

### Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends

Aikiyam School sends warmest greetings to you all during this remarkable February of Auroville's 50th year. We are happy to share with you the main events of this quarter. The whole school is talking about 'Water' since it is the project topic of the entire school for this academic year. Our students are learning about this important element scientifically, mathematically, socially, politically and ecologically. They are visiting various ponds, lakes, rivers and reservoirs, which they enjoy immensely. We also had a wonderful annual exhibition this year when all our science models, and works of art made in our vocational training rooms were displayed for the whole community. We teachers want to thank all our teacher trainers who spend almost all their weekends with us to help us improve our teaching skills, and finally we thank all of you all for being with us with your invaluable support. Aum... Shankar



### An Appeal To Our Friends

In 2016/17 it cost Rs24,932 (€325 or US\$387) to educate one child and provide a nutritious lunch and 2 healthy snacks per day for one year at Aikiyam School. Fortunately Auroville covered approximately half of this, and a Government of India grant covered 5%, leaving a need of Rs10,955 (€143 or US\$168) per child per year. Because of inflation and the intention to give the teachers a substantial salary increase, this year we need Rs12,955 (€172 or US\$199) per child.

There are 258 children at Aikiyam. On an average they can make a contribution of Rs4,000 (€53 or US\$61) per year, meaning we still need to find Rs8,955 (€117 or US\$137) for each child. Any amount you can afford to help these children is welcome.



### Water

The monsoon failure in 2016 really brought home to us in a very concrete way how essential to life water is, so we decided that the main school project for 2017/18 would be water. Here are some pieces that our students wrote about water:

**Kishore Kumar is nine years old and studying in 5th grade.** In our Tamil class we are doing a project about water on a dam called Kallanai. We made a model of the dam in our clay class. We read

stories about water. We also read Thirukkural that talks about water.

We are planning to visit Kallanai Dam. It is near Trichy, between Kaveri, Vennaru and Kollidam. It has been standing there for many centuries. This dam was built by Karikala Chola. We are excited to go on this trip.

**Santosh is eleven years old and studying in 6th grade.** In our English class we are reading water stories from around the world. So far we have completed two stories, and my favorite story from what we have read so far

is 'Tiddalik. This story is from Australia. Tiddalik is a small frog. He drank all the water from the world. There was no



water in the world. All the creatures needed water, so they asked a little amount of water but Tiddalik didn't give. So they planned to make Tiddalik laugh. First there came a bird named Kukubra, who sang well. She said I can sing and make Tiddalik laugh. It made Tiddalik happy, but he didn't laugh. Next came Emu a bird. She danced well. She danced and tried her best to make Tiddalik laugh. But he didn't laugh. A kangaroo came and told a story, but Tiddalik didn't even laugh for that. Finally an eel came and tried to make Tiddalik laugh. He played on the frog's back and Tiddalik felt ticklish, so he started laughing, and all the water came out of Tiddalik's mouth, like a waterfall. There was a flood, so the animals tried to save their lives from the flood. All the creatures got water. This is the story, and I liked it very much. After reading the story, we all had lots of fun in drawing, colouring and writing about it in a chart, which we have displayed in our class.

Apart from this we are also going on a field trip to Trichy to see dams, lakes and rivers to learn more about water.

**Vaitheeswari is thirteen years old and studying in 8th grade.** Every class in our school is doing a project related to water. And we have made an ECO pond. It's about 18 feet long and 10 feet in breadth.

First we dug the ground and took out the sand and spread a big transparent sheet, then we poured a lot of water into it. We decorated our pond with beautiful stones. Using the colourful stones we wrote our school name and our grade. 'AIKIYAM SCHOOL VIII GRADE'.

Now we have about 5 big fish and more than 50 small fish in our pond. We also have planted lotus in



Water Filter

our pond which is our national flower. To make it safe, we have made a fence around the pond.

Everybody in the school likes the pond that we have made. I see children from other classes standing around the pond and watching the fish and flowers in it.

I would like to thank my principal, science teacher, and our school gardener, who helped us to make this pond. We feel so happy and proud of the pond that we have made in our school.

**Deepa is thirteen years old and studying in 8th grade** For our water project we have made a nice water filter, and eco pond. We are also making a fish pond now.

**POND:** We have made two ponds, one for asola plant, and the other for fish. We are doing this as a group project. We have created it just outside our classroom. Our pond will have lotus, lilies and fish.

**WATER PURIFIER:** We took two water cans, one small and one big. We collected pebbles, cotton, gravel and some marbles. We washed them nicely. Then we took the big can and we made a hole at the bottom of the can. We then took the small can and placed it on the big can. We kept filter paper under the big can, and filled with pebbles, gravel and cotton. Finally we filled it with water. It took about almost a day to get the purified water from the filter.

