

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends,

I am pleased to write this note during these busy hours of our children's project work and Auroville birthday-week celebrations. I am happy and appreciate that many of our friends and AVI members have come to visit Aikiyam children and see their work; they made time for us in their busy schedules while in Auroville.

This term of the academic year has been so colourful with cultural activities, project presentations, enacting plays, and organizing art, craft and science exhibitions. We Aikiyam teachers follow a lot of training sessions and workshops, along with other Auroville teachers, during this season when there are many resource-professionals visiting and sharing their knowledge. It almost need not be said that our children enjoy and benefit a lot from both long- and short-term volunteers. I am also a little sad that our new classroom building project slipped away because of unforeseeable reasons, but our sadhana continues with the children. I hope you all enjoy this newsletter as we are informing and reaching you all with it. Aum... Shankar



Entrance to kindergarten classrooms



Republic Day cultural program

Saturday 26 January 2013, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm

Aikiyam School Campus, New Creation Community

Every year we celebrate Republic Day on the Aikiyam School campus. This year was no exception. On Saturday 26 January, in addition to the flag-hoisting ceremony which started promptly at 8:30 am, there was a full cultural program immediately following, as well as an open exhibition of the many works being created by the students in our vocational training classes such as carpentry, tailoring, clay, and painting.



In Geography the students were asked to contemplate and write about the Earth. Here Saraswati shares on topics from birds to natural resources such as rain.

Nature, by K. Saraswathi

Nature is a boon that god has given to the earth. I like nature very much. The nature on our earth includes water, wind, trees, plants, forest, waterfalls, animals, birds, insects, rain, and humans also.

Nature is very good for our life. Vegetables come from nature. When we eat them it is very healthy and good for our body. Not only vegetables, also fruits, and some animals that humans eat, and some Ayurvedic medicine too.

Water is the one important element for living organisms on our earth. We can not manage without water for half a day. Places like Rajasthan, and Chennai are not able to produce enough water underground. Because of this, water is also for sale in shops.

Birds are one of the living organisms on earth. Some birds have become extinct. They are dodo and passenger pigeon. The bird which knows before it rains is the peacock. The peacock is the national bird for India.

Animals include human beings. Most animals do not know how to live in society. But humans know how to live in society and how to manage with other people. That is why people are known as social animals.

The thing that farmers depend on the most is rain. Why do they depend on rain? They depend on rain because the farmers put seeds in the ground for their agriculture. Only when rain comes will the crops grow.

The crops which grow in rainy season are called kharif* crops; for example, wheat, gram, and paddy. Rain is sometimes destructive like tsunami, and when too much rain pours on the crops, they will be damaged. This is how rain destroys.



Waterfalls are one of the most beautiful things in nature. When we see the waterfall falling it is very excellent and beautiful to see. The largest waterfall in the world is Victoria Falls, and the highest is Angel Falls. The one waterfall I would like to see is Niagara Falls.

We should save all these natural resources because when we destroy or damage them some strange destruction may happen, like cyclone or tsunami. Now after we take care of our nature and five elements, it is our duty to take care of our environment. Now we are polluting our environment with something called plastics. Plastics are destroying our country and making it become very ugly. All the places are covered with plastics. In Kodaikanal, where people come as tourists and for cinema shooting, they leave plastics and their waste. This way the tour place is becoming unnatural. So we want to stop using plastics more and more. We are cutting many trees for paper. Trees are decreasing so we want to use paper very carefully. That means do not leave unused pages when we start another lesson..

*Hindi word



Project Microbes, G. Radhakrishnan – Science teacher

At the beginning of this academic year I started this project along with the 8th standard students. First I introduced the project and asked some questions about living organisms and their habitats. The students were very interested and gave these answers: fresh water, marine water, terrestrial and arboreal adaptations.

Then I asked them to think about organisms which we are not able to see with our naked eye. They replied that those organisms are called Micro-organisms. Then we had a discussion about how to start the project.

First I explained the different kinds of Microbes we can find around us, like bacteria, protozoa, algae, fungi and viruses and also I explained to them how viruses are different from other microbes.

