to improve their tailoring, embroidery and crochet skills. Special wall art works were designed and guided by Devi. These were hand embroidered by senior women.

- **Yoga**: Women practiced yoga by themselves once a week. They took turns leading the sessions.

- **Teaching at the Endangered Crafts Mela**: Five women participated in the Endangered Crafts Mela and taught Auroville students to sew and crochet.

- **Visit to Savitri Bhavan**: The women were keen to explore the inside of Savitri Bhavan, spent time in the garden and visited Huta’s paintings with a lot of interest.
This year we had to restrict workshops and other gatherings like career guidance sessions due to Covid regulations.

**Outcomes:**
LEC creates a special environment for learning through informal ways. The activities help women gain confidence and to become aware of themselves and the society. The activities are designed to enhance sensorial capacities, and for development of individuals in the physical, vital, mental and spiritual dimensions.

**Reflections:**
LEC attempts to integrate learning, working and progressing individually and as a community. It is a meaningful and needed experiment. This year again proved how much the Centre is needed, especially during challenging times like now and to gain strength and support from each other.
Ilaignarkal Education Centre
by R. Meenakshi

Ilaignarkal Education Centre exists to bridge Auroville and the neighborhood through life-long learning programmes for the workforce. Our vision is to strive to be a pioneer in providing overall development of students who will become beacons of progress, human unity and harmony, following the Mother’s charter and guidance. Today the centre touches the lives of approximately 200 Auroville workers and their children from over ten villages in the Auroville region. The mode of instruction is Tamil but functional English is also introduced. Its aim is co-evolution.

Activities of the year:

- **Regular classes for communication skills**: Auroville workers and their wards attend language courses conducted by Prof. Anandou. From the basic level to higher levels, the programme is conducted in small groups or even one-to-one. When it is necessary Ms. Sumitra takes care of the neo-literates.

- **Tailoring unit**: We offer tailoring classes for beginners with basic stitching, cutting, designing clothes and sewing for their own use. The trainer Ms. Pachaiammal encourages her students to be creative in making useful soft toys for children to play with – from leftover cut pieces – a good model for recycling/up cycling. They are also used as educational tools.

- **Yoga Asanas**: Every Monday and Wednesday, yoga exercises are conducted by Ms. Muthukumari for our staff and senior students. The beneficiaries especially appreciated the breathing exercises during this Covid time.

- **Classical Dance**: Every Saturday, a classical dance course is offered by Ms. Rajarajeswari, Professional artist, to the beneficiaries of the Bharati Educare girls group. They enjoy the culturally rich training and learning the performing art to uplift their body, mind and soul.

- **“Joyful Learning Programme” for Bharatipuram children**: Twice a week, the children of Bharatipuram village attend classes on Yoga, tailoring, sacred cooking, drawing and improvement of language skills. They enjoyed our space for indoor games and outdoor sports when they were not attending their regular schools during the pandemic time.

- **Siddha Healing workshop**: On the second week of each month, for two days, Siddha Healing specialist Vaithiari Dr. K.P. Selvam visits our centre and gives consultations for Auroville workers, Aurovilians, guests, volunteers, school teachers and children. This programme helps us to learn the rich ancient knowledge of identification of herbs growing naturally in our land and how to utilize them for sacred cooking and medicinal purposes.
Special events:

- World Yoga Day on 21.06.2021 was celebrated in our centre with programmes for the whole day; our beneficiaries attended Akanda yoga, Ananda yoga and group singing. The participants received a certificate of appreciation.
- India’s 75th Independence Day was celebrated on 15th of August with vigour.
- Mrs. Rajarajeswari rendered a song by Bharati on liberation. Portraits of freedom fighters were displayed. Each student carrying a poster of a leader narrated his/her story and role played for India’s freedom. A mini procession singing patriotic songs was taken around Town Hall area.
- Ganesh Chaturthi was celebrated praying for a green earth. Clay Ganesh dolls stuffed with neem seeds were crafted by students and later immersed in the nearby pond for greening the zone. An exhibition of colourful pictures on various forms of Ganesh from all over the world was viewed.
- A seminar cum exhibition of the 45 years of Ilaignarkal’s research and publications was organized. Invitees and visitors recorded their impressions. Many of our students, parents, outreach school teachers and friends attended the week-long exhibition. Yatra Media Arts made a documentary.
- The Festival of Evolution was celebrated. This year the theme was Reptiles – snakes and their significant role in Indian Mythology and their own evolution. A video was documented by Yatra.
- The Chennai Welfare Foundation and our centre jointly organized a special Thursday evening event in September. Shri. Kasturi Jayaraman (95 years), a senior writer and translator associated with Sri Ramakrishna Mission, gave a great talk on spiritual education as taught by the Tamil Siddhars who formed a comprehensive encyclopaedia on life and the art of yoga. Poothurai Singer Mrs. Parvathi Amma delighted everyone with her folk songs. Teachers, parents and students from the region participated, including senior teaching staff from Kuilapalayam Trust school, Oli School and Alankuppam Pavender school. A good harmonious event illumined the audience.
Our team was invited to initiate “Joyful Learning” training for teachers of Trust school – a 3-day event. The participants were keen to know the messages of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Education. Sri Aurobindo's 150 Birth Anniversary was celebrated with them.

The Faculty of Tamilology of our centre gave a workshop on Tamil New Year (14th April). Inscription analyst, writer and historian Villianur Pulavar Venkatesan presented on the history of the Irumbai Mahalam Siva temple which is very close to our city. The event was well attended. Yatra Srinivasan chaired. Sri Aurobindo’s educational principle “from the near to the far” was taken as the basic note.

**Outcomes:**

- During covid-19 when there was no regular formal outside schools, our centre gave psychological and tutorial support to the needy. Yoga classes, nutritive food and herbal preventive medicines were offered.

- 12 issues of “Auroville Seythimadal”, our monthly Tamil magazine, got published and distributed to Government and private schools, general libraries, Tamil Nadu Centres of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, contemporary Tamil magazines and creative Tamil writers.

- We continued our Auroville Radio talks and held Zoom meetings on poet Bharati and Sri Aurobindo.
This year’s Health and Healing Education Project was provided in cooperation with Auroville outreach units Ilaignarkal school, Arulvazhi school and Thamarai Learning Centre, and various local bodies. The project provided an outreach service of targeted education and instruction in traditional health and yoga practices, along with access to natural healing and primary health resources, to people from the villages near Auroville. The aspiration of the holistic approach of this project was to develop consciousness of the body, mind and psychic layers of being towards integral health.

Description of project:

The project engaged participants from within Auroville and the bioregion mainly through their connection with one of the three units Ilaignarkal, Arulvazhi and Thamarai. Participants consisted of rural village residents who worked in one of the Auroville units, attended one of the outreach schools or education programs, or were otherwise associated in some way with Auroville.

Weekly yoga and wellness programs were delivered to these local village participants. The programs provided training and education on yoga asana, breath, and meditation practices and techniques for experiential learning, and related wellbeing self-care strategies. Yoga practice and theory was delivered by Thamarai Health and Wellbeing Service Coordinator M. Muthukumari, with support from Carla (yoga teacher and Rehabilitation Counsellor).

Additional health and wellbeing activities were offered in collaboration with Auroville healers: Homeopathy (Sigrid and Malar), traditional Tamil herbs and nutrition education (Muthukumari) and Hypnotherapy (Dan). The project also linked with Mattram Mental Health Care in Auroville and Mother Care Foundation Rehabilitation Centre in Pondicherry.

These activities and interventions were provided without charge to the participants (except in the case of the Mother Care residential rehabilitation centre where a partial contribution was requested towards the fee for the 30 day stay).

Beneficiaries:

The villages we work in are rural, largely consisting of farmers and daily wage earners, with often inadequate infrastructure and housing. In addition to considerable
economic and structural disadvantage, many villagers are also impacted by negative health effects stemming from the displacement of traditional ways of living with those of the ‘modern’ lifestyle. In particular, changes to; modes of transport (from bicycling and walking to motorised two-wheelers); food and nutrition (diet of mainly low fat, high carbohydrate/fibre and many herbs to highly processed foods, high sugar, high fat and low fibre); sedentary time spent with mobile phones and TV; and the widespread contamination of water and other environmental pollution, including frequently poor air quality. Over recent decades, such changes have seen the affliction of modern ‘lifestyle’ diseases (namely obesity, diabetes melitus, hypertension and heart disease, kidney disease, anxiety and other mood disorders, and alcohol addiction) substantially increasing in the Tamil Nadu population. Many of the region’s villagers thus face the cumulative impact of these detrimental modern influences together with the many health burdens related to widespread poverty and structural disadvantage.

The holistic approach of the Health and Healing Education Project aspired to enhance the consciousness and integration of the physical, mental, and psychic domains. The project taught material and methods, and provided access to health supports, aimed at progressing participants towards integral wellness. It was grounded in the awareness of the multi-faceted nature of the human being, and in the understanding that relieving suffering and achieving wellness involves addressing all of these facets and leveraging methods and knowledge from both modern and traditional systems.

Also central to the Health and Healing Education Project was the recognition of the inherent value and humanity of the residents of these villages. The core principles of the project, working from a foundation of compassion, dignity and full potential for all, promoted increased self-esteem and empowerment for the participants, especially for the women and children. We did this by underpinning the approach and curriculum of the project with the goal of fostering the innate capacity of the participants to unfold their own power to heal and thrive; through learning a range of methods that supported connecting the various layers of being and encouraged holistic awareness of their own health, villagers were able to develop personal resource and self-efficacy in managing and improving their own wellbeing, with flow-on impact to their families and communities.

In total, approximately 1,415 adults and children, hailing from a large number of the surrounding villages and in some way connected to Auroville, participated in one or more components of this project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating adults:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participating children:</td>
<td>805</td>
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<td><strong>Total participants:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,415</strong></td>
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General Health Assessment:

A general health assessment was completed with seven participant groups. The data captured by this survey provided basic health information and highlighted any specific issues on these basic measures, both for individuals and for concerns common amongst
and/or within participant groups.

For example, through the Thamarai Learning Centre we completed the general health assessment for 42 children and youth in the village of Annai Nagar. The results identified a common serious health issue experienced amongst this group of young participants – iron deficiency anemia. The survey highlighted that most of the group were anemic, particularly the girls. Out of 42 participants, 36 were found to be anemic at the time of testing.

Project interventions aimed to improve this significant issue included (1) supplementation with spirulina drinks and the provision of nutritional foods and advice; (2) daily sports and frisbee sessions.

Following these interventions, the children and youth self-reported increased energy and activity levels. These results were corroborated by post intervention haemoglobin tests; which demonstrated improved levels for most of the 20 participants retested, and (apart from one case), most particularly for those who had the lowest levels at initial assessment.

**Yoga and wellness education in schools:**

This year the Health and Healing Education Project offered outreach wellness education and yoga in five schools of Auroville servicing surrounding villages. Weekly classes were provided to a total of 150 students in 7 places. The program was based on the first four limbs of Ashtanga Yoga (per the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali): Yama (restraints), Niyama (personal observances), Asana (physical postures) and Pranayama (breath control).

Some basic techniques of seated concentration were also introduced.

Additional education and training was provided on hygiene, nutrition, exercises for eye health, menstrual education and period management, body health awareness, and biofield and pranic energy systems.

Thus this program addressed aspects of the students’ development within the body, energy and mental layers of being. The method of program delivery focused on practical and experiential learning; the students were able to practice and experiment with the information and techniques within their own bodies, supporting them in enhancing their awareness and mastery of body, senses and mind.

**International Yoga Day:**

To celebrate International Day of Yoga in June 2021 (within the guidelines of local COVID-19 restrictions) Thamarai Health and Wellbeing Service organised a five-day program for villagers and students of the bioregion, in collaboration with Auroville unit Arulvazhi Education Centre. The program focused on building participants’ awareness of
Body health and how to boost the immune system using knowledge and practices of yoga and wellness.

In total 115 adults and children participated in the five-day program. After the classes, participants reported much positive feedback, such as that they experienced improved feelings of health and reduced or resolved body pains and body discomfort, and that they realized the importance of health awareness and were interested to learn more.

Teacher training:

A one-day Wellness Teacher Training Program was offered to government kindergarten school teachers, organised by the Vanur District Education Department. In this day program, participants learned the essentials of how to create a healthy and happy environment for their students. They explored ways of teaching creatively and joyfully. They learned about the necessity of using fundamental concepts of physical education and good nutrition to help build strong and healthy students. And they learned yoga postures, breathing exercises and practical techniques for self healing of common health issues. By the end of the session participants had gained an understanding of the unique features of Integral Education methods.

Approximately 200 teachers and school officers participated in this Teacher Training day. Most of the participants had no prior experience with this kind of class. The feedback received included that they found the class inspiring and would like the opportunity to continue this education in the future.

At the end of the training, the school principles and officers decided yoga should be offered in every school. All teachers who attended agreed to start yoga exercises every day with their students in their schools.

Integral Wellness course:

This year 26 women from various bioregion villages regularly attended a year-long Integral Wellness course. The course was held three hours per week for the full year. The curriculum for this program included information, instruction and practice of: yoga asanas, pranayama, meditation, mudras (energetic seals), Trataka (eye/ concentration exercises), nutrition, and physical and psychological health disorders. The learning and experiences gained in this course aimed to provide the women with the foundation and inspiration to develop a holistic approach in managing their own physical, mental and emotional health.

In the feedback from the course, many women mentioned that they felt newly empowered regarding their health and wellbeing, that the awareness and knowledge gained had increased their self-confidence, and that they experienced connection, love and oneness from coming to the class.

Additionally, a number of participants informed the program leader that the course didn’t just impact the women’s own wellbeing behaviours, but that they also introduced many positive changes to their family at home and spread the education amongst their family and friends in the community.
Awareness of health and wellness:
Through the General Health Awareness programs offered in numerous local villages,
the Health and Healing Education Project made available:
● a basic health check, including tests for blood pressure, diabetes, haemoglobin
● general health awareness education
● homeopathy remedies, and
● herbs and natural health tips for common health issues.
The aspiration of this program was to increase the health consciousness of the village residents, and to support them in maintaining good health.

Alcohol addiction prevention and recovery:
Thamarai Health and Wellbeing Service has evolved a two-pronged approach in response to people's request to support the significant and often destructive community health issue of alcohol and other substance addiction; one being prevention and the other, treatment.

The prevention strategy has involved arranging a sports field, sports equipment and coaching for regular sports and fitness activities with the local youths (young adults). The intention of this approach; by encouraging good physical health and the development of strong self-esteem, and by nourishing a sense of inclusion and community through such activities, the youth build core life skills capable of assisting them in making sound decisions about their health and wellbeing as they mature.

The treatment strategy has included making available to those youth and family men who were experiencing the impacts of substance abuse access to residential rehabilitation at Mother Care Foundation, Pondicherry. The 30-day program at Mother Care provides individual, group and family counselling, as well as alternative therapies like yoga and homeopathy. This past year under the Health and Healing Education Project four men were enrolled in residential treatment with the Mother Care Foundation and successfully completed the program. Families of these four men in recovery have reported that they are now working and maintaining the family well.

Testimonials:

Thenmozhi (Morattandi village):
“Since 5 years I have been attending wellbeing sessions in Arulvazhi school. I am feeling much better. I learned so many things about my body and life. I have diabetes and other health issues. These wellbeing and yoga sessions maintain these under control and I am alive and healthy. In the time of Covid 19, I suffered from being covid 19 positive. These wellbeing tips saved my health and gave me my life back.

Also I noticed my body when I am not practicing yogasanas, my health is not in good condition; when I am practicing yoga, I feel very good and relaxed. And also psychological issues like stress, tension, too much thinking, everything has been changed. Now I am more calm, relaxed and happy.”
My husband also has diabetes and other health issues. Whatever I am learning, I am teaching my husband and children, it helps us less have family problems. Now we have good understandings in my family and I am more mature in handling life. I am supporting others in my village.

I request this program should be continued forever to save many lives. Thank you so much.”

Kamala (Auroville Free Store):

“I have been practising for 2 yrs in the wellness program. 2 yrs before I had menopause issues, it disturbed me in psychological ways. I took homeopathy medicines and the doctor suggested that I do some yoga exercise. I met Muthukumari and shared about my health issues. She started to give some health tips. I slowly felt different in myself.

The aspiration started within me to learn more, from that day I have been continuously practising since 2 yrs. I learned so many healing techniques and Yoga asanas with pranayama and mudras.

I have no words to say, I realised this is real healing power without any side effects. Now I have no menopause health issues, and also no knee and leg issues after yoga and wellness totally changed these things, now my heath is so relaxed and peaceful. I feel much healthier and active. I have been attending all the sessions without missing since 2 yrs. If I missed practice, that day my healthwise would not be happy.

