

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends

The school campus has seen many different activities this semester. The children gave several performances, one after another to parents, visitors, fellow students and staff. Our regular visiting friends Bill and Livia Vanaver, directors of Vanaver Caravan Dance Company, amazed the campus by showing the result of their two weeks training to 1st to 4th grade children. After witnessing the children's cultural performances on the 26th of January at the Indian Republic day function, the campus is now getting ready to exhibit all the academic and vocational productions of the children this school year on the 28th of February, Auroville's Birthday. The children went on many field trips including a 2 days bicycle trip where they had to live with basic supplies in the villages among the villagers.

The Support Group wants to thank you all for your continuous support to the school. Aum...



Dance practice with Bill and Livia Vanaver



Children's Day



Children's Day By Teacher Pravenna

Every year we celebrate Children's Day by a themed dress-up party. Each class teacher chooses a theme by asking their students for ideas. We also request the students and the parents not to spend a lot of money, but just to use recycled materials and the things that they have at home.

The children really love a dress-up party because they are different on that day. The themes that we chose this year in the Kindergarten block were Gods and Goddesses, National leaders, birds etc.

The higher grade students also dress up by choosing a theme like animals, farmers, market, water and its uses, which they demonstrate by also doing a mime. Some dressed up like junk food and healthy food. Some of the themes the students chose were interesting and meaningful. Not only did they come with different costumes, they also tried to tell some good messages. The teachers and the students enjoyed the day a lot.



Children's Day

Be True not Violent – Peace Education for Village Children

One afternoon in January Aurovilian Tineke met Rita Erben at the special Non Violent Classroom she has set up at Aikiyam.

Tineke writes: This afternoon is for twelve girls aged 11 and 12 . Boys used to attend the class too but the girls prefer to be among themselves. They call their group “the lovely sisters group”.

Normally the Thursday afternoon session starts with sitting in a circle around a candle and meditating. But because I was new there, Rita explained what they usually do. We also talked with each of the girls about their goals in life and what they want to study. None of them wanted to become a house wife! They performed one of the basic Gurdjeff dances, and then insisted on showing me their own choreography of a dance from a well known and popular Tamil movie. They then played some games with each other. The class ended with a repeat show of their favorite Tamil dance.

Eight years ago Rita started to develop a method to teach village children how to deal with the violence which they encounter in their daily life, mainly at home. She explains that peace education is the process of acquiring the values and knowledge, and then developing the attitudes, skills and behaviour to live in harmony with oneself, and with others. It teaches people (children, youth and adults) how to interact with others and avoid unnecessary aggression and emotional stress. These goals are based on the assumption that, while violent conflict is unavoidable, there is a process by which we can address conflict and minimize violence. Peace educators help to promote a hopeful optimism with the

help of meditation, drama, body movements and other creative activities.

The violent situations at home influence the student’s concentration in school. Together with illustrator Emanuele, Rita wrote a comic book in which 3 figures (Papui - a boy, Draggy – dragon, and ‘Something Else’) travel around the world to find peace, which they don’t find, as there isn’t any in this world. Through their encounters with different kinds of violence, solutions are given to the readers on how to find inner peace. This book works quite well for children up to the age of 10. ([See our February 2013 newsletter](#)) For older students special classes are held using meditation, drama, dance, painting and writing. Rita also teaches teachers on how to deal with the problems around violence, using this book and also a special guidebook for teachers. Every day she has different classes and groups coming for 45 minutes to one hour sessions. She also works with individual children who need more special care. She lets them paint and write as a means to learn how to deal with their problems.

Rita says that the work seems to be successful, because some children can concentrate better after they regularly take part in relaxation exercises or learn to perceive and express their feelings in group work. But it is a long-term process and very intensive, because all these children are coming from a very poor background and at home they experience different rules than in school, where for example they are not beaten.

Since 2016 Rita has given special teacher workshops on how to deal with the problems around violence, using this book and also a special guidebook for teachers.

Girls’ Group: What does it mean to be a woman?



Drama play



Concentration reduces inner stress



Girls



Playing chess



Learning to express feelings

Peace Class by Esther and Suganya, 6th Grade

Rita Teacher teaches us how to meditate, how to dance and how to draw.

First we meditate and start to dance when our heart becomes peaceful. She is like our friend. We go there and stay quiet. We draw many things like different types of birds. We draw our self, our body.

Rita teacher told us a story about wax children.

There was a village, and in the village there was a family with three children made of wax. There were two girls and one boy. In day times they would always stay in the house. They knew that they were made of wax. One day the boy was angry with himself. He wanted to go outside and play with his friends. The girls told him when you go outside you will melt. The boy opened the door and he ran very fast to the end of the village. The boy melted. When the night came the girls opened the door and they went to the end of the village. They made with the wax a bird. And they put the bird in the village mountains where birds fly freely.

Esther said, "Without asking my mother and father for permission, I want to do my things. That is freedom for me."

After this story Rita teacher told us to draw birds and make a creation. We drew many birds which we colored and pasted. We benefit in many good ways from her class and we love to go to her class very often.



Esther and Suganya

When the parents came home they asked the little girls where their brother was. They told this story from the beginning and they all were worried, but at the same time they were happy because he had found his freedom. He can fly where he wants to go, over the sea and over the mountains and under the grasslands. This is the story about the wax children.

Then Rita asked us what freedom means for us.

Suganya said, "What things I do, I want to do. That is freedom for me."



Visit to Solitude Farm By Karthik, Social Science Teacher

In December students from grades 1 till 5 visited Solitude Farm accompanied by their respective class teachers and myself. When they arrived the students received a short introduction to the farm which included an interactive session. Some of the questions discussed were where is our food coming from, what is healthy and nutritious food, and what is local food etc. After this, they were given a farm tour where many varieties of local edible plants were identified by students themselves. Species which could not be identified by students were explained to them. The 3rd graders with their class teachers brought along some vegetables and other cooking ingredients and they all prepared a delicious meal and had picnic just outside Solitude Farm. In my observation the students seem to really enjoy these activities.



Trip to Solitude Farm

Internet Fundraising

Most of you know that in order to be able to run the school well Aikiyam depends on donations to supplement the basic income that we get from Auroville. People give as generously as they can from their own pockets, but sometimes we at Aikiyam need more than we receive. Therefore we would like to share how an ex-volunteer uses the internet to raise funds for Aikiyam, hoping that others may be inspired by the example.

Pips Rudd Mather, who spent several months at Aikiyam as a volunteer in 2010 has been fundraising for the school for several years. She uses an online fundraising site called mydonate which according to Wikipedia is a not-for-profit online fundraising service in the United Kingdom which passes on 100% of all donations made through the site to the chosen charity, excluding credit/debit card charges and doesn't charge a subscription fee or take commission.

In November Pips hosted a fund raising event in London, which displayed photos and artwork from the school and served delicious Indian food. So far they have raised more than £3,700. We will use this to fund an

educational trip at the end of the school year for our eighth grade graduating class to participate in an exchange program with a school in Pune.

We are deeply touched that Pips has continued to raise funds in this way year after year, while at the same time making more and more people aware of Aikiyam School.



Pips with teachers Sathiya and Aruna in 2010

To make a donation go to <https://www.auroville.org/contents/2835> and choose the way that is most suitable for you. Regardless of your choice please be sure to write to assg@auroville.org.in with copy to unityfund@auroville.org.in explaining that your donation is for Aikiyam School.

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Our newsletters from 2006 onwards can be read online at: <http://www.aikiyamschool.org>