For the extended learning activity I divided the students into small groups and let them take a topic such as bacteria, fungi, and their economic importance. They made posters, and models and they also cultivated the bread mould in the Science lab. I also conducted some quiz programmes to help the students think and learn more about the topic.

Then I let them examine the bread mould through the compound microscope, and showed them the different types of bacteria and their shapes under the microscope.

They studied the economical importance of microbes used for making bread, medicines, food items, etc.. Then I also told them about the harmfulness of some microbes, such as tuberculosis. During the month of December we had a volunteer named Leah who helped me very much with the project. She also made some wonderful powerpoint presentations for the class. The students learned much more as she also taught them also about the importance of hygiene.

In December they presented the project in the Science lab.

For this academic activity I conducted five formative assessments too. The students paid attention and secured good marks.

It was a very good project and a wonderful learning experience for the students and a satisfactory project for me.



"Be True, Not Violent"



Mala Rita Selvaraj Shankar



Be True, Not Violent book in Tamil



Emmanuelle, the artist

A couple of years ago we decided to run a new class on a trial basis on how to deal with violence. We invited Rita Erben, author of a book called *Be True, Not Violent* to work with two teachers, who volunteered to try it out in their classes and give feedback. The two following articles by teachers Mala and Selvaraj are reports on their experience.

Selvaraj, 3rd grade teacher

"Be True, Not Violent" is a programme which was applied in August 2011, in our 2nd grade, for the age group of 7 – 9. It was tried in our school on a trial process for the children on how they could deal with their conflicts without responding with violence. Through the lessons, our children were able to open up a lot, and share their problems often. They learned how to deal with their problems themselves and most of the time through positive, alternative solutions that they learned through this programme.



Rita Erben, our programme coordinator, helped us once a week in planning the lesson and also guided us during the lesson with the kids so we had more fun in the classes too.

This programme contains 22 lessons in a comic-style book and this must be taught along with games, role – plays, writing, reading, drawing, coloring, and with some other activities. Once a week, there was one hour allotted for this programme. Through the process of learning the programme, in the first year we covered only 12 lessons.

As a result, the rest of the lessons continued in the next year in 2012, having the same kids and with the same teacher, when they advanced to the third grade. This year, they were more mature and were aged from 8 – 10. We hear the complaints from the children and help them to deal with their problems through alternative solutions positively. We are now in the 20th lesson and we are teaching them the equal rights of girls and boys.

Through this programme, we are glad to share with you that we are sowing the seeds with our children of not engaging in violence with anyone, and they are developing an awareness of it. So we hope that in the future it will grow up into a very good tree in them: the inner truth of BE TRUE NOT VIOLENT.

Mala, 2nd grade teacher

The teachers have one hour preparation every week and practice role play exercises and games, and adapt the materials to the Tamil culture if needed.



Girls and boys learn about gender equality as part of the programme

I believe this course is very useful to the students as they live in a violent world. It helps them to understand the causes of violence and how to address conflicts in a non-violent way. Making mistakes is normal but we should all learn how to deal calmly with the consequences of conflict.

During the class the children feel confident enough to talk freely about their experiences at home. One group of children volunteered to become counsellors to assist other children to deal with their problems during break time.

The comic book is very colourful and the children really enjoy reading the stories and looking at the illustrations. They help them to understand the messages in the examples given.

The practical book has many games and activities such as community building, trust forming and fun games. The theory book is invaluable in giving us, the teachers, the knowledge we need to run the course.

As I faced a lot of violence in my childhood I feel this is the right time for me to work through this course. Even though I have attended many other good workshops on non-violent communication and other



Teaching adults different signs of violence

peace programs, I think this is the most effective and child-centered course so far.

As a small team we are proud that this course has spread around Auroville and even to rural areas around Chennai, where there is a lot of violence.

Running this course has really helped me in my work and in my personal life.

You can send your donation via the Auroville International Centre in your country, or send a cheque made payable to 'Auroville Unity Fund', Town Hall, Auroville, 605101 Tamil Nadu, INDIA indicating clearly that the donation is for Aikiyam School, or you can send it electronically by going to auroville.com/donations/ and following the instructions.