I am not taking any medicines, only yoga and natural healings. I am sharing with my families and friends what I experienced and healing wisdom to others.”
Aruvazhi Education Centre
by Ashwini

In Tamil Aruvazhi means ‘Path of Grace’. Aruvazhi is a learning center, catering to the educational and cultural needs of the children of Morattandi village aged 3 to 18 years and women aged 25 to 45 years. We base our activities on the principles of the Integral education of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, developing the five parts of being: the physical, mental, vital, psychic and spiritual.

Activities of the year:

Morning Yoga sessions (6:30 am to 7:30 am)
Participants: 40 children
- Yoga & Meditation: Velumurgan
- International Yoga Day: Velumurgan & Muthukumari (once a year)

Women’s sessions (10:30 am to 11:50 am)
Participants: 15 women
- Women’s wellbeing: Muthukumari
- English language development: Ashwini
- Healthy food and healthy living: Ocean and Nimila
- Menstrual Education (Eco Femme): Muthukumari (twice a year)
- Evening English language development: Chitra (4:30 to 6:00 pm)

Evening learning sessions (4:30pm to 6:15pm)
Participants: 55 children ages 10 to 17 years
- Singing and dance: Nimila
- Art & craft, language development (English & Hindi): Ashwini
- Awareness sessions: Ashwini
- Sports: Velumurgan
- Sessions on Savitri, Mother & Sri Aurobindo and significance of Flowers: Muthukumari
- Frisbee: Selvi
- Computers: Ganesh
- Grammar: Uma (December 2021 & January 2022)

We also organised educational field trips on alternate Saturdays, 9am to 12pm. Topics covered: our surroundings, Garbology, water awareness, Savitri Bhavan, and cycle trips to Auroville.
Around 45 villagers associated with our centre participated in the “Integral wellness” program – see report connected to Ilaignarkal centre.

Outcomes:
A holistic approach towards learning was practiced. This created in the participants inquisitiveness, awareness and an urge to explore. This technique also helped them to realize their talents, skills and work on their inner consciousness within.

Research highlights:
The students of the 8th, 9th and 10th grades made a research on two projects: Garbology and Water. Both of these projects provided a number of options in practice to go deep into the subject and create an awareness within the student. Initially it was the teacher who facilitated with the topic, which the students later took ahead actively. They began educating their families and siblings, also creating awareness in their surroundings. We supported them by guiding them come up with practical ideas that would help them to keep their village & school clean and save water.

The Savitri sessions were done in an activity-based manner and included reading, discussions, debates, and visits to Savitri Bhavan. This helped the students to develop their inner consciousness and empowered them with inner qualities such as perseverance, courage etc.

Reflections:
We saw an eagerness for learning in the children, after school! Children are more attentive towards learning during hands-on, activity based learning.

Teaching in a no-classroom area in the evenings can be challenging, and our facilitators got involved in finding new techniques of holding the attention of the students for a longer time while teaching in such areas.

Conclusion:
We intend to create new techniques and make learning happy in the light of the teachings of Mother and Sri Aurobindo.
STEM Land
by Muralidharan A.

STEM Land is a learning organization providing resources for anyone willing to learn in the fields of Science, Technology, Mathematics and (exceptionally) English. The aim of STEM Land is to develop responsibility, equality and courage to create.

This year we initiated a one-year residential Master’s course called “Becoming and Being a Shifu (Master)” for graduates to learn skills (programming, chip design), competencies and inner capacities.

We also started to consolidate our learning in terms of codifying STEM Land to support teachers from other schools to adapt what has worked for us in their context.

Activities of the year:

- We worked intensively with Isai Ambalam School and Udavi School.
- We trained one facilitator to support the STEM center at Thamarai.
- We generally work with around 300 children across the schools either though our own centers or supporting centers at Aikiyam and Auroville schools.
- During the period of COVID restrictions the schools were not in session but we supported a small group of 5-10 alumni of STEM Land from Udavi and Isai Ambalam schools to learn electronics and programming.

Eight youths registered for the Shifu program. These residential students started the day with surya namaskar and were involved in many activities throughout the day, including Anapana meditation, teaching math in school, learning and working in their domain, sports, and daily reflection. They also took part in Radical Transformational Leadership (RTL), Vipassana and exploring Auroville on either a weekly or monthly basis.

Outcomes:
Five of the students who went through the Shifu program have graduated and are working in real life projects. Another 5 youths are currently in the program.

We worked on consolidating the English program at Isai Ambalam School and created a book based on TPR (Total Physical Response), an effective way for young children to learn English.

Research highlights:
Our team members published papers at the MES11 (Mathematics Education and Society) conference:

2. “Altered traits of alumni from a collaborative learning environment”
Reflections from team members:

**Arun:**
I realise now that I have taken new initiatives to make the project effective, like documenting a new issue/project and creating test cases before closing an issue. I organized sessions with Swati and where teachers benefited and learned new ways of introducing concepts to children. Working with new teachers helped them to become more competent (I hope).

I have seen C3STREAM Land *(the unit associated with STEM Land)* grow taking in new people and working on multiple projects. This gives us a new opportunity to enhance us to a larger organization providing opportunities to youths to learn, grow, work and teach.

**Pratap:**
Looking at the last 5 months being part of C3STREAM Land, I have started taking responsibility for my growth and team growth. For example I saw that STEM teachers were not filling in the teachers notes, which means we don’t know what teachers are teaching in class. I started to take initiative to ask the teachers and myself to put the teachers notes every day. I created a Signal group with all the teachers and asked them to post their plans and also asked them to fill the teachers notes online.

**Bakyalakshmi:**
From the last year I can see that I have gone through many different situations and have tackled each one of them with the help of RTL and other sessions. Each of them was new learning and new experience. I can see myself acting without fear and acting courageously.

**Muralidharan:**
Last year was a challenging and experimental year for me. I was part of many new things like handling finance, mentoring Shifuians, supporting kitchen related tasks, author for MES11, lead for Au5328 project and RTL PC. Working from home during the pandemic has really made an impact on my working style. At least meeting children physically for a few months was nice.

As an organisation we have grown not just in number of people but also in the areas of projects we work. Working and being with many new people helped me learn new skills from them and also teach them what I knew. For this year also, I hope to retain the things that have helped me grow in all aspects. I noticed how much I have contributed by being in integrity to the growth of our organisation and would like to improve in the areas where I lack integrity as an individual and as a team.

Revisiting the time spent and things I learnt last year, I realize that I should increase the time for learning and focus on things to learn that are relevant to my area of work or interests me personally.
Ranjith:

My contribution as mentor in the Shifu program was mentoring the candidates on VLSI layout and inner capacities. Through that process, I got inspired from mentee’s dedication towards their progress, and that is the take away for me from the Shifu program.

My contributions as a teacher were introducing visual ways to remember formulas and reminding the children about their commitment as students, because they lost their connection to education due to covid lockdowns in the last two years.

Poovizhi:

I notice that the more I practice integrity the more I am aware of myself. Being part of STEM Land gives me continuous realisation and the needful actions towards my personal and professional growth of being who I am.

To improve: I need to focus on building the team (improve in communication, planning and execution of the plan). I also need to have a have backup for each project and create interdependencies within the team.

I learnt that I get opportunities for my growth, learning and at the same time opportunity to provide space for others’ growth.

Conclusion:

Intentions for next year are to continue the “Becoming and Being a Shifu” program and also to collaborate with AIAT (Auroville Institute of Applied Technology) to run a new B.Voc (Bachelor of Vocation) program in partnership with Pondicherry University.

We will continue the codification of STEM Land as well as look to offer workshops with partners.
Aer School – Integral Agriculture program
by Anshul Aggarwal

The purpose of the project was to offer a 1-year course in Integral Agriculture to graduates of the Auroville schools. This was also a research project in that it was a pilot which will help create a structured approach for offering this course in the coming years.

**Description of project:**

This course was aimed to introduce the idea of Integral Agriculture with hands-on training in farming.

An open call was made to students who were interested in taking this course after the completion of school.

One student committed to participating in this course. She was a student of Future School and wanted to learn more about farming and food.

**Philosophical note (excerpts from longer paper):**

Agriculture, like most human activities, is in a process of renewal of aspiration. However, the new aspiration that we seek does not limit itself to agriculture. What we are moving towards is a complete transformation of the human consciousness and agriculture with its far-reaching implications plays an important part in this journey. In the past decades, we have been fortunate to learn and be inspired by the likes of Masanobu Fukuoka, Albert Howard, Bhaskar Save and others about a new way of looking at agriculture. Integral agriculture does not exclude any of their findings or suggestions. Neither it is a new term or concept. It is simply an extension of the ideals of Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga and interpretation of what integrality means when working with the land, with each other and growing food as a service to humanity and all life.

Just as our physical body has subtle bodies, food too has its subtle fields emanating from the etheric and psychic energies of the source of the food, and from the process used to transform it for consumption. This is a common experience of many people and can be verified easily. Different sources of food, the way the food was grown, handled and cooked, lead to differing results in nutrition, flavour and energy of the food. Thus, our consumption of food adds its physical to our physical and its subtle to our subtle, while our physical body carries the memory of the food we consume, our subtle bodies carry the memory of the subtle qualities of the food.

The body is often seen as the Tamasic weight that drags us down and impedes our progress on the path of Yoga. But the quality of our body is directly related to the quality of our food. And the quality of the food is dependent on how and where it is grown, also who grows it and then finally how it is cooked and consumed. To raise the consciousness of the food, the consciousness of all these aspects has to be raised.
Globally, the emphatic stress on strategies and policies to feed the world are focused only on producing more food, while completely forgetting or ignoring the qualities of the food. As the world wakes up to appreciate the subtle nuances of relationships of humans with nature, with other humans and within themselves, the subtle qualities of food and their relationship with human health must also be considered and appreciated. As a global collective, feeding the world population is rather an insufficient objective. That all on this planet should have access to clean and wholesome food of the highest vibration, could be an idea worth aspiring for.

It may be difficult to chart the path of a new paradigm from where we are right now. We could only try to be humble and follow certain beacons of values and imaginations. It would require us to be open to embrace surprises and our doubts, accept our ignorance, surrender to a higher guiding power and receive the answers as best as we can.

### Course outline:

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<th>Month</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>Plants</td>
<td>Biology &amp; Classification</td>
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<td>What role do plants play in life?</td>
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<td>Identify plants growing around your house.</td>
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<td>Pollination, Annuals &amp; Perennials</td>
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<td>Flows &amp; Patterns / Sacred geometry</td>
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<td>Energy cycles / Climate and microclimates</td>
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<td>What is sustainability / regeneration?</td>
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<td>Production, distribution and consumption</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Living water</td>
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<td>Irrigation &amp; Dryland farming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcomes:

Apart from the intangible learning outcomes, we created maps for AuroOrchard farm and created a soil biology chart for the various zones of the farm.

Reflections:

Since Dakshani was the only student, there were no opportunities for group sessions or activities. Thankfully, we had the volunteer group at AuroOrchard which filled some of this gap, but this group was not part of the entire process of the course. Therefore, the experience of learning in a group was limited during the course.

Dakshani’s reflections on some of the modules:

- **Plants:** “I was immensely impressed as well as influenced by plants. I wanted to be like a plant. Plants have a clear purpose. A great purpose. They are food producers, habitat providers, air purifiers, soil protectors, water absorbers and much more. They are survivors, no matter the difficulties, they always strive toward the sun.”

- **Design:** “We use design as a tool to solve challenges. We use it regularly, we just don’t see it as “design”. For example, I designed my gap year program to figure out my interests. In the context of a farm, people design a farm by observing, working with the existing flows and patterns of the land and creating something new to accommodate their needs and likings.”

- **Soil assessment:** “It was thrilling to see the unseen. It was fun walking around and collecting soil samples and studying them under a microscope. The search for fungus in every slide is one of my favourite memories.”

- **Compost:** “I heard many people say ‘the soil is alive’. I used to wonder, ‘how?’ Now I say there is more life in the soil than on top of the surface. When I was studying soil samples under a microscope, I saw hundreds of bacteria, fungus and if lucky, other microorganisms. Compost is basically a cultivation of microorganisms which nurtures the soil for bigger organisms to thrive.”

- **Cartography:** “To fit something of huge size into a small paper was new and exciting. I learned a lot about the land through mapping. I walked places I haven’t been before. Talked
with people I didn’t know before. I had to make multiple sketches of the same drawings and sometimes it seemed it would never end. But I liked it even better as it all felt very real."

A lot of motivation is required for a student to go through a course such as this on her own. Having peers involved in the same process would have been helpful. Fortunately, Dakshani’s family supported her immensely and encouraged her to continue.

We thoroughly enjoyed working with each other and adapted to how things evolved.

**Conclusion:**

This experience can be shared with the schools and students to explore if this program can be offered again.
Auroville Campus Initiative
by Divyanshi Chugh

Auroville Campus Initiative aims to facilitate the creation of Auroville as a new kind of a Univers-city. Activities include helping to develop educational courses for adults in Auroville, and helping the course creators interface with the world at large, as well as supporting students coming to Auroville to navigate through and find relevant courses et al.

Activities of the year:

Through the Auroville Campus Platform https://edu.auroville.org we responded to queries of potential interested students. We received 40+ queries this year – more than we would expect, given the fact that we have not been doing any major outreach of the platform. There are requests based on fields of study, towards which we guide them to one of the courses or websites from our database. Oftentimes, we get on a call with students to offer consultancy, helping them with all aspects of coming to Auroville from accommodation, to volunteering, to studies and courses. There are requests for degrees and diplomas as well; however, at this stage, Auroville does not have many substantial long-term courses.

The courses section of the website was kept up with the help of two volunteers until January, 2022. The volunteers would regularly go over 12+ websites related to Auroville and update the platform with upcoming workshops and courses. However, in January 2022, we decided to discontinue this work, since volunteers were finding it difficult; it has to be entirely manually done. Without any money, it was difficult to either develop the platform to help auto-mate it or support a volunteer who can dedicatedly work on keeping the website up-to-date. Thus, the courses page on the website has now been updated as a static page with 15+ places where the students can access Auroville courses.

Other than the upkeep of the Auroville Campus Platform, we are also collaborating with Sri Aurobindo Integral Education Network, first step towards Sri Aurobindo International Multiversity and helping them connect with Auroville centres and individuals in Auroville to become a part of the network.

Reflections:

Auroville Campus Initiative does not have any source of funding at the moment. The development of the platform requires a decent flow of money, only then would it be possible to take the platform forward. The money is required for a two-fold work of simultaneously developing the Auroville Campus Platform (the technology backbone) as well as supporting Auroville individuals and units to create curriculum and courses.

We are looking at framing a proposal for FAMC for development of knowledge economy on request of the FAMC, where we feel it is important to bring the importance of technology-backbone, a learning management system, and need for support in online course-development.
Vidyamandir Auroville aims to enliven Sanskrit language in Auroville and offers learning programs and tools based on Indic Knowledge Systems, in the context of Auroville’s vision and Integral Yoga.

**Activities of the year:**

Presently our activities can be broadly divided into the following categories:

1) **Learning Sanskrit language** *(with an intention to realize unity and oneness.)*
2) **Rediscovering ancient texts** *(like Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, Dhammapada etc.)*
3) **Practical application of timeless wisdom** *(through everyday life in the present context.)*
4) **Sacred Celebrations** *(invoking Divine presence and holding space for unity.)*

We explored a range of learning formats like chanting and music, study circles and classes, guest lectures, theatre, stories, silence, experiential workshops and more. More than 200 residents of Auroville and some from Pondicherry and bioregion attended our workshops / activities organized between April 2021 and March 2022. Below are some details of the activities.

**Learning Sanskrit language:**

a) **Sanskrit Immersion with Dr. Anuradha Choudry:** A group of Auroville residents together learned Sanskrit through classes we organized at Auroville Language Lab based on the video lectures by Dr. Anuradha Choudry. To aid the learning we had organized a 5-day immersive program with her in person in Auroville in May 2021, but due to Covid guidelines changing we had to convert the course into live online sessions (even though she had already arrived in Pondicherry) spread over 9 days. While the online sessions cannot replace the depth of in-person sessions, it still ended up being an extremely enriching learning experience.

b) **Sanskrit Conversation with Ojasi Sukhtankar:** After we organized a talk by Ojasi on learning Sanskrit through the Gita, a group of Auroville residents expressed an intention to learn Sanskrit from her and we organized online Sanskrit conversation classes once a week which ran for around one year. Participants found it very enriching.

c) **Sanskrit Basics with Aravinda:** A small group of Auroville residents wanted to learn Sanskrit language starting from the very basics of the alphabet and its sound. Aravinda started a batch at the Language Lab.
d) **Presentation to Auroville School Board:** We made a presentation to the Auroville School Board in November 2021 about our work and offered support to schools in integrating Sanskrit and key elements from the Indic Knowledge Systems. We are interacting with some school members who are interested in this and are exploring ways to integrate this in academic year 2022-23.