The other experiment we have done for this project is a rain gauge. A rain gauge is used to calculate the amount of rain in centimetres. We took a big glass bottle, and we took a steel scale and glued it to the bottle. We then placed it on one of the classroom buildings. Since we did it during the rainy season, we were able to measure the rainwater in centimeters using our experiment.



Measuring Rainwater



Rainwater Harvesting



## The Ocean is a Mystery to Me by 8th grade students

Crash, bang, splash: these are the sounds of the ocean.  
The water of the ocean can be salty, spicy, clean or dirty.  
Sometimes the ocean is a hungry tiger,  
Sometimes the ocean is as shiny as a diamond reflecting light,

Sometimes the ocean is like a blue whale moving in slow motion,  
Or like a blue blanket.  
Perhaps a woman, like a goddess, may rise out of the water.  
The ocean is a mystery to me.



*Eighth grade students with science teacher, Radhakrishna*

## A Few Glimpses from Our Annual Exhibition on Republic Day, January 26th



*claywork*



*embroidery and stuffed animals*



*Science exhibit electric float*



*Carpentry*



*Science exhibit robot*

## Aikiyam Students Prepare For School Elections

As the largest democracy in the world, India has an important role to ensure that its young people learn how to participate in democracy. In a few years, many of the upper level students will exercise their democratic right to vote in national, state and local elections. Aikiyam School is taking an active role in teaching grades 5-8 how to plan, organize and take part in a democratic election so they will have a better understanding of the importance of secret ballots and one vote for each person

in a democracy. They will also understand the right of women and people of all castes to vote, concepts that were won after a lot of hard work many years ago and are enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

This is the third Student Council election at Aikiyam School involving the 8th grade in election planning and preparation. The students are responsible for all aspects of the election, including four major areas of work: 1) deciding on the composition, roles and duties of the Student Council; 2) planning the design of the ballot

and voting station; 3) soliciting names of candidates and organizing speeches; 4) overseeing and monitoring the election.

The 8th grade class is planning the election of the 2018 Student Council. They have decided that "the Student Council will assist with maintaining discipline and cleanliness at Aikiyam School". They determined that they need representatives on the Council in three areas:

- President and Vice President
- Public Works Leader and Workers
- Student (Class) Leaders

To achieve this, the second part of the process - planning and design of the vote - is underway. It includes developing accurate lists of students, designing ballots, constructing ballot boxes, choosing symbols for each candidate, and constructing privacy screens for the vote to ensure secret ballot voting. The students are receiving assistance from Teachers Vadivel, Janaki and Murugan to help them with these tasks.

The third part of the planning process involves advising students on how to stand as candidates in the election. Each candidate has to prepare and make a speech about their strengths and qualifications for the position. The

students will be shown how to mark their ballots properly on election day. Any ballots not marked properly will be marked VOID and not included in the final count.

The last part of the process will be Election Day, February 12th. Approximately 90 students will vote in the morning, with a team of 8th grade students monitoring the process. Everyone who has voted will receive a mark on their fingernail to ensure that each person votes only once. Within a few hours, the vote should be complete and counting of the votes will proceed, with the students and teachers present to observe. The winners will be announced and a date set for the first meeting of the new Student Council.

This election in 2018 will be different from previous elections in that there will be a succession plan for the next school year. So when the 8th grade graduates, the 7th grade will take over running the Student Council. This process will be overseen by Teacher Karthik, who has been very involved in organizing this election. With this plan, there will be a Student Council in place until the next Student Council election in 2019, when the students can organize a new democratic election.



School election day

### Three Aikiyam Teachers Attend a Conference at Pondicherry University

Three teachers, Mala from Grade 2, Manju from Grade 1 and Thamizhselvi from Grade 3 attended a three day Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) conference at Pondicherry University. It was about teaching subjects such as science, history and geography to students through a foreign language. These teachers, together with others, have been operating GET SET GO, an English as a Second Language course for children and they are familiar with adapting these methods to other subjects, which are also taught through the medium of English. (See Feb. 2017 Newsletter) The conference was lead by tutors from Spain, Italy, Bangalore and Chandigarh.

The teachers were able to recognize many of the techniques that they are already using in the classroom and shared them with course participants. They also learnt new ideas to bring back and share with other members of staff.

These local conferences are a good way to network with other schools and teachers.



left to right Manju, Thamizhselvi, Mala

Thank you to visiting photographer Anna Watts for pictures on Page 1, and to Aurovilian photographer Sven for pictures related to the water project and school exhibition.

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