**Rediscovering ancient texts:**

After exploring several texts from ancient Indian traditions last year what emerged was a deep aspiration to dive deeper and wider into the Bhagavad Gita. As the Mother referred to Auroville as a place for ‘Karmayoga’ and with Sri Aurobindo’s 150th birthday approaching, we wholeheartedly embarked on a collective *yajnya* to dive deeper into the Gita. There was also an interest to explore Natyashastra and continue the study of Vedas and Upanishads.

a) **Bhagavad Gita:**

i. Weekly study circle on Sri Aurobindo’s *Essays on the Gita* (every Friday, 4-5 pm)

ii. Weekly chanting of Bhagavad Gita shlokas (every Friday, 5-6 pm)

iii. Beginner’s Gita chanting classes (every Mon/Wed/Fri, 7-8 am)

iv. Word-by-word meaning of Gita Shlokas: a 4-week pilot program conducted by Shraddha from Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

v. Sanskrit Grammar through Gita: Jean-Yves conducts these sessions at Last School and some of our team members attend it.

vi. Chapter-by-chapter study: Sessions with Dr. Sampadananda Mishra on insights from each chapter of Gita along with subtler meanings of key Sanskrit terms in that chapter.

vii. Audio resources: we started creating audio files with Sanskrit chanting of the shlokas along with Sri Aurobindo’s commentaries in English.

viii. Annual chanting of the full Bhagavad Gita on the Gita day.

b) **Mundaka Upanishad**: We continued our exploration of the Vedas and Upanishads. In June 2021 we concluded the study session of Mundaka Upanishad with Dr. Sampadananda Mishra that had started last year. Reflections on key verses related to *Para* and *Apara Vidya*, *Jivatma* and *Parmatma* (analogy of two birds) and *Satyameva Jayate* were specifically explored in this session.

c) **Natyashastra**: We organized a weekly study circle on Natyashastra, which is often referred to as the fifth Veda and one of the most essential texts of drama, dance, music, arts and fine arts. The Rasa theory given by Bharat Muni in Natyashastra is the basis on which many artistic disciplines have evolved over the course of Indian history. We referred to some videos and an online course on Natyashastra by Dr. Bharat Gupt, developed by the Center of Indic Studies at the Indus University. This course introduced the participants to the origin of Natyashastra, the performance of Natya,
kinds of theatre, ancient Indian theatre, elements of play, the Natya Karanas, the date of Natyashastra, the performance before the play, the most important concept of Rasa, the various Bhavas, and the commentary of various commentators, classical and modern. Our study circle was facilitated by Yogini Gandhi, Rekha Tandon and Aravinda Maheshwari and attended by various artists and enthusiasts in Auroville.

In 2022-23 we intend to continue this learning journey by inviting experts on this subject in Auroville to conduct experiential workshops and also by co-creating a community project that integrates different elements of the Natyashastra.

Practical application of timeless wisdom:

a) **Swadheena Swasthya Mahavidya**: After the transformative workshop in March 2021 with over 38 Auroville residents participating, we continued to the learning and practice through weekly circles and also organized a community kitchen project in collaboration with Anandi of Satchidananda Kitchen (KOFPU). We also offered our suggestions to the Solar Kitchen team on food that would nourish all parts of the being. In 2022-23, we intend to offer more spaces where residents of Auroville can learn from the Sanskrit texts of Ayurveda and Swadheena Swasthya Mahaavidya with English translations and also apply simple and practical therapies using five elements of ether, air, sun (fire), water, and earth. And also ‘eat’ the recommended food prepared in a sacred kitchen to experience health benefits.

b) **Nada Yoga**: Continuing from last year’s deeply enriching experience, Mandar and Dakshayani from Baithak Foundation visited Auroville again from November 2021 to February 2022 and offered workshops and regular classes on Nada yoga in Auroville. There was a deepening in the understanding and experience of how sounds affect our health and we are also exploring collaboration with Svaram.

c) **Gurukulam**: One of our core team members visited Dharma Gurukulam near Palani run by Anaadi Foundation. He stayed there for a week to get an immersive experience of a life in a Gurukulam. We then invited the founders of Dharma Gurukulam – Adi Narayanan and Smrithi Adinarayanan – to visit Auroville and organized three sessions with them that were very well received. Each of them were attended with around 50 participants:

- **Mahabharata and Human Unity** (14 November 2021, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm): This workshop provided an opportunity to reflect deeply into one’s life, gain clarity, deepen relationships and evolve a vision for self, family and community in an engaging way. It was an inward journey into oneself with Vyasa Maharishi’s Mahabharata as the backdrop.

- **Gurukulam based on Indic Knowledge System** (15 November 2021, 3:30-4:30 pm): In this session, the founders of Dharma Gurukulam shared some
fundamental reasons behind the learning approach in their ashram/gurukulam and key insights from their experiences. Concepts from mainstream subjects like Maths, Science, History, Geography etc. are taught in Sanskrit and English through subjects like Ganitha, Vijnaana, Itihaasa, Ayurveda, Yoga, Nakshatravidya etc. It is not a fixed curriculum but something that evolves with life and acknowledges the interplay of spirit and matter.

- **Yogic Neuroscience and First Person Research** (15 November 2021, 5:00-6:00 pm): In this session we explored a transdisciplinary approach to research involving Neuroscience, Epigenetics and Yogic Sciences. Yogic Sciences take a holistic view of the being based on the Panchakosha model of the Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya, and Anandamaya Koshas (often translated in English as five sheaths: Physical, Vital, Mental, Supramental, Spiritual) and is based on first-person experiences.

**Sacred Celebrations:**

We organized various group chanting practice sessions to prepare for celebrating special occasions including Sri Aurobindo’s birthday (August 15) at Matrimandir, Indian Independence Day (August 15) at Bharat Nivas, Republic Day (January 26) at Bharat Nivas, and Sanskrit Day (August 22) at Bharat Nivas.

**Other projects:**

a) **The Mother’s 12 Qualities**: Dr. Anuradha Choudry translated the Mother’s 12 Qualities along with excerpts for each of them from the writings of The Mother into Sanskrit with support from a few members of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry and Samskritam Auroville team.

b) **National Book Trust**: We supported the organizing of a 3-day workshop conducted by Dr. Sampadananda Mishra on behalf of the National Book Trust (NBT), New Delhi for translating children’s book into Sanskrit. Fifteen participants from across the country came together to translate 25 children’s book from English/Hindi into Sanskrit under the guidance of Dr. Mishra. This workshop was held from September 28-30 at Bharat Nivas.

c) **vidya.auroville.org website**: We continue to build the website with an intention to launch it on August 15, 2022.

d) **“Usha and the dawns to come – From Vedas to Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri”**: Aryamani is directing this theatre project to be performed on Sri Aurobindo’s 150th birthday – 15th August 2022 and the practice began in August 2021. Two of the core team members of Samskritam Auroville team are part of this project and are also supporting how Sanskrit can be incorporated in it.
e) **Brahma Muhurta:** In ancient Indian texts there is an important concept of ब्रह्ममुहूर्त – Brahma Muhurta. One *muhurta* is a period of 48 minutes, with a whole night consisting of 15 muhurtas. Brahma Muhurta is the 14th muhurtakala of the night. The time of sunrise varies each day, according to geographic location and time of year, and the time of the Brahma Muhurta varies with it. For example, if sunrise happens at 6:00am, the Brahma Muhurta begins at 4:24am and ends at 5:12am. It is considered a very auspicious time for regular yogic practices and the experience of many of us reinforces that. We created awareness on this and also formed a group with all those who are interested to come together during Brahma Muhurta to inwardly connect in the spirit of collective yoga.

**Outcomes:**

A good range of learning programs were created based on the requests made by Auroville residents and schools. Participants are finding the process of learning very enriching and joyful. At a subtler level, Psychic discovery and becoming better servitors of the Divine Consciousness is at the core of all our work. The joy and peace we witness in the participants during and after attending our programs is the most precious reward that keeps us going.

**Research highlights:**

We started exploring how the sound of Sanskrit shlokas and mantras affect a human being and transforms consciousness. We tried to understand the nuances of the difference in state of consciousness when mere listening to them and how it changes when one starts chanting them in a particular meter (chandas) with the right intonations. At an individual level we experienced widening and heightening of consciousness while chanting the Sanskrit shlokas (especially from the Bhagavad Gita), but as the changes are so subtle and experiential, we are not sure how to put them into words and in a research report format. We are studying the principles and methodology for ‘First Person Research’ created by Indian Psychology Institute in Pondicherry. We also met one of their team members and it looks like that the methodology that they have created for First Person Research can be used in our research work. We intend to continue this exploration next year.

**Reflections:**

What we are witnessing is that when residents come together to learn Sanskrit and other wisdom texts, there is a deeper inner connection they experience within themselves and with each other. Auroville is going through a difficult phase of conflict and accelerated transformation since last year. As all our programs are held with an intention to discover our inmost being and to realize unity, what is heartening to see is that participants even with ‘opposing views’ in the conflict are able to sit in the same circle and learn and chant together and we do see sparks of a shift towards unity in those moments. These moments of seeing the light and experiencing unity even during the atmosphere of intense conflicts have been
the most meaningful this year. With complete श्रद्धा / faith and आत्मसमर्पण / surrender to the Divine Consciousness, we are committed on this adventure of collective yoga for human unity.

Conclusion:
As willing servitors of the Divine Consciousness, we are deeply committed to continue this यज्ञ/ Yajnya of learning Sanskrit and wisdom from the Indic Knowledge Systems in the spirit of Auroville’s intention to realize human unity. We thank SAIIER for the continued support.
Teachers’ Center
by Marion, Ana and Francoise

The mission of the Teachers’ Center is to support teachers and educators who are committed to following the development of the child, applying the principles of Integral Education as set down by Sri Aurobindo and Mother.

Its aim is to encourage the development and implementation of Integral Education through collaboration, networking, research and innovation.

Activities of the year:
During this year 2021-22 the main goal was to keep the Teachers’ Center open (at the maximum of our capacities considering government regulations), offering resources and Professional Development. In fact it was a wonderful time for the teachers to focus on learning and studying, as children were not on campus.

We have the following programs going on at TC currently:
- Supportive Learning Satellite
- Professional Development program (introduction to the Montessori method as a tool to develop Integral Education in the classroom; Mathematics; Geometry; Sensorial; Language learning and classroom management)
- Online learning platform for educators joining our Professional Development program
- Resource building in the area of Mathematics, Geometry and Language
- Teacher support on request and according to specific need

Currently we are a team of four Aurovilian educators offering Professional Development, two working in the Supportive Learning Satellite initiative, and one secretary.

Our general offerings include support for parents; an advisory service in the field of education; workshops; making teaching-learning resources on request; support for teachers through observation, workshops, research etc.; the development of educational programs depending on the needs of the teachers, children and schools; classes for children; the organization of events and trips for children; support for school management teams; Special Needs support.

Our secretary is in charge of office work, organizing meetings, researching and preparing materials for teachers and the TC team, maintaining record books and materials and acting as the focal point and liaison between team members and others.

The Supportive Learning Satellite (SLS) has, at the request of schools and sometimes parents, observed and assessed children displaying a variety of difficulties of an emotional, social, behavioral, developmental and learning nature, in the classroom; met with parents; advised on and supported home-school liaison; provided advice and helped implement
family support in the home environment; provided individual support and one-to-one programs for children in school or at Lilaloka.
This year the SLS formally supported Nandanam, Kindergarten, Transition and Deepanam schools.
The SLS has one member on the support group of the Auroville Child Protection Project with which it liaises and to which it provides input and support when requested.

Outcomes:
- 2 teachers from SLS and Udavi School followed a course in Child Development as part or one of our Professional Development programs.
- 30 teachers from different schools participated in an online course that finished in June 2021.
- 17 Teachers completed an examination course in Mathematics and Geometry, modality B-Learning and were issued with a certificate in November 2021.
- 5 Aurovilians and 2 volunteers participated in a Practical Life workshop in Spanish, for which facilitator and student handbooks were created.
- 16 Teachers completed an examination course in Mathematics and Geometry, modality B-Learning and were issued with a certificate in November 2021.
- 5 Aurovilians and 2 volunteers participated in a Practical Life workshop in Spanish, for which facilitator and student handbooks were created.
- 16 teachers followed a course in sensorial activities from October 2021 to January 2022.
- 16 teachers are currently following a workshop in language which began in February 2022 and will end in July 2022
- We have an ongoing program for 14 teachers in Classroom Management for kindergarten teachers.
- We created resource materials in the areas of Mathematics, Sensorial, Geometry and Language.
- We used Edmodo to create a platform for our courses in Mathematics, Sensorial, Geometry, and Using Montessori Pedagogy as a Tool to Develop Integral Education. Currently we are working on a Language platform.
- We researched digital material and offered to teachers who requested it.
- We created a Sensorial Manual for educators. The final editing is in process.
- A booklet on Montessori pedagogy is in the last editing process (funded by Foundation for World Education).
- Two of our TC members participate in a Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) online webinar with many schools and ecovillages working in Education.

Reflections:
Three of our team members are over seventy years old; it is a great opportunity to share skills and provide advice from life and working experience in Auroville and other places, while at the same time it is very challenging because the energy it is not the same and the needs from schools and teachers are greater than we can offer.
This year we learned better to prioritize, responding to the most important requests according to our capacities and skills.
The Scholarship and Educational Fund (SEF) was established in 2008 to provide financial assistance to Aurovilians who seek educational opportunities outside Auroville. Financial support is provided in the form of interest-free loans, repayable as soon as possible and in installments feasible for the recipient.

**Activities of the year:**

During the financial year 2021-22, 50 Auroville students received financial support from or through the SEF. Main sources of student-nonspecific contributions were as follows: from Auroville City Budget: Rs. 9.5 lakh; opening balance plus contributions by way of loan repayment: Rs. 3 lakh; a few contributions from Auroville units including Rs. 19,980 from Yuvabe.

During the FY 2021-22 the SEF team had six meetings in person, to interview new applicants and to make decisions on support; and, due to Covid-related precautions, made several more decisions via email correspondence.

**Outcomes:**

In total, fifty Aurovillian students received support from SEF in this FY, out of which four received support exclusively from student-specific contributions made by Auroville units. In most cases the financial help provided by the SEF presented only in-part support.


**Conclusion:**

In February 2022 we were happy to be assured of donations for the coming FY 2022-23: A grant from Foundation for World Education of $ 4,000, approximately Rs. 3 lakh; and a grant from an Aurovilian individual of Rs. 66,31,566.- or 66.31 lakh. We have been given freedom to make use of the funds as per our guidelines and internal decision process, also for administrative expense if needed, and have been encouraged to create a corpus fund if so wanted.

Intentions for next year are to create the matrix for an overview on internal accounts; and to create a corpus fund from the generous individual donation received and make use of the appeal of such a fund for further fund-raising.
Dehashakti School of Physical Education
by Satyavan, Ganesh and Fred

The aim of Dehashakti is to provide an integral development of the body through a variety of planned physical activities which include individual games, collective games, gymnastics, swimming and athletics. Excelling in these activities is not the final objective in itself but rather the tools which assist the children to incorporate and develop physical qualities such as strength, speed, and stamina, as well as values like sincerity, respect, sacrifice for the collective, courage and perseverance. These qualities and values are the foundation for those aspiring to be true Aurovilians.

Activities of the year:
The Dehashakti program was attended by students from Deepanam, Transition, TLC and Last School. Following are the number of students who joined (more or less regularly) the PE program this school year 2021-22:

- Joy (1st grade): 27
- Bliss (2nd grade): 36
- Beauty (3rd grade): 27
- Harmony (4th grade): 30
- Force (5th grade): 35
- Perfection (6th+ grade): 42
- In total: 197

After a Covid-ridden year with limitations and lockdowns we managed to provide a program as diverse as and close to what used to be pre-Covid. The focus this year was more on collective games due to the isolation and social distancing in the year before. What makes Dehashakti special is the coming together of children from different schools for a regular intensive program. The aim was to rekindle this aspect since socializing, interaction with one another is crucial for the learning process of children and no amount, however high, of online classes can replace that.

In the last term we introduced the concept of clubs in order for the children to specialize in a particular sport of their choice. This approach gave the opportunity for the children from fifth grade onwards to choose which activities they would like to improve upon. The aim was to give them more sessions of the activity of their choice during each week to accelerate their skill acquisition and confidence. We felt this approach to be the most appropriate for the older students (5th grade onwards) and plan to implement it from the very start of the next academic year in July.

The swimming classes which could not happen due to repair work in La Piscine were
sorely missed since swimming is an integral part of our program. We hope to restart swimming in the next academic year.

Outcomes:

Thanks to the relaxations introduced on the Covid restrictions we were able to conduct collective games such as Football, Basketball, Kho-Kho and Softball, individual games such as Badminton as well as take scores of the student’s athletics performances of Jumps, Sprints and Throws.

At the end of the term each group’s parents and teachers from respective schools were invited to Dehashakti to have a collective session and to interact before the term ended. This was well-appreciated by the students, parents and teachers.

Research highlights:

Since several years we have been working towards an evaluation system that is not competitive yet allows reflection upon the strengths and weaknesses of the students. This year we made individual reports/booklets for each student with specific feedback and some pictures, making it a fun way for the students and their parents to reflect on their progress. For example one report includes the comments:

- “You have come a long way since the start of the year when many activities were physically and mentally taxing for you. Now you have built great strength, resilience, willpower and endurance. You are also pretty good at catching and throwing now.”
- “When you are sprinting a short distance, your body produces energy without the use of oxygen. This is called anaerobic exercise. The body can only produce energy in this way for up to 2min. After that you will get tired and slow down.
- “For Long Jumps you need power, which is a combination of speed and strength. You need to accelerate towards the take-off line and you need strong thigh, back and abdominal muscles to jump far.”
In Auroville, the practice of the Japanese martial art Aikido has been practiced since the very early days. This is because it is a martial art that is very complete, involving body, mind and spirit. Aikido is known as the Art of Peace. What the Japanese word ‘Aikido’ means can be broken down as: ‘Ai’ – for love or harmony, ‘Ki’ – for the energy that is life, – ‘Do’ is the path. Our Japanese master’s translation for it is: the way which unifies energy and harmony.

In Aikido we learn how to defend ourselves (for this we learn attacks) without the need to defeat or harm someone else. We study martial art techniques to build an inner confidence. We are then less driven by our own fears and do not react from fear. In this way we can be more open to the possibility of a peaceful resolution to any situation. This is what we are trying to ‘teach’ through the practice.

Aikido is quite demanding. It requires attention and intention at all times. It is an intense physical training that requires regularity and time, if one wants to see serious progress.

Description of project:
This year we could start the school year from July 12th, the Covid restrictions being lifted for sports. We gave three classes a week to adults and three classes a week to children at our Budokan in Dehashakti. Our students are mostly from Auroville, with a certain number of non-Aurovilians coming from the bio-region and Pondicherry, and occasionally guests. During the year 2021-22, we had approximately 18 children and 22 adults. (Due to Covid lockdown and restrictions the number of students decreased; but we would have no problem to accommodate at least double this number of students.)

The children’s classes are for age 8 up to the teenage years. Their group ideally practices three to four times a week, during the whole school year. Once the children get older they are encouraged to attend our adult classes.

This year we had three children’s classes a week instead of our usual four, due to the absence of one of our teachers who underwent a long physiotherapy treatment.

Outcomes:
Whether with the children or the adults, we tried to have our students perceive the nobility of this art which allows working on the different aspects of the personality. This is done through focused attention and techniques that involve the whole body. For instance the falls called ‘ukemi’: in order to fall well, one has to surrender, one has to accept the fall, not only to avoid hurting oneself, but also in order to quickly get up and be fit for what comes next, without feeling weak or that one has ‘lost’.
Reflections:

We have been particularly happy with our children’s group this year, as we saw a lot more motivation and enthusiasm from them, as well as more understanding and will to progress.

We feel the need to provide more adult classes during the daytime or late afternoon, instead of in the morning, as per the availability of the students.

Conclusion:

We are so grateful to be able to practice and share the teaching of this wonderful and complete martial art. We hope to be able to plan an Intensive (workshop) for adults and children in the next year.
Auroville Mixed Martial Arts (MMA)
by Giacomo

This year was the second phase of the project, in order to see how an integral mixed martial art culture with a proper base (gear and mat) would affect the youth in and outside Auroville. Participants were around 35 regular Auroville students in the last year and 50 from outside.

Description of project:
Giacomo started a second phase of teaching that included a ToT part. Some assistants joined (Joe as a boxing coach, Ruben as K1 coach, and soon Yari, as a former world champion MMA coach). Students from different ages and genders showed an increasing of skill, a distance from use of drugs, an understanding of the mechanics of their posture and structure. At least three of them are ready to become basic instructors, both for inside Auroville and outside, and a specific course for this will start in 2022.

Outcomes:
MMA is one of the most active and consistent activities happening in Dehashakti Gym, with classes and informal training sessions happening almost every day. The team is responsible and takes care of part of the gym and some of its tools. We are still recognized by the Tamil Nadu Mixed Martial Arts Association and we are regularly in touch with teachers and students from Mumbai and from Darjeeling. Now three of our best students are ready to become basic instructors (offering this service to Auroville) and some international level masters have agreed to visit Auroville for a few months every year to support our projects. A Shou Dao Master is available to come, to test the students and give official certificates to them. Further classes can be given on-line.

Reflections:
Challenges are the management of the spaces and the timeslots, since we don’t have full access to the facilities in spite of being so active, consistent and productive. The mat is not always available and its hygiene is neglected and left to us. Gloves, pads and other gear are sometimes used by other users of the gym who don’t care about them: we had to throw away some gear and to spend money to repair some others. We don’t have enough for all the students since only few of them can afford personal gear. This limits the kind of techniques that we can train and learn.

In spite of all this, the progress made in many areas is evident: some students reached a high level of skill, their posture, structure, peripheral vision, self control and overall health improved. Many of them have given up for good any kind of drug use and alcohol. Their capacity to visualize things in their mind increased drastically, and this helps them not to act out of panic (fear or anger). I can see that elements of a “new” healthy culture are stemming.
Conclusion:
Due to positive results, I am constantly receiving more requests of classes, especially from Aurovilian parents. And other coaches are coming or being formed, which means that we may be ready to have a place of our own to be managed 6/7 days a week. My plan is to buy some more gear for all students and to invite the Shou Dao Master to Auroville in order to certify my students as basic instructors.
Activities of the year:
I have been training Aurovilians, Newcomers, volunteers, and workers in the field of physical education through fitness, gym, functional training, self defense, holistic physical training in the gym, in my house, in their homes, in the villages etc.

Reflections:
There is a significant increase in the interest and awareness to train the physical being and the realisation that it is crucial for the body (the vessel) to be well trained for everyday life, for integral health and integral yoga itself.
Covid-19 pandemic was still the challenge, but it got better.

Research highlights:
I have come to realise through training myself and many people all over the world that the 'body' is the final frontier, so to speak. It holds a crucial key to the well-being of the emotional, mental and vital parts of human beings. One needs to constantly train the body with discipline, through different methods to progress and get better at the faculties like balance, strength, endurance, lightness etc.
I am positive that only when the vessel is trained with discipline, can it receive, hold and act with the wisdom/ light from The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. In my humble understanding, cellular transformation and perfection are the highest aspirations of the physical frontier (physical body).
I hope to continue to research more through my work on how to make the physical being aspire and move towards perfection, in everyday life and in the journey of integral yoga.

Conclusion:
My intention is to be sincere and persevere to train myself and others more and raise more awareness in the field of physical education, for the people in Auroville, the bio-region and across the world. I also have the dream of playing a role in manifesting a one of a kind physical education perfection center/ stadium which will truly represent the spirit of Mother, Sri Aurobindo and Auroville.
AVSRC sees itself as one of the tools for working towards the goal of human unity through sports and cultural activities. In our efforts towards this, we have been organizing and coordinating various games, sports and cultural activities in the bio region and in Auroville for the last 15 years. We have also been supporting improvement of sports fields / facilities as there is a severe lack of it.

Activities of the year:

- Training boys and girls in the multipurpose indoor stadium 4 days a week for about 3-4 hours a session. Organized internal basketball tournaments in league and knockout formats for children.
- Volleyball coaching and training continues to take place in the following villages: Kottakarai, Kuilapalayam, Bommayarpalayam, Edayanchavadi, Periya Mudaliar Chavadi, Irumbai, Nadukuppam, Bharathi Nagar for the girls and boys and youth in the evenings and mornings on a rotational basis. We also support Aikiyam school sports program every week days and additionally we support AVAG to coordinate their annual women's day sports and cultural programs.
- As the Indoor stadium at NC sports ground is only partially covered /enclosed, the electrical room covered with sheet metal roof leaked during monsoon rains due to damage. We managed to replace the leaking sheet metal roof on the Indoor stadium’s electrical room with a concrete one.
- AVSRC received the old sound system from Bharat Nivas and we are in the process of fixing and setting it up in the Indoor Stadium necessary for our basketball teaching program using audio visual system to effectively teach skills in basketball to children and for facilitating viewing of live telecasts of world sports events like the Olympics, Wimbledon, US Open, NBA, NCAA and other cultural events.
- Supported Auroville Cricket Team with their uniform needs by helping to channel funds through SAIIER and similarly for Auroville Frisbee team for shoes for the players.

Outcomes:

We hope to complete the indoor stadium with all the necessary equipment and tools for training our physical body with an intention to keeping it fit and agile. As this facility is still in lack of equipment and incomplete enclosure of its structure continues to exist, we can only state that it is still an ongoing process for us...although the participants continue to benefit even at this incomplete stage of the structure through our activities and programs conducted in it.
Reflections:
In the past year, due to the pandemic, it has been rather a struggle to organize activities and programs, because of the restrictions imposed due to covid rules in the indoor stadium. Not to mention the lack of resources necessary for carrying out the programs and activities. In spite of these hurdles, the children came forward to continue their training in the indoor stadium as and when permitted. This was indeed a very positive and rewarding experience for us.

Conclusion:
Our efforts towards human unity through sports and cultural activities and in helping to keep our physical body fit and agile is a continuous process; as such, the resources necessary to complete the indoor stadium with all its required equipment to carry out activities and programs should be well supported and encouraged.

We would also like to request support to improve and develop the Adventure sports ground in the coming year.
Regular Volleyball training for boys, girls and youth
by Senthilkumar

This was a project to teach and train volleyball sports skills for boys, girls and youths from Auroville and its surrounding nine neighboring villages. The project’s main purpose was to improve their physical fitness and skills, helping them reach their goals in the field of physical education.

Description of project:
This program has been an ongoing activity for the past eight years. I am a coach and coordinator of volleyball sports development in Auroville and among the villages. This activity is functioning under Auroville Sports Resource Centre (AVSRC) under SAIIER. Training is given on a rotational basis covering all the villages and Auroville. There is one session in the morning in one village at 6:30 am, and in the evening in another village at 5:30 pm. I carry balls and nets for participants at each village.

Trainings include:
- Right type of running and vertical jumping
- Various core exercises to strengthen the muscles
- Drills training for fitness, strength and endurance
- Underhand passing, fingering and overhead ball passing
- Jumping to strike the ball over the net at a length of 6 meters or further
- How to strike the ball harder with better arm swing at a closer distance over the net.
- Wall training to perfect ball passing and to improve arm strength
- Blocking the ball over the net from opposite the strikers
- Different types of jump services from different places

This year around 275 people including boys, girls, and youth participated (see following table).

Every Sunday morning I organized and invited our trainee teams from different villages to take part in friendly matches. The participants have shown a lot of skills, experience and enthusiasm in this field.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edayanchavadi</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kottakarai</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Irumbai</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nadukuppam</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>275</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes:**

Volleyball sports teaching and learning methods are mostly through practical ways of exercising flexibility and agility toward improving body and mind. These sports activities for the local village youth, boys and girls are not only limited to sporting spirits but also help them learn discipline, punctuality, good cooperation and coordination between players, and better understanding of other village teams.

This training program encourages the trainees to practice together physically at their own playgrounds and this way each person can develop their own skills and promote higher levels of sportsmanship in this region.

**Reflections:**

One meaningful aspect of this activity is that it encourages the young boys and girls to take responsibility and leadership of their own team, and to take part in junior level sports competitions in our district.

It also helps to strengthen good relationships between the inhabitants of Auroville and its surrounding villages.

This year we had the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, and so some training programs did not take place.

In addition, for the past months of November and December, there was heavy rain in the Auroville region which totally damaged all the villages’ playgrounds. We adapted to this by holding training sessions at New Creation sports ground.
This project was a ten-day program to train physical education teachers from the Auroville and Outreach schools. We wrote a letter to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports Department at Bangalore who arranged for one coach, Dr. A. S. Ebenezer, to come and teach our program.

**Description of project:**

The program took place from June 28th to July 8th 2021 at Dehashakti Sports Ground.

Participants were 25 physical education teachers from different Auroville schools: Aikiyam School (6 teachers), Dehashakti School of Physical Education (11 teachers), Udavi School (3 teachers), Isaiambalam School (2 teachers), AVSRC – Auroville Sports Resource Centre (2 teachers) and NESS – New Era Secondary School (2 teachers).

Teachers learned and trained in 12 categories of skills: 1) Endurance, 2) Fitness, 3) Strength, 4) Power, 5) Agility, 6) Speed, 7) Flexibility, 8) Balance, 9) Stretching, 10) Accuracy, 11) Coordination, and 12) injury rehabilitation training. The teachers learned more than 120 categories of ground and floor exercises.

The project provided for the coach consulting fee, accommodation, transport charge and food during 10 days in Auroville.

Auroville Foundation Secretary, Dr. Jayanti Ravi, IAS, distributed the certificates for the participants’ successful completion of the program.

**Outcomes:**

The Auroville physical education teachers training project was useful to us. This expert coach training and his methods of teaching, we have understood. This project has brought to Auroville sports teachers the right methods for enabling their children and youths, such as following discipline, punctuality, observation, coordination, leadership and listening to careful coach instruction.

In addition the project activities have helped create good relationships between sports teachers of different schools.
Activities of the year:

- Ongoing Yoga Nidra sessions for Aurovilians and Newcomers once a week from August 2021
- One intensive workshop this year in February 2022 with Joan
- One workshop of three hours for WasteLess in November 2020
- One intensive workshop on Yoga Nidra and ATB in November
- One intensive workshop on Yoga Nidra and ATB in March
- One ATB session for Svaram in March
- Finished the translation into Spanish and correction of the book “ATB in the Kindergarten” with Joan and Pablo Cuesta. The book has been sent to Spain for publication.
- Finished the Spanish translation, and began revision of “Our many selves”, a compilation of Sri Aurobindo’s and Mother texts about the planes of the being done by A.S. Dalal. We consider this a very important book for the people who facilitate ATB. Many of the Spanish facilitators are not fluent in English, thus the need of translating it. We worked on that with Pablo three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30/9 to 12:30.
- Continued the correction of the French translation of the Kindergarten book with Sebastien (it is done online as Sebastien is in Paris)
- Maintained the ATB websites, and worked on translation into French for the new website
- Kept the correspondence of ATB

Reflections:

Most meaningful this year was the intensive on Yoga Nidra. I had created this new module to be offered to hatha yoga teachers in Ireland, but due to Covid, and to the health of my husband I cancelled all the outside workshops. Then when several Aurovilians asked me to do something on Yoga Nidra, I revised the module, envisaging it more for people interested in Integral Yoga than people from the hatha yoga circle. It was a very quiet, deep, fulfilling experience for me as well as for the participants. That is why I am repeating it at the end of this month.

Most challenging this year was my age (I get more tired than in the past) and family situation.

Intentions for the future:

Whatever comes will be welcomed. Right now I do not look towards the future.
This program of integral education and transformation helps children discover their individual potential. It gives them a better understanding of themselves and the ability to concentrate on the subjects which we practice. The children learn to bring awareness to their emotional and mental being, helping them to relate better to other people. They also learn to feel their energy body: to not only understand but also to experience and feel the energies of life. All this work is done through simple dynamic games, yoga, breathing exercises, music, body movement and arts and crafts.

**Description of project:**

This program is held in Pitanga for children 5 to 13 years old. Around fifteen children participated this year from various kindergartens and schools of Auroville. The classes were held on Saturdays, during weekdays after school, as well as during holidays.

Our classes continued to have a very diverse age group. The activities included Yoga and Pranayama, Energetic Games, and Arts and Crafts.

The children learned new Asanas for the flexibility of the spine and calmness of the mind. They learned various inverted Asanas, which helped them with conscious and subconscious fears which every human being has. Doing Asanas in pairs brought more joyfulness and collaboration in working with other people and learning how to coexist with others. We also practiced Pranayama, as it is very beneficial to keep the respiratory system healthy.

We worked with different crystals through meditation games. This helped the children explore their potential using their energy biosphere and brought them together in the various dimensions of their life. We developed memory through memory games to improve learning skills. We worked on reactions and attention by using equipment bought for the program such as balls, balloons, colorful scarves and skipping rope.

In Arts and Crafts, the children used watercolors to learn how to work with a brush, feel the 3D shape of a design, and mix colors without fear of making an error. They experienced the ‘acrylic pouring’ style of art, which was new for them this year. This let them work with color in a specific way, practicing how to improvise and to combine their
imagination and skills. The children learned acceptance of the results while using this technique.

**Outcomes:**

The facilitators and children together decided to make an exhibition and to work on a deeper level to achieve this year’s goals. We managed to create a unique exhibition with 44 pieces of art that showcased the work the children did throughout the year.

**Reflections:**

This year the group of children was constant as most children attended most of the classes, including the extra classes during holidays. At the beginning of the year we started with only one class per week, but found the need for adding extra classes so that we could work more deeply with each child and according to their specific needs and skills.

A challenge was the financial difficulty of this year, as we received the funds from SAIIER very late in the year and had to use our own money to cover costs of the exhibition. We understand that our program is being shifted under the City Services Budget from next year.

**Conclusion:**

Our yearly aim is to go deeper in researching Yoga through self-body with children. We invent new Energetic Games and exercises. This year our focus was on inner discovery using meditation and meditation with crystals. Our overall goal is to help the children be more integrated harmoniously in this life.
This year we were two teachers instead of only one. We could take more children and give more to each of them. We really need to be two teachers for running the Circus school.

Activities of the year:

We had regular classes running every day which were organized in advance with each group. The groups this year were: Kindergarten (16 children), Nandanam (15), Transition School (14), TLC (9), and Last School (5).

When the children arrive at the circus we start with minimum 40 minutes stretching and preparing the body’s physical condition and the mind to be able to practice different physical activities in the realm of circus which requires a lot of concentration and discipline.

Once the ground is sown, we aim at using the different skills as a means of expression and art form. We work on aerial silks and aerial yoga, Hula Hoops, acrobatics, juggling and some theater improvisation. Each class, especially with the younger children, is set out to adjust to their energy level and needs of their situation on that day.

Eluciole is different from other related activities in that circus skills allow different abilities of the individual to shine through. We work toward creating a show at the end of the year, where the children can express the best of themselves.

Outcomes:

By working with the fears of the children, the work helps them to work on self-trust, confidence and building a strong mental attitude/growth mind-set to overcome difficulties.

Usually we create a presentation to share with the parents and classmates. This gives the children self-confidence through seeing that they are capable of achieving something (for example, climbing the rope 10 meters high). This year again we faced Covid restrictions and other limitations, and were not able to make presentations.

Reflections:

This year was very strong emotionally for the children, for everybody. We had to face the virus that the world is facing, and also some difficult situations in Auroville. Through my work I tried to help the children stay in their heart, and keep their inner balance even with all that happened around themselves.
Kshetra Kalarippayattu and Yoga Research Centre
by Maneesh Mohanan

Located in the Aspiration community of Auroville, we are a centre dedicated to the various practices and research in the field of Kalaripayattu and Yoga. Our work intends to create awareness among the masses and promote Kalaripayattu, one of the most ancient martial art forms in the world. We conduct regular classes and workshops for Kalaripayattu, Yoga and Silambam.

During the pandemic we found it difficult to conduct classes regularly, so we created an online platform to support the students in their practice using the Edmodo App. Later we converted it into a YouTube channel called ‘Kshetra Kalari’ which is accessible to everyone, and at present, we have over 83 tutorials with 1,730 subscribers and counting.

Our Kalari is a place of learning and of community where knowledge is imparted to all who desire to learn. People from all backgrounds are welcome to join our Kalari without bothering about financial status or age. Our members are as young as 6 and some well over 70, from various parts of the world.

Activities of the year:

Due to the pandemic we were restricted in conducting too many activities, nevertheless we did organise some activities during the year which are mentioned below.

1. **Kalarippayattu and Yoga Workshop** – We conducted a 2-day workshop on Yoga and Kalarippayattu on 3-4 April 2021. We had 12 participants, the limit we set due to the lockdown measures that were in effect. We invited a Mr. Palanivel, a renowned Silambam master from Pondicherry, who also gave a master class on Silambam to the participants of the workshop.

2. **Awareness camp and Lecture** – Kshetra Kalari was invited for an awareness camp and lecture in Manimegalai Girls School, Pondicherry on the 18th of December, 2021 as part of the “Fit India Movement”. Dr. Maneesh Mohanan gave a talk on the importance of fitness and how even a a small step in this direction can transform one’s life. The talk was followed by a Kalarippayattu performance and then some practical lessons for the students of the school where we taught some simple self-defence techniques which one can use in daily life.

3. **Performances:**
   - Kshetra Kalari team performed in the “Endangered Crafts Mela”, the annual festival conducted at TLC Base Camp in Auroville.
   - As part of the 150th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, Kshetra Kalari gave a performance in Bharat Nivas. We were blessed with the presence of Hon. Secretary, Dr. Jayanti Ravi.
4. **Vijayadashami Celebration** – This is the most important day in our calendar year as it marks the beginning of the new year. On this occasion practitioners are initiated to the next level in their practice as well as new students are initiated with a small Puja done by the Guru. On this day all the members of our Kalari are under one roof to celebrate the beginning of the new year. Many students were initiated to the next level in their practice and we also inducted many new students to the Kalari.

5. **Online Content Creation** – Due to the lockdown our regular classes were impacted back in 2020, so we decided to create video content to support all Kalarippayattu students. Every week we upload one video teaching an important technique of Kalarippayattu or Yoga. Over the last two years we have managed to create 80+ such tutorials and gained over 1,730 subscribers with 77,500+ total views.

6. **Regular Kalarippayattu classes with restricted numbers** – As the lockdown was eased at the beginning of 2021, with respect to the guidelines from Auroville we restarted the regular classes starting with 8-10 students per session outdoor and then over the weeks allowing a gradual increase in the numbers. All safety protocols were in place during this time. Currently, the regular classes are back on track with no restrictions in the number of students.

7. **Advanced Classes** – We have additional training sessions for the advanced practitioners outside of the regular hours where the senior practitioners perfect their skill in the presence of the teacher. These sessions take place immediately after the regular classes both in the mornings and evenings and sometimes well over 1.5 - 2 hours.

8. **Regular Silambam classes** – Recently we started offering regular Silambam classes in our Kalari. The aim is to introduce another indigenous martial art form to students interested as there is a close link in both these forms.

**Outcomes:**

Even though the pandemic shut us down for almost a year and a half we managed to keep the practice going for all our students through the various activities mentioned above. We gradually re-opened the Kalari keeping with the guidelines by the government of India and Tamil Nadu. When the regular classes were shut we managed to create an online presence through our social media channels on Facebook and Youtube. Through our online platform we not only managed to keep our students engaged but also reached thousands of people from across the world who saw and learned some of the basic practices of Kalarippayattu.
Research highlights:

This year we published our second research article in an international journal:

Dr. Maneesh.V.M. Dr. Soumya Devasia, Dr. Anoop.U.R, MDS, Dr. Kavita Verma, BDS,
“Yoga as a Treatment Modality for Grave’s Disease – A New Hypothesis”,
*International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*, Volume 8, Issue 4,

In January of 2021 we had published our first book on Kalarippayattu for the practitioners and beginners. This book is currently available in soft cover directly from us upon request and also as an e-book on the Amazon Kindle store. This book was our effort to elaborate a bit more upon our already existing “Kalari App” (10,000+ downloads) in Google Play store, available to download on Android devices.

We are currently, working in collaboration with Indianostrum Theatre, Pondicherry where we are researching a new methodology and training regimen for theatre artists. This research will be published within a year. We are also actively working on our second book, which will be a bit more detailed with some more advanced techniques of Kalarippayattu.

Reflections:

Learning has no boundaries and this pandemic proves it: when there is desire to learn knowledge can be shared regardless of the circumstances. Our students kept moving forward and we tried our best to keep imparting our teachings of Kalarippayattu and Yoga to all. This pandemic pushed us to exploring the digital world and how best we could utilise it to teach and learn without compromising on the essence of the practices. In future, hopefully with the pandemic behind us we can move forward and be accessible in-person to all from Auroville and its bio-region and online to a wider audience worldwide through our online offerings.

Conclusions:

Next year we plan to improve upon the progress we made this year. Firstly, we will be conducting more workshops like the one we did this year. Secondly, we wish to start a treatment centre to provide the traditional Kalari treatments to people who need it most. Thirdly, we wish to establish a Kalarippayattu and Yoga Institute in affiliation with Pondicherry University offering courses in Kalarippayattu and Yoga and offering certifications to students who spend time and energy acquiring knowledge pertaining to these vast fields. Furthermore, we would like to make use of the Multiversity initiative to offer high quality recognised courses from our centre. We are actively working towards the success of all these endeavours.
Auroville Theatre Group
by Jill Navarre

The Auroville Theatre Group was created 25 years ago in response to the need for a theatre group in Auroville that spoke to the aims of Auroville: inclusivity, human unity, man’s thirst for progress. Over the past 25 years, we have created a group with a local, national and international reach that has succeeded in bringing young, beginning actors as well as mature actors from inside and outside Auroville together to create provocative, passionate and timely stories to the stage.

Activities of the year:
In spite of restrictions due to Covid, were able to create three shows this year: EQUUS by Peter Shaffer (April 2021), A PLACE CALLED HOME by Jill Navarre (a Zoom play, uploaded on YouTube May 2021) and THE ELEPHANT MAN by Bernard Pomerance (December 2021). All performances were directed by Jill Navarre. THE ELEPHANT MAN starred Raunak Khan, Haarish CK, Rupam Mishra, Umair Ahrar, Swar Weinberger, Wei Xei. EQUUS starred Jill Navarre, Umair Ahrar, Dev Habibullah, Abhay Srivastava, Shraddha Nesalkar, Swar Weinberger, Arvind, Snehal, Pranav, Wei Xei. A PLACE CALLED HOME featured Umair Ahrar, Anadi Sharma, Aparna Kunde Kowli, Aarti Desai, Santhosh Nandivada, Nishant Uniyal, Jill Navarre, Ashfique Rizwan.

Outcomes:
Three full length plays were created. Actors came from Auroville and from around India. We worked on each play for three months. The daily rehearsals, work on acting and text, was rewarding and creative for all the participants, learning new skills, honing old ones, working together with fellow actors from different states, different languages, different cultures. Our audience, of course, benefitted from the final performances of these shows, where hundreds of people attended.

Research highlights:
We were successful in our attempt to create an online, Zoom play. It took one year to do this, with many problems of internet connectivity, illness, even deaths in the family, yet we persisted because we all felt the topic of the international refugee crisis and the journey of discovery, arriving in a new place, (including the story of those who choose to come to Auroville), was worth the work. Technically, for theatre scripts it meant finding a new way to tell a story on Zoom. Not having a stage, not being to interreact physically, presented enormous challenges for us. Our research involved how to take this stage play and put it into boxes online that would be dynamic and would reach our audience. Our play now exists on our Youtube channel. The editing work was excellent and helped us to overcome difficulties. We can surely use what we have learned for any future productions on Zoom.
Reflections:

Our Zoom play, A PLACE CALLED HOME, was the most exciting learning experience. For our production of THE ELEPHANT MAN, we had the challenge of playing at Bharat Nivas during a rain storm! That tested our tenacity and our love for theatre, since out of three nights of performance, one night was almost completely washed out. We understood that despite the heavy rain, we had the will to go on and that there was a small, but dedicated group of people who came to see it in spite of the weather.

Conclusion:

We have some exciting plans for next year, including a new play: a rock musical written and directed by Jill Navarre, with music by Aurovilian composer Martin Gluckman. We are beginning to get a band together.

The Auroville Theatre Group plans to celebrate its 25th Anniversary this year! For our 25th Anniversary celebration, we have initiated an 8-week workshop called Fundamentals of Acting which started March 9th and will continue until end of April. We plan to present scene work from some of our best plays from the past to the students as well as to an invited audience.
Is This the End?: A theatrical, musical and choreographic show  
by Philippe Pelen Baldini and Thierry Moucazambo

This project involved the creation of a theatrical, choreographic and musical show inspired by the poem of Sri Aurobindo, “The End”. With “Is this the end?” we explored the body memories of the actor/dancer and his/her movements provoked by sounds and frequencies. Facing a world in crisis and deep transition, our characters on stage expressed the physical urgency of a new breath, a new link to Nature and Vastness.

This show is accessible to everyone, whatever their culture and background; it is a universal story. It is directed by Philippe and performed by three artists on stage: dancers, musicians, actors. It’s a tribute to Sri Aurobindo in the year of his 150th Birth Anniversary.

Description of project:

Timeline:

- February-August 2021: Research and musical composition with Philippe, Thierry and David
- August-September 2021: Choreographic and theatrical research with Gopal, Huong, David, Philippe and Thierry
- October 2021 – January 2022: Rehearsals at CRIPA
- December 2021 – January 2022: Ten public rehearsals
- 10th, 11th, 12th of February 2022: Performances at Sri Aurobindo Auditorium
- 25th of February 2022: Performance for the anniversary of Auroville at Sri Aurobindo Auditorium

Additional performances as part of the French Rendez-Vous Festival 2022:

- 4th, 6th of February: Performances in Pondicherry
- 9th of February: Performance in Chennai

Supporting work:

1. Creation of a booklet
2. Shooting and editing of a video and a trailer: Collaboration with Alessandra Silver, Sagar, Piero Cefaloni
3. Photo shooting and editing: Collaboration with Alessandra Silver, Sagar, Piero Cefaloni, Kirtan
Outcomes:

A show of professional standards has been created. This dramaturgy experience proposes a transformation of the performers as well as a transformative experience for the audience.

Some reviews:

- “Was an excellent performance with such a ‘thought and heart provoking’ theme! Congratulations to the entire team for the excellent coordination, movements, energy, and poetry in movement. All the very best and keep it up.” – Dr. Jayanti Ravi, Secretary, Auroville Foundation
- “What a poetic journey! Through dance, music, and emotions. Thank you very much. All the best for this new show.” – Lise Talbot Barré, Consul general of France
- “Inspiring performance on Aurobindo’s poem. Much needed work of theatre to everyone on the Earth. Regards.” – Rajaravivarma, Head of Department of Performing Arts, Pondicherry University
- “Deep, intense, inspiring, pure, authentic, true. Thank you for your sharing.” – Kalou, Eluciole Circus School, Auroville
- “You, as performers, achieved what it is that I believe art DOES. You carried me and every audience member out of myself, out of ourselves. You showed us what is happening in the world and in our community and in ourselves. Words are not necessary. The language of movement, the power of sound, the creation of a story through image and expression. I breathed with you and wept with you and your screams were mine. Your silence was mine, too. Your death upheld the part of me that died a bitter suffocation death in the disappointment in our elders, our community, our home. And then we walked again, found our voice, found our feet. You leap, show freedom, delicate, gentle, loud expression.” – Lili, Auroville

Reflections:

The SAIIER grant provided the salaries of 2 artists: dancer Gopal Dalami and composer Zan David. All other charges and expenses for the musical creation, the staging, the writing, the salaries and expenses of the other artists, the communications, the management, the video and photo shooting and editing, all of this was taken care of by Philippe and Thierry. We were supposed to receive aid from the 150th Anniversary budget, but nothing was paid. So we thank SAIIER very much for its precious help.

Conclusion:

Surya Performance Lab explores body memories and works for the decolonization of the mind and the body to experience a free and authentic expression, acting and dancing. Inspired by the Integral yoga of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, by indigenous cultures, and by new discoveries in the field of energy, body-mind consciousness, we create a contemporary expression and art, a dance and theatre linked to nature, planet and living.

Surya Performance Lab wants to continue collaborating with different structures within Auroville: SAIIER, CRIPA, New Creation Dance Studio, etc.
Kalabhumi Art Studio
by Nele and Sabrina

Kalabhumi Art Studio is an open studio project where two artists share their studio space, materials and knowledge to interested students of all ages. We have various groups and classes with a maximum number of 4-5 students, which makes it possible to give individually tailored projects. The main aim is to nourish and provide a ‘safe space’ where the student does not feel pressed by expectation or competition and can discover her/his own approach to art and creative activities.

Description of project:

We have two studios for the visual arts, an open covered space, a ceramic studio and a storeroom. The studios are in Kalabhumi community, easily reachable for students who come after school.

In the visual art section we had four fixed classes of 2-3 hours in the afternoon, and extra timings for students who work on their own. In painting we mostly worked on study of form and line, aquarelle painting with a focus on layering, light and shadow and to create form and space through contrast.

In the ceramics studio 6 students (adults and school children) came for individual sessions weekly. We focused on hand-building larger sculptural forms while some felt like taking the challenge of the potter’s wheel. More advanced students come more often during the week and work on larger individual projects.

We also welcomed younger kids to play and experiment with paint and clay.

Outcomes:

The fact that we worked for long time on the same technique made it possible to really make progress. The good results were very satisfying for the students and led to very meaningful discussions on the theme and technique.

The fact that we could work individually allowed for personal ideas and projects to evolve, both in discussion and in actual artwork. This became a natural form of research and learning – playful and driven by one’s own curiosity, which often led us towards unexpected and fruitful results. The individual focus acted as a booster to the quality of the work as it grew out of the research of each student which was then shared within the larger group. To make sure this happened there was time set apart for discussion at the end of each class.

Apart from the regular classes there is more and more interest of young adults to really involve themselves in art. We have students coming outside the regular class timings...
to work on their own, with guidance from the artist, discussions on the work and suggestions of what could be the next step. This is very interesting also for the artists, as it is very inspiring for both the student and teacher.

**Reflections:**

We discovered that it is important to try and avoid our impulse to always follow the same pattern. By taking breaks and discussing the work we found different possibilities to continue.

The creative process can be perceived as a mirror of inner work that is simultaneously linked to the world one lives in. This concept can successfully be worked out in our small group setting that provides feedback to the individual but is at the same time a safe space that allows for freedom of expression.

**Conclusion:**

This last year we found that the open art studio has been a valuable creative outlet to students and teachers to keep the creative spark alive regardless of our outer predicaments or difficulties. In the future as Covid restrictions have eased we would like to involve all students together in creating Open Houses and encourage interactions with the larger artist community in Auroville.
Art and research by Nele

I run a small art centre in Kalabhumi, where I combine the research in my art with an open studio project, in which I teach and share the space with interested students of all ages.

Through my art I aim at creating a space of harmony, beauty, clarity and open mind. In the open studio I try to share that space, giving the participating students a place to feel free to explore their creative possibilities. This report is about my personal work.

Activities of the year:

In art my main medium is painting, but I also work with sculpture, ceramics, and installations. It is part of my research to constantly look for new ways of expression, both with new materials and concepts.

In the abstract technique I give each element, like colour, form, line, its own value of expression; I do not try to reproduce reality on the canvas, I create new realities inspired by nature and formed through my own experience. I feel that like this I can reach a hidden narrative behind the visible; I try to reach deeper layers of reality where the composition is created by forces like energy, light, balance. It is a continuous rebalancing, a new way of seeing, of understanding. Matter is not in its solid state, what we see is only one of its possible states. My search starts here.

This exploration is closely linked to the technical research. A new technical discovery inspires new ideas, and vice versa. In this context I use different medias, painting on canvas, transparent materials like plexiglass; I make kinetic mobiles in metal, stone sculpture, natural materials.

I usually work on a series with a specific theme, in which I study the possibilities and try to deepen the understanding and expression of the art work. In the last year I worked on different themes:

- “Skies and water” – inspired by the sea and the sky, it became a study of forms and colour. This series was shown in Kalakendra, Barat Nivas in a group show titled “Unity in Diversity”. A continuation of this theme was the three-dimensional work in Plexiglas, glass paint and metal foil, called “liquid matter”. This was created and shown in this year’s Auroville Art Camp.
- Another theme in the last year was “play of light”. Through textures and layers a “veil of realities” is created.
- I plan to create a series based on a passage from Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri. To start with I did extensive reading to find a passage which could be right. I am still working on
the reading, though it has already had a strong influence of both my series created this year.

Reflections:

The group show “Unity in diversity” was curated by “Sarala’s Art World” gallery in Chennai, and very diverse work from different artists in India was shown. It was very inspiring for me to see the work and connect to the different artists present at the opening.

At the Auroville Art Camp, held in the Tibetan Pavilion in March 2022, the exchange of ideas was especially interesting for me, especially exploring a new technique with metal foil shared by a visiting artist in the camp. It was a very fruitful exchange which opens a whole universe of ideas for my new art work. It was inspiring to see the different interpretations on the camp’s theme, “Every finite is an infinite”

Conclusion:

Though the work in the studio is going on since many years, it always feels new to me. Every new concept opens a whole new world of ideas and possibilities. I am very happy that the open studio project is going so well, the teaching aspect in my work is very important to me.
Auroville Art Camp 2022
by Herve

This is an Artist camp with Artist residency taking place in Auroville. The Art Camp focuses on Indian national artists collaborating with Aurovilian artists and working on a specific theme directly related to Auroville’s *raison d’être* during this one week. Art students are also invited to participate as this is a great platform for exchange and learning. This year was the third edition.

**Description of project:**

Participants this year were 18 artists and 2 students (11 Indian nationals, 7 Auroville artists, 1 Indian national student, 1 Auroville student). The art camp took place from March 12th till March 19th 2022. The organizing team provided artists a time and a space of creation in an atmosphere that encourages concentration and quality. Different interactions with the community were organised. The art camp ended with an exhibition where all the artworks created during the art camp were displayed.

**Reflections:**

The Auroville Art Camp 2022 was supposed to receive a grant of 2.5 lakhs but the funds were blocked. The SAIIER grant was supposed to cover the food provided to the artists, the accommodation and the transport within Auroville. Usually the bill is provided and SAIIER is directly paying but this year we were first told that we had to advance the money. We got the help that enabled to us to advance the money, but then the bills provided were not refunded. We had to wait till April when we were finally refunded Rs 1.1 lakhs only. Till date no refunds of the remaining part of the grant have been done.

The Art Camp did happen despite of this unfortunate event, thanks to the goodwill and collaboration of many Aurovilians and friends of Auroville. Thank you to all the artists from all over India, and to the Auroville artists and Aurovilians who contributed in so many ways to make this event happen. The art community of India is supporting this initiative and the family is extending each year. Because of this grant not being totally released, we don’t know if and how the next edition can happen. We still hope that SAIIER will be able to refund the 1.4 lakhs so that we can refund the money we have borrowed.
Cinema has been called the “7th Art” and the Mother, seeing and appreciating its importance, gave specific recommendations for the Ashram and Auroville to select, view and make films. Since its beginning nearly thirty years ago, under the leadership and inspiration of the late old-timer Aurovilian Gérard Carabin, Aurofilm aims at offering quality cultural and educational programs to the whole community through this powerful medium.

As a universal art, cinema showcases all cultures of the world and deals with the ‘human condition’, which is essential for Auroville’s quest of individual and collective progress, which should progressively be leading towards us human unity.

Activities of the year:

This year, like the previous one, was quite special due to Covid restrictions. Yet we managed to restart film screenings at the Multimedia Center (MMC) in Town Hall on Fridays for some months, and cine-master classes at our Aurofilm studio in Kalabhumi. These events often had limited/reduced audience: at MMC from 45 to 100 or more people depending on the situation and the kind of film screened, and at our studio an average of 12 for our Cine-master-classes.

Through the end of March we screened 32 films at MMC/Town Hall and organised totally 10 “Cine-master classes”.

Since about a year and a half, before our Friday screenings, often one of our team members offered a short presentation about the film, the film director and context to the audience at MMC auditorium. For 6 months, we also had a collaboration for our screenings with Pr. Sehdev Kumar, a Canadian of Indian origins, scholar and a Professor Emeritus from the University of Toronto. The professor has animated a series he calls “International Film Classics and the Human Condition” curating and presenting 10 films on this theme, from the world over.

From October 2021, in collaboration with Future School/Sasikanth Somu, Philippe May gave 8 Film Appreciation classes.

Abhijit Roy gave 8 Animation classes to eight Future School students. This was part of the regular curriculum for which they have enrolled at Future School.

This year our 3 day festival showcased 8 animated films from the world (short and long features, for adults and for the children).

Sadly, in October 2021, our Aurofilm founder & mentor, Gérard Carabin, passed away from Parkinson’s disease. Our team put up a presentation of his wonderful contribution to the cultural life of Auroville and his work with Aurofilm for all these years, and in January we did invite SAIIER, friends and film lovers to pay an homage to him.
Outcomes:

The interactions we have with our audiences show that our activities are highly appreciated. The films and classes trigger the sharing and questioning that we wish to bring out from our audience (and ourselves) as Aurovilians, people close to Auroville, or those wanting to discover Auroville and our Yoga here.

Research highlights:

All our “Cine-master classes” are thoroughly prepared by the intervenants. They research all aspects of film making, storytelling/narration, mise-en-scene, cultural, social background, acting, photography, music, references and more. For instance in January, the master class around Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky was presented by 2 researchers, Philippe May and Alexander Pereverzev. The first one is a French IT engineer with a math teaching background as well, whose passion for Cinema led him to watch and study the 7th art since his youth; the latter is a Russian scholar with a discerning eye and who could present in this case a more historical and sociological context of the different epochs and country for the film, for that particular film maker. Andrei Tarkovsky is indeed a very complex and brilliant artist whose work is usually labeled as deep, enigmatic, even mystical and metaphysical. We believe this program, with the film selected, “Mirror” (USSR, 1975) tremendously helped the audience to access at least part of Tarkovsky’s intentions.

On the other hand, through the film presentations and screenings we organise with Pr. Sehdev Kumar for the winter months, the focus is more on the message content (while including also the cultural and other aspects). This approach gives easier reading to the audience with less emphasis on analyzing the cinematic aspects of the chosen work.

Reflections:

For us, the introduction of the Film Appreciation and Animation classes for young Aurovilian students was a big highlight in our activities this year. For a long time we had wanted to offer it again (as we did it quite some years ago with some Future School and Udavi School students) yet we were not ready in our limited team. This year finally it was not only possible from our side, but also was accepted by Future School and teacher Sasikant.

Conclusion:

To develop and transform our human nature, working on all the aspects of our being, can only bring us closer to human unity as a collective. In Aurofilm our Yoga is mainly being tackled through these researches and outputs. We very much wish to continue with our current programs, which have evolved in an enriching way.
Every year Aurofilm organises a 3-day film festival in Auroville. With this event we want to showcase our team’s selection of great, important or representative films that have been produced in India or in the world, recent or “old”. Among film genres there is one which is often left aside, maybe considered by some as ‘films for children’, and that is Animation. This year, we chose to focus on and present an “Animation Film Festival”, with films from around the world.

**Description of project:**

Our festival happened in March and we could book the Multi Media Center Auditorium (MMC at Town Hall) for 18-19-20 March 2022. The idea of an Animation Film Festival came up in the middle of last year and quite rapidly, as we have a good collection of great animated films gathered with Gérard along the years, a program imposed itself.

We chose films from around the world, some of them for the general audience, and some only or mostly for adults. A highlight of the festival was the online interaction with a renowned and award-winning Finnish film director, Katarina Lillqvits, speaking from Prague in the Czech Republic. We could present five short films from her puppets’ animated productions that she has produced in the Czech Republic, where she partly lives, and we could ask her questions about her wonderful creative work that she likes to share generously with her audience.

The other four films were from France: “Persepolis”, about Iranian history and culture, “Azur and Asmar” taking its inspiration from Moroccan arts and folktale tradition, and “Fantastic Planet (La Planète Sauvage)” a science fiction medium length film and more on the experimental and philosophical side. They were long features using hand-drawings or 3D computer animation techniques.

**Outcomes:**

With our annual film festivals, we aim at presenting and promoting quality cinema of India and the world. Our selection also targets films that are not easily accessible to the audience, fostering themes of human condition, thriving, unity, and of course art and culture. Each film was introduced by members of our team, highlighting their important components. The two 5pm screenings gathered about 70 people, the Friday 8.00pm screening with Katariina Lillvits had about 85 and the children’s matinee at 4.30pm around 70 (children and adults). The audiences were of mixed nationalities and backgrounds, as is the norm in Auroville, and we got fantastic and grateful response from them.
Spiritual History of India: Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Perspective
by Manoj Pavitran and Hemant Shekhar

This project involves creation of a 64-minute video tracing the spiritual evolution of India, its historic process and the underlying psychological transitions based on Sri Aurobindo’s research. Included is the discovery, loss and recovery of the knowledge and the power of Supermind.

This video is based on Sri Aurobindo’s vision and a gist of it can be found in a letter written by him:

“If we analyse the spiritual history of India we shall find that after reaching this height there was a descent which attempted to take up each lower degree of the already evolved consciousness and link it to the spiritual at the summit. The Vedic age was followed by a great outburst of intellectual philosophy which yet took spiritual truth as its basis and tried to reach it anew, not through a direct intuitive or occult process as did the Vedic seers, but by the power of the mind’s reflective, speculative, logical thought; at the same time processes of Yoga were developed which used the thinking mind as a means of arriving at spiritual realisation, spiritualising this mind itself at the same time. Then followed an era of the development of philosophies and Yoga processes which more and more used the emotional and aesthetic being as the means of spiritual realisation and spiritualised the emotional level in man through the heart and feeling. This was accompanied by Tantric and other processes which took up the mental will, the life-will, the life of sensations and made them at once the instruments and the field of spiritualisation. In Hathayoga and in the various attempts at divinisation of the body there is also a line of endeavour which attempted to arrive at the same achievement with regard to living matter; but this still awaits the discovery of the true characteristic method and power of spirit in the body. We may say therefore that the universal Consciousness after its descent into Matter has conducted the evolution there along two lines, one of ascent to the discovery of the self and spirit, the other of descent through the already evolved levels of mind, life and body so as to bring down the spiritual consciousness into these also and to fulfil thereby some secret intention in the creation of the material universe. Our Yoga is in its principle a taking up and summarising and completing of this process, an endeavour to rise to the highest possible supramental level and bring down its consciousness and powers into mind, life and body.”

This video is part 4 of the “Evolution Fast-forward” series available at www.sopanam.org

Description of project:
Participants in this project are Manoj (direction), Hemant (production), Arnab (music) and many people from the Ashram and Auroville for checking & feedback.
### Phases

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<th>Phases</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Research</td>
<td>24 Nov 2020 to 21 Feb 2020 - Done</td>
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<td>2. Script</td>
<td>21 Feb 2021 - 15 Aug 2021 - Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Virtual set design Stock library creation Animation &amp; motion graphics</td>
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<td>5. Media outreach</td>
<td>15 July – 15 Aug 2022</td>
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<td>6. Digital Master copy</td>
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<td>7. Production of 100 digital memory cards for distribution</td>
<td>30 July – 10 Aug 2022</td>
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<td>8. Release</td>
<td>15th Aug 2022</td>
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#### Outcomes:

At present the video project is under production and slated for release on 15-08-2022. We hope to get the funding for next financial year to continue and finish it.

#### Reflections:

At present there is no known narration of the History of India through its continuous and unbroken Spiritual evolution from the Vedic times.

#### Conclusion:

This project aims to be an offering on Sri Aurobindo’s birth centenary 15th August 2022. Its purpose is to review history through Sri Aurobindo’s integral perspective to understand the future better, and to educate the world about spiritual evolution.
Introduction to the Vedas – A short video
by Jean-Yves

This will be a short film (12-15 mns) explaining Vedic Symbolism in an evocative language, with an emphasis on Agni, based on Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation. The aim is to make Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of the Vedas more accessible, under the form of an evocation rather than a scholarly approach. The project holder has been studying Sanskrit, Vedic culture and History in the light of Sri Aurobindo for many years.

Description of project:
Phase 1 consisted in writing the script, recording the voices and collecting images.
Phase 2 aimed at completing the video editing.

Script: Jean-Yves
Video: Hervé RV, Claire Iono
Duration: 4 months
Budget: 2 maintenance for 4 months for Claire and RV

Outcomes:
The work is almost finalized, except for one voice that had to be recorded (speaking in Sanskrit) and became available only recently.
Considering the workload of the two persons in charge of editing the video, the final version will be made available in September 2022.
SAIIER was looking to publishing stories relevant to children. I had written a story to my daughter long ago and proposed it, and it was accepted. It is the story of three daughters who secretly help their fathers, the kings, to fight a dragon.

**Description of project:**

The story was written in French, so it had to be translated. Miriam and Elene helped me, then Suzie, English teacher for years, finalized the translation.

For illustrations, an artist from Auroville was approached but after some months found the project too time absorbing for her and dropped it. Sanjeev A. then proposed Ruchi Mhasane, a young illustrator who had previously illustrated some children books published by SAIIER. We had a good collaboration, by e-mails along the months. She did the editing and sent the full book to Auroville Press Publishers.

Printed in Auroville in December, 1000 books were ready at the end of the year 2021.

**Outcomes:**

A children book of 40 pages was created, with soft cover and colour illustrations. The story tells how the kings’ daughters helped their fathers who went to fight a dragon. The book is available at the Seagull bookshop in the Visitors’ Center and online at auroville.com.

I read the story to the two older groups of the Kindergarten, as well as the 1st grade of Transition School. Afterwards, the children made a drawing of the story.

The illustrator Ruchi came in May and read the story to 25 children at Auroville Library. The children enjoyed to do colorings of the story.

And during the Summer Program when the children of the Auroville kindergartens were mixed, I read again the story and the children could do colorings and cut and decorate their own crowns.

**Reflections:**

The beautiful part was to see how a good illustrator could interpret and give life to a story that one invented. The collaboration with Ruchi was respectful of the opinions of each of us, she succeeded to fulfill all our requirements. And I learned to accept some modifications, as the number of princesses for example!
Conclusion:

I am very grateful to Sanjeev Aggarwal who supported the project since the beginning and encouraged and pushed me to go on when everything seemed stopped by the lockdown. Thanks to the three ladies who helped for the translation and to Ruchi who did a wonderful work in illustrating my story.

Illustrator Ruchi Mhasane at Auroville Library
Piano and music teaching
by Shakti Balu

Activities of the year:
I gave regular piano classes to 19 students in Auroville, both adults and children. I was creator of a Christmas concert in CRIPA, where some of my students performed their skill. One of the concert days was especially for children, with Santa and presents.

I created a project called “Harmonies inspired by Sri Aurobindo”. I composed music for 12 poems of Sri Aurobindo, working with singers, 5 Aurovilians. We are planning to perform on Sri Aurobindo’s Birthday Anniversary in August. Jyothi Khare is creating art for each sonnet, and we plan to publish a book with notations and illustrations of her paintings.

Reflections:
This year was very challenging with the lockdowns, because my work is personal classes with the students. Many families left for their countries in the middle of the learning year. I had to allow for many breaks. In the end of the year we could not do an open house presentation as usual, because the students were not ready to perform. However I try to keep the attitude of: do not stop working! Do not be discouraged by the situation.

Research highlights:
My background is piano training in a conservative in the Soviet Union, and we had very good musical education in our country. But working here in Auroville with the kids I am learning a lot how to be dedicated to the music itself. Actually it is only because of Sri Aurobindo’s ‘integral education’ (I got my MA in Sri Aurobindo Studies from SACAR) that my aspiration lasts and motivation is still there.

Every new student of mine is a teacher to me; every student is a person who is progressing in life. And I collaborate with them learning myself, and music is an instrument, it is a medium, it is a field, where all of us are students.

I found a new technique, student-oriented freedom of expression, connected to the interests of everyone. I give the possibility for each one to find their own interest, what they want to express through the touch of the keys. When I see what they want to express I infuse the techniques of training.

Conclusion:
I intend to just go on! There are so many people who need piano as an instrument of developing their senses. A person who learns piano develops not only hearing but all other senses – vision, touch, thinking, even speaking. All become much easier and enjoyable.

I am also inclined to encourage children to play music with other people, to apply their skills in life.
The purpose of this project was to spread knowledge about one of the most beautiful arts in human history. To get people motivated to dive into the world of Western classical music.

Description of project:
I gave classes with video clips about the periods of Western classical music from the 10th century to the 20th century with their cultural and political background and music-samples. There were 3-8 participants in each class, including Aurovilians and some volunteers.

Example:
https://youtu.be/JwZOXC6_4fE
Anja Hatero sings Richard Strauss. A song about two friends. Late Romantic period (around 1865-1920).

Outcomes:
People enjoyed the classes very much. I myself was content about the fact that I managed to make a good speech in front of a group of people.

Reflections:
The most meaningful aspect of this project for me was, that all Indian participants seemed to be very interested in the topic. I guess they have been touched as much as I am touched by classical Indian music.
Savitri Bhavan
by Shraddhavan and Dhanalakshmi

Savitri Bhavan has grown up since its inception in 1994 as a centre dedicated to fostering a living sense of Human Unity through spiritual education based on the vision and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which are the underlying foundation of the aims and ideals of Auroville. Its aim is to gather and create, to house and share all kinds of materials and activities to Aurovilians and members of the interested general public which will support this awareness and understanding.

This year due to the COVID lockdowns visits to Savitri Bhavan were restricted to a minimum. The total number of beneficiaries may be approximately 2,000. Virtual beneficiaries for online classes and YouTube were about 700.

Activities of the year:

At the request of Savitri lovers, the regular one-and-a-half-hour Sunday morning Savitri Study Circle was continued in the Sangam Hall while observing social distancing and other required anti-covid precautions, and the sessions were also broadcast live. Steps are being taken to make edited versions of these sessions available with sub-titles on the Savitri Bhavan website. In spite of health issues of Shraddhavan the Savitri Study Circle is continuing led by Larry.

The film on “Meditations on Savitri” previously done by Manohar was re-created adjusting to new technology. 18 such videos have been edited and uploaded on the Savitri Bhavan website.

Sri Aurobindo’s “Essays on the Gita” was chosen to be produced as an audio book. The work was started in August 2021 and so far 24 chapters have been recorded, edited, and uploaded on the Savitri Bhavan website for the use of the wider public.

At the request of Auroville Radio to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, a weekly session on Sri Aurobindo’s biography was prepared and read in Tamil by Dhanalakshmi from 18th January 2022.

On 23rd August 2021 the SAIIER staff visited Savitri Bhavan. At the request of SAIIER, Dhanalakshmi gave an orientation in Tamil and answered questions.

In view of the continuous Covid lockdown Auroville schools remained closed. The Kindergarten team requested Savitri Bhavan to use the premises, mainly the garden, as classrooms twice a week. This was a new experience for all and worked out very well.

On 13th August 2021, 28 students with 6 teachers from Deepanam School visited Savitri Bhavan. They brought their craft work to offer it to Sri Aurobindo.

A 5-week Introduction to “Hymns to the Mystic Fire” by Sri Aurobindo was conducted by Nishtha Muller in March 2022.

Dr. Alexander Pereverzev, a Newcomer working at Savitri Bhavan, presented 4 slide-shows with explanations in December, January and February on the life and works of
Nicholas Roerich, a Russian visionary artist, thinker and philosopher. The presentations were well attended and appreciated, and each presentation was followed by a Question-and-Answer session.

Exhibitions:
1. From 15th to 17th August 2021 the Divine Flowers Team held a flower exhibition with the theme “Sri Aurobindo and His Yoga” to celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo.
2. CREEVA, an art service of Auroville, held an exhibition called “From Lockdown” from 26 December 2021 to 14 January 2022.
3. The Divine Flowers Team held their yearly exhibition during the birthday week from 21st - 28th February 2022 in the Square Hall of Savitri Bhavan.

Publications:
1. Two more volumes of the English of Savitri book series were published during the year. Volume Nine covers Cantos X and XI of Book Two, “The Book of the Traveller of the Worlds”, and Volume Ten covers Cantos XII to XV.
2. Three issues of Prarthana (Tamil journals - Nos. 36, 37 and 38) were published including a special issue published in November 2021 to celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo.

Outcomes:
In spite of constant lockdowns all the regular activities could continue from August 2021 onwards. The lockdown situation led us to conduct the sessions both physically and on-line simultaneously, to reach those who could not attend. A team of 5 Aurovilians has taken up the editing of the videos which are uploaded on the Savitri Bhavan website with a link to YouTube.

Research highlights:
Our online encyclopedia of Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri is ongoing. Sebastian Nitzschke, a volunteer from Germany is continuing the work and Gopal Ahir has joined in this project together with Sebastian. Gopal gave a presentation on the online Savitri Encyclopaedia at Sri Aurobindo Niwas, Baroda on 2nd October 2021. The link to the encyclopedia is https://encyclopedia.savtribhavan.org/

Conclusion:
In view of the Celebration of the 150th anniversary year of Sri Aurobindo, we are planning and preparing the next audio book, “The Human Cycle” to be taken up for the year 2022-23.

Two more volumes of “The English of Savitri” are planned to provide explanations to complete the whole of Sri Aurobindo’s epic.
Our aim is to focus on Integral Yoga and Integral Education through a flower garden that we would like to create in Auroville, which will house most of the 898 flowers that The Mother has given significance to. It will be a constant source of education for children and adults as we intend to involve the community, specially the children in creating and maintaining it. A simple stroll in the garden will help Aurovillians to connect with themselves and to the Mother’s messages through the many significances that Mother has given to the flowers. The various activities we plan to propose will help all to go deeper into the matter.

Activities of the year:

This year, one of our important goals was to be allocated a five-acre plot of land for the garden. We had meeting after meeting with ATDC for this. We finally received a “Special Project Approval” from ATDC and expect to be allocated land soon in Mahalakshmi Park.

Meanwhile in order to prepare for making the garden we got a small piece of land for 3 years (with a possibility of renewing the agreement), at Matrimandir Nursery for starting a temporary nursery there. We had its opening, with some plantings, on the auspicious day of 1St Jan 2022 in the presence of around 25 persons from the community.

Reflections:

Working with the ATDC gave us a wider picture of the town’s planning and design and all that is required to make things work. We also had a meeting with the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation in this regard where she was very supportive of our work.

Conclusion:

Next year seems to be promising as we are confident to receive the land and take forward the work at a quicker pace.
The Divine Flowers Exhibition 2022 was a beautiful display of a variety of real flowers and paintings, displayed with their spiritual significance given by The Mother. The purpose of the exhibition was to bring this aspect of beauty, sensitivity, delicacy, psychic atmosphere of The Mother’s work in Auroville.

**Description of project:**

We held the exhibition in Savitri Bhavan during which some 100 varieties of flowers were beautifully displayed together with their spiritual significance, botanical and common names. The exhibition also included some thirty watercolor paintings of flowers, focusing specially on their significance as given by The Mother, done by an artist from Auroville.

A Flower Clock was creatively made from a bicycle to display the blooming times of different flowers. This and other large displays added to the experience of the visitors and enhanced the whole exhibition.

The theme of the exhibition this year was ‘The Road to the Divine’, and we consciously selected the qualities needed by us in order to journey towards the Divine like ‘surrender’ (rose), ‘aspiration’ (parijata), etc.

As we are still in process of acquiring land for a flower garden in Auroville which will supply these exhibitions, we grew flowers in pots in Savitri Bhavan, months in advance, in order to have them available for the exhibition. This was a labor of love and joy. During the exhibition we also sourced flowers from the Auroville and Sri Aurobindo Ashram gardens and some from the market.

**Outcomes:**

Many in Auroville, young and old deeply appreciated the flower exhibitions and are very supportive of our project.
Though the exhibitions last only a week, they involve months of work for us and give us a lot of hands-on learning experience.

We have developed a network of many people working with flowers in the Ashram and Auroville, who during the exhibition weeks, help us and provide us with the flowers we need. This helps bring the Ashram and Auroville closer together as people visiting the exhibition also come from both communities.

Schools also organize trips to the exhibition for their students, making the whole thing a joyful, nourishing community event.

**Reflections:**

All the members of our team have full time commitment in other services. All that we do for this project is in our free time because we are passionate about our work. Our project is growing steadily as an offering to Mother’s work.
Laboratory of Evolution (LOE)  
by Kalyani, Namah and Bhaga

Under the name “Laboratory of Evolution” are different but related activities, as described below.

**Laboratory of Evolution Library (by Kalyani):**

   The main aim of our specialised Library is to diffuse information about Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's vision of Evolution, through books in many languages, audio CDs and DVD films. We also gather the books of Ashram disciples, books of Aurovilians, and compilations in various languages (English, Dutch, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, etc.).

   Giving information on Auroville is also part of our sharing with Newcomers and Guests, whenever a deeper understanding is needed or a research is being done.

   We assist researchers in the choice of books related to their particular research. Our library covers topics including Near-Death Experiences (NDE), Psychology and Neurosciences, New Physics and Biology, Nutrition, Breatharianism, Ayurveda, Hatha Yoga, Acupuncture, and all kinds of Nature Cure (through aromatherapy, amaroli, magnets, music, crystals, water, etc.).

   The main work of this year was to update the computerised lists of books in all categories. We also repaired many old books to give them a fresh look, as many of them are not anymore available in their countries and are very much appreciated by researchers and visitors.

**Bhaga’s work:**

   From August 15th on, I have started a YouTube Channel as “Bhaga d’Auroville : Living an Integral Evolution”, to present the Evolutive Action of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from my own experience, in preparation for August 15th 2023.

**Namah’s work:**

   The past two years were a cataclysm of rapid change: psychological, mental, vital, psychic and spiritual for many of us. I realised how immensely grateful I was to have been granted this life here in Auroville, and to be immersed in the presence of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

   My work this year mainly consisted in carrying out theoretical research and internal research, as well as giving courses on the planes of being, the psychology of the depths and the development of an inner visibility. By reading Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s work we understand the difficulty of their integral yoga for us; we also understand that the most direct and difficult way is the total surrender of our nature to the Divine. We must therefore start from where we are, and find, for each one of us, the tools, and way of doing and being,
to prepare a fertile ground for this seed of integral yoga – which in fact represents for us the natural, logical movement of evolution which we must support as best as we can.

“Inner Visibility” classes:

I used many techniques of yoga as tools of introspection to widen the capacity of inner visibility on: planes of being, the different bodies we are composed of, inner states and atmospheres, pre-sensing what could be higher levels of consciousness. The intention is to refine our inner perception and make it more present, more direct and more clear in our perception of outer life. We work in a group and individually.

Already it is possible to move forward with multiple means, personal will and Self-surrender to the Supreme for a gradual change in our mentality, way of thinking, mental silence, openness to the higher mental, and a gradual change in our psychological and emotional system, both leading to a first stage of witness, beyond reacting to contact with outer life.

The progressive physical change however appears to us more blurred, except for the bases that give the material physical body better health, balanced diet, rest, hygiene and exercise and experiences with the consciousness of the body.

This year, we placed our focus on the subtle physical body, which is less dense than the physical body, as well as on the role of the latter in a transformation which could be more integral. The course included: inner senses, observing with inner senses, atmosphere – vibration – internal structure, feeling the different substances and atmospheres of different bodies, identification of the pranic body, reinforcing the transfer of consciousness to the subtle physical body, difference between the bodies: cellular physical body and subtle physical body, matter (density, fluidity, plasticity, form, atmosphere), encouraging contact with the psychic being whose support is the subtle physical body.

The classes require qualities of centering and concentration, observation and attention, so that mentality no longer represents an obstacle to a new future. We are talking about spiritual responsibility put into action in matter and life.

Breath and Prana classes:

Breath induces life, movement, vastness. Becoming aware of the breath is a control of oneself through the knowledge of the workings of Prana within. This course is an introspection to know by experience the functioning of Energy and its role in our physical and psychic life.

The course includes various exercises on breathing, breath and pranas with centering and observation. The goal depends on the aspiration of each person, but the basic benefits are better health, resistance and immunity; appeasement and mental calm; a more transparent inner vision; an opening to new spaces.
Introspective meditation (kriya):

The position of the body, sitting or lying down, must be comfortable. The fact of being guided is a help and allows one to continue to work alone. Anyone can participate, everyone experiences the session in a unique manner. This course is an active introspection, a conscious inner exploration.

The techniques are diverse (centering, space, sound, breath) to clarify the surface personality, mental and vital, and to access deeper inner levels. We can note that the more regular the practice and the research, the more the visibility of the subtle physical body and its instruments become apparent. At this level we enter into the subliminal; its vibrational quality, its substance and atmosphere, are particularly harmonious compared to the physical plane.

The sessions are all different.

The kriyas are a work of concentration and movement of consciousness and energy on different planes, the physical, the vital, the mental, and the subtle physical, the psychic. Their role is to cleanse and open subtle spaces and planes. The intention put into these practices is important; for us here, it is about developing a higher potential which becomes active in life, therefore a tool of transformation. We must always support psychic contact and spiritual contact through aspiration and we know that our will is first and foremost a necessity so that the Mother can freely work in us.

Yoga Nidra, deep exploration:

Yoga nidra is practiced lying down. It is an immersion in physical, emotional and mental letting go for complete relaxation. Yoga nidra takes us on a journey from the physical to the subtle. By staying awake in the deeper and deeper layers of our being, we allow the elimination of our samskara and lighten up our subconscious. We can enter into inner experiences and touch our true being. Physical, emotional and mental regeneration takes place.
The Auroville Research Platform (1) helps initiate and catalyze research collaborations between external researchers and Aurovilians/Auroville units, and (2) raises the visibility of research outputs from or about Auroville through the online repository, AuroRepo (https://aurorepo.in).

Activities of the year:

In the last year, we personally guided (through calls, in-person meetings, mentoring) 18 external (and 6 Aurovilian) researchers to start or complete their research project on Auroville. These included PhD students and university professors. We had another ~40 requests from all over the world.

Our online repository is for anyone in the world who is interested in looking up research papers that are about some aspect of Auroville (AuroRepo is covered by Google and Google Scholar – the latter is especially used by researchers). This year we traced and uploaded a variety of scholarly theses/dissertations done on Auroville, catalogued all the items in the old research database (research.auroville.org) and we identified the research outputs to be uploaded onto AuroRepo.

We recently received the go-ahead from Sanjeev R. and Mr. Srinivasmurty to formalize the Research Platform website and Aurorepo, replacing the old research database at research.auroville.org.. On 29th March 2022 the research.auroville.org domain was set up to point to the informative website we have set up (which in turn contains a link to Aurorepo).

Research highlights:

Research outcomes on Auroville published this year that may be of interest are:

- PhD thesis in Anthropology, “ETHNOGRAPHIE D’UNE UTOPIE: Auroville, cité internationale en Inde du Sud”, by Dr. Marie Horassius (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)
- PhD thesis in Anthropology, “Where I Feel Most Comfortable in the World”: Searching Utopia for Home, by Dr. Rebecca Bee Braithwaite Clark (La Trobe University, Australia)
- Book Chapter: “Lessons from Utopia: Reflections on Peak Transformative Experiences in a University Studio in Auroville, India”, by Dr. Bem Le Hunte, Dr.
Katie Ross, Dr. Suryamayi Clarence-Smith & Aditi Rosegger, published in the Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation.

- Research Report: “Exploring Auroville’s Capacity to Flourish” by Helen and Manjula

Reflections:

Challenges:

- **Human resources:** While our team keeps up with requests and is able to lend a helping hand to incoming academics, our limited time for this project means that we can only support academics who can work semi-independently, as we don’t have the bandwidth for more extensive mentoring.

- **Quality of requests:** We have quite some requests from people interested to do a PhD on Auroville throughout the year. This is important for us for, as opposed to MA students, PhD students tend to have a firmer grasp on theory, methodology, and subject matter. They are also able to do much more in-depth work as their projects tend to span 4 years. However, despite regular follow-up, many of these projects are delayed or do not come off the ground for a variety of reasons on the researchers’ side (COVID, funding, institutional hurdles, etc). For this reason, the bulk of the research we support is less in-depth than what we would like to see.

- **Attitude of requests:** Some (especially more senior) researchers can be quite uncooperative in their communication, which creates some challenges in terms of ensuring they align with the ethos of Auroville and the way we wish to uphold research interventions here, in the spirit of collaboration.

- **Slow institutional response:** In this case from the Office of the Foundation with regards to the website.

Learnings:

- **Nurturing young talent:** We have noticed that while MA students are generally much less qualified than PhD students, they are often willing to contribute to Auroville through volunteering, and their attitude is quite rewarding for the team and brings positive energy into Auroville.

- **Speed of communication:** We sometimes miss an email or take some time to respond while we coordinate in the team. We have now created some mechanisms to be faster in our response.

Conclusion:

We have started to be more regular in updating the community on research outputs relating to Auroville.

We now have close to 200 items on Aurorepo and we have a catalog of a few hundred items that we plan to add to Aurorepo in the coming year.

Otherwise we are quite happy with the way we are functioning and will continue on as we are.
The Auroville Library has existed since almost the beginning of Auroville, first in Aspiration as “Aspiration Library”, and later here and there until it was established at Bharat Nivas. There the collection grew, and finally the Library moved to its present location in October 2011 – over 10 years ago!

Now the Library has approximately 55,000 books, on a wide range of topics, in 10 languages. We get two daily newspapers (one in English and one in Tamil), News & Notes, Auroville Today, and various other periodicals and magazines which are donated to us regularly.

Everyone can benefit from the library: Aurovilians, Newcomers, volunteers, guests and workers of Auroville and especially children. Anyone can come and read at the library; a lending account is only needed for borrowing books.

Activities of the year:

This year, we were able to allow studying inside the library again which many of our youth have been making use of. The last few months have seen an increase in guests joining the library again after two years of intermittent lockdowns.

We hosted a few book readings from local authors which were a success. We exhibited artwork from local artists and photographers.

We had our annual distribution of The Mother’s, Sri Aurobindo’s and disciples’ books. In this we give away extra books that we don’t need, which have been donated to us over the course of the year. We also shared extra books of various kinds with Auroville schools and other institutions.

We had some essential repairs carried out on the building, which have made a big impact. These included fixing leaks on the roof, repainting and fixing window grills, and repairing the window mesh, which stops bats and other wildlife from getting inside the library.

We were recently given a grant to purchase 4 new double bookshelves, and these have made a big difference in terms of space for more books as our collection is always growing!

Outcomes:

The book readings gave a welcome opportunity to bring the community together after two years of social distancing. Our most successful event was a talk from Michel Danino reading excerpts from his book “Sri Aurobindo and India’s Rebirth”.

We also had a poetry reading from Anandi Z. who was releasing a book of poetry, and Gautham Sachdeva gave a talk with the specific focus of ‘peace of mind in daily living’ through relationships.
Several people visited the library specifically to view the exhibitions and commented on the beautiful, peaceful space in which they were displayed.

**Reflections:**

Being allowed to reopen the library fully after two years of restrictions felt good. It’s always a pleasure to see our library being used as a quiet space for studying. We enjoyed hosting the book readings and hope to have more in the coming year. We also plan to restart our storytime sessions for children over the summer.

**Future direction:**

Our architect Suhasini is preparing the plans for a building application to expand the Children’s Room. This will be a huge improvement, as this room is now too small; many books have to be kept in storage (on a rotation basis) because there’s simply no room. This will also let us have Story Time comfortably inside instead of having to sit on the entrance terrace.

We believe strongly that by nurturing our children’s thirst for reading, they will become book lovers for the rest of their lives.
Sanskrit Research Institute (SRI)  
by Martin Glukman

SRI exists to delve deeply into the Sanskrit language and its immense literature and make it more accessible for all. The Sanskrit language contains the vast entirety of Indian history, culture, civilization, philosophy and wisdom. Sanskrit was very dear to the hearts of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and is also a very key part of Auroville’s identity being one of the official languages of Auroville and The Mother wanting Sanskrit to be the official language of India.

Goals for this year were to continue work on our Sanskrit Archive project of creating a detailed overview of the extant Sanskrit literature (estimated some 10m manuscripts). Five team members worked on this throughout the year. Additional goals were to deepen our research on Sanskrit and how it has influenced other languages, with a particular research focus on Dhivehi and Lithuanian for new posters we are creating. It has been a year of deepening collaborations with the SAMHiTA Project (IIC Delhi), The University of Cape Town and Google Research India.

Activities of the year:

- **Sanskrit Archive Project continuation and ancillary works**: This year we continued work on our ongoing Sanskrit Archive project, a project working to create a detailed map of extant Sanskrit literature. A team of three (Sashka, Gauri & Gali) have been categorising entries of Sanskrit works, commentaries and authors. We have created an index of the largest works and authors (ranked by the number of manuscripts, commentaries and publications related to this work or author) and this has given a very interesting list of the most significant works in the Sanskrit corpus. We completed a mapping of Sanskrit manuscript catalogues which was published in September 2021 (https://sanskritdictionary.com/ncc/map/). We also published statistical information for the Sanskrit Archive project which highlights the most significant subjects in the Sanskrit corpus (https://sanskritdictionary.com/ncc/). One of our volunteers (Nitin) has helped to create an “auto-tagger” of Sanskrit works during his tenure.

- **Sanskrit Posters**: We commenced work (lead by Daniel Grings a SRI volunteer) on a Dhivehi-Sanskrit poster which is near completion and will shortly be working on a Lithuanian-Sanskrit poster and then a poster covering all the Lipis (scripts) used in extant Sanskrit manuscripts.

- **Articles and Interviews**: SRI has also featured in a number of podcasts and newsletters during this year.
Collaborations: During the year we were invited to a number of collaborations:
  o IIC Delhi (on the SAMHiTA project).
  o With Google Research (India, Singapore and USA) to work jointly on the SAMHiTA project.
  o University of Cape Town (to assist with digital tools and preservation of Khoesän languages).

Outcomes:
Currently ~100,000 web visitors use our various Sanskrit tools monthly including a number of persons in Auroville and the Ashram.

We have a very active pool of medium and long term volunteers contributing to our project, many of whom end up joining Auroville as new residents.

We have received positive feedback throughout the year from both the scholarly community and the general public.

Research highlights:

  ● Sanskrit Manuscript Map: We created and published a map of the catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts. This project involved a team firstly capturing the data and then geotagging it based on the site where the manuscript catalogue was published (e.g. BORI in Pune or the Adyar Library in Chennai). This was then put into a GIS system (Google Maps) and presented as a web application. The output revealed as expected that most of the Sanskrit manuscript catalogues are in India but there were many in Europe and the USA. We noticed that neighbouring countries have just a few and started a survey with the SAMHiTA collaboration as a result to properly “fill these gaps”. One of our new volunteers (Sabrina) was assigned to assist with this research which is ongoing.

  ● SRI assistance with Khoesän languages: In August 2019 we gave a lecture at the University of Cape Town and subsequently were invited to assist the Khoesän languages (click languages of Southern Africa) with digital preservation and tools. This has been a great privilege as we could repurpose many of the tools we created over the years for the Sanskrit language to assist the Khoesän languages.

Reflections:

The spirit of volunteership in Auroville and at SRI and the calibre and consciousness of people who come to join this project of “human unity” and our research on Sanskrit was extremely moving. Our office had the largest number of volunteers on campus, peaking at 9 earlier in the year. Our mean number of volunteers on campus in Auroville is usually half this amount and it was wonderful to see the spirit of connection and collaboration on the human level. Sanskrit is a wonderful catalyst to bring people together and deepen one understanding of both India and humanity.
The activities of Agni Veda Research include:

- Research into Vedic Sanskrit literature, applying Sri Aurobindo’s keys to language and meaning of the Vedas;
- Translations, publications, and interaction with scholars on Sri Aurobindo’s approach to the Vedas;
- Teaching of Vedic hymns along with the original Sanskrit text in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga.

Activities of the year:

Daily activities (at the home office “Vedasthan” at Agni):

- Research in the hymns of the Veda
- for finding suitable quotes to teach Vedic grammar at different levels of progress;
- for deepening my understanding of the Vedic language and the implications of many of its standing terms, in order to give substantive support for publications planned in the future;
- working on appropriate translations fit for a publication.

The above research work involves a comparative study of some Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita on a regular basis.

In March 2022 a 5-week introduction into Sri Aurobindo’s book “Hymns to the Mystic Fire” along with a recitation of selected hymns was given at Savitri Bhavan, with seven Aurovilians participating.

Due to the Covid pandemic the weekly meditative study sessions, “Meditation with hymns from the Rig Veda” at Savitri Bhavan remained suspended for the second year.

The Vedic studies and teaching of grammar as online sessions with students from across India was continued from the previous year. Several students dropped out and only three remained.

Due to their different levels of progress, these three students received individual lessons once or twice a week, amounting to eight hours or more in total.

With one student these sessions included Sanskrit studies of the Kena Upanishad based on Sri Aurobindo’s rendering and detailed commentary. In addition, we had a thorough study of Sri Aurobindo’s earlier translations and commentaries on the Isha Upanishad.

With another student from the Chennai group, with which I had regular online sessions in the year before, the bi-weekly sessions included:

a) a discussion of many Vedic topics including specific terms, vocabulary and translation and interpretation of whole verses; to this in recent times was added a
preliminary study of the Mandukya Upanishad in the original Sanskrit and with Sri Aurobindo’s early English rendering; along with an additional translation and commentary by K.D. Sethna (also known as Sri Aurobindo’s disciple Amal Kiran); and b) the study of my Vedic grammar sessions right from the start for which, as in the previous year, I undertook a thorough revision which is still in process.

With the third most advanced Veda student I had weekly four hours sessions, for which I continued with the creation of further grammar lessons.

**Outcomes:**

- Creation of new grammar lessons nos. 38 to 43 (each consisting of about 15 A4 pages) as an alternative method to learn Sanskrit, with a special focus on the Vedic grammar with many original samples.
- Renewed revisions – some slight and some extensive – of almost all the earlier 15 and some of the more recent lessons.
- Creation of a comprehensive dictionary (ongoing).
- Along with the Sanskrit Grammar lessons I developed a session-wise dictionary that gives detailed information both on grammatic forms and on possible English meanings. Although it is based on the Monier-Williams dictionary I add here some personal insights and often include renderings and commentaries of important terms by Sri Aurobindo. Till date, this “Session Dictionary” consists of 216 pages.
- It is planned in the coming year to offer within Auroville a new approach to Sanskrit learning for beginners that is based on these lessons and the dictionary. Interest in this has been expressed, and an offer has been made to publish the completed sessions in book form.
- Additions to several important Vedic topics that are intended to be published as a series of research booklets in the future.
- Creation of documents with topics selected from Sri Aurobindo’s work, e.g., the origin of language, on interpreting the Upanishads, the One and the Many, the three Purushas (the latter two from his commentary on the Isha Upanishad). These documents have been shared with the current and with earlier students, who are waiting for a new (online) grammar course that will give them a second start.
- Additions to a book manuscript on the Veda in the light of Sri Aurobindo, still in process (which due to the involvement in creating high level grammar sessions did not receive as much attention as had been planned).
- Those who participate in the online Veda and grammar sessions or in the renewed personal meetings at Savitri Bhavan or at my Vedasthana home in Agni benefit a lot, not only in regard to learning Sanskrit but also in many other ways, which is expressed in their continuous feedback.
Research highlights:

There have been no really new discoveries to those made in the course of the past years (except those who relate to the growth of one’s own personal understanding). But there are many confirmations of the past insights that are important. And as a result of this, all original examples relevant to the different topics have been added as supportive quotes to the various research files.

Reflections:

Challenging and mentally often very stressful was the fact that almost all interaction for teaching and scholarly discussion had to be conducted through the internet. In fact, in my personal experience I find that online sessions in general – helpful as they may be in a given situation – cannot replace or fully compensate for the exchange that is possible by personal interaction both, between student and teacher and among fellow students.

Another challenge is the amount of time-consuming labor that some of this research demands, e.g., the creation of files that incorporate the Devanagari script and the international transliteration along with English and the vocabulary in Sanskrit and English. In this process, time and again mistakes occur either in the text copied from internet sources or from printed books. Added to this is the reaction of the Windows document which gets confused by the usage of several languages in one file.

Intentions for next year:

● Keep teaching the grammar on a weekly basis; continue creating lessons with relevant samples from different ancient spiritual texts.
● Continue with all other ongoing projects (as mentioned above).
● Hoping that in the year 2022-23 there will be more opportunities to teach at home in Auroville.
Kailash Youth Residency
by Kripa

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 as a frame from the start, and are fixed:

● Open to youth between 16 and 21 years old.
● A daily activity such as school, work, apprenticeship, etc. is compulsory.
● Active participation in the Kailash community life. (Weekly meetings, gardening, cooking shifts, maintenance of the building, and so on.)
● Respect each other and the neighborhood.
● No illegal drugs in the residency.

Activities of the year:

As we are a residency, we do not conduct activities as such. We deal with daily life. We have 14 rooms, with 2 big rooms that can potentially be shared, so we have a regular hosting capacity of 14 that can go up to a maximum of 16 residents at a time. The minimum stay is of 2 months and maximum is of 6 years.

We host children of Aurovilians as well as children of foreign and Indian non-Aurovilians with a volunteer or a student status.

We have our traditional dinner with a Secret Santa around Christmas time, and we have our annual group photo taken as highlight moments in the year.

Throughout the year, we have our weekly community meeting as well as monthly (or more if needed) collective clean-up and work for maintenance of the building and its grounds.

Every day, 2 people shop, cook and clean up for the others. This way every evening everybody can eat dinner together, while cooking only once a week.

This year we organized a cake sale to generate funds to cover 2 of our terraces so as to provide shade and to waterproof the rooms below, which were leaking during the rains, and to create a covered parking space in front of the residency to protect the motorbikes during monsoon. We have through this event brought awareness and received a donation for this specifically. We also received a donation of a hand blender and a second hand sofa. We improved our kitchen pots and pans which desperately needed a renewal.

We would still need to have a nice oven to be able to cook and bake for a community of 14 people. We are hoping to make it happen somehow in the coming year.
Outcomes:

Kailash is a place that offers the space for youngsters to grow, develop and find themselves in a safe environment away from the family home. It is not simply a housing option. The space is created so the individuals learn from each other from the most basics of material responsibility of cooking, cleaning, and household chores to applied notions of respect, communication, understanding of others, others’ needs, others’ growing and maturing process. Kailash is their home and the residents and caretakers become family.

As there is a regular turnover of residents, there is a natural passing on of information from the older residents to the newer ones. There is a transmission of identity and spirit of the place where the older ones act as older brothers and sisters within the group.

Research highlights:

It is very difficult to set aims and goals for research in a place that is basically about community life and learning to grow and live among peers. Within the same frame, the same walls and building, the picture and daily life changes very much according to the individuals who constitute this collective. Even though the frame is guaranteed by the caretakers, the rest of it depends on a lot of factors that can be world related (Covid pandemics) environmental related (Auroville events), personal related (Caretakers’ availability, presence and engagement), residents related (age of the residents, type, maturity and situation of each of them).

We are often more in a situation of observing and finding that issues raised in Kailash reflect and reveal, giving us elements of understanding on larger issues.

Reflections:

The conception and project writing, fundraising and manifestation of Kailash started in 1998, the construction finished and the first youth moved in in 2001. We have a building that is slowly aging and will need some kind of regular budget/income to maintain it if we want to keep it available on the long term to future residents.

While we are a sub-unit of SAIIER and wish to stay so (as without the educational aspect of Kailash, it would be merely a housing option, which it is not), we are difficult to fit into any funding category. We have applied for monthly financial support from the BCC for 2022-23 for maintenance and up keeping of the building. We hope this will be accepted. As of now, we are not receiving any financial support and we are self supportive. We have just enough to repair and do the basic needful, but never to innovate, improve or create.

We have had a very low-key non promotional or outspoken attitude about the space we offer in Kailash, but we see that unless we are outspoken, we will not be heard of, and if we are not heard of, we won’t get financial support. This is a conflict within our nature and how we function, and we will have to see how to go about it.
Conclusion:

Kailash is “a little Auroville within Auroville” and is a place to explore, grow and learn about life in a safe and secure environment. Auroville itself is a reflection of what happens in the world, and it is essential to have nurturing hubs to help the youth prepare and step into a responsible adult life feeling strong and empowered. Whether as residents, or as apprentice caretakers, the youngsters who have lived in and are connected to Kailash are very much part of one of those nurturing hubs.

We again have a big amount of residents leaving at the end of this school year to pursue their educational goals and keep walking on their life path. So for us also, we will be continuing our purpose and welcoming new youngsters into this unique life opportunity.
## Projects supported in 2021-22

### Projects of SAIER sub-units:

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### Auroville community projects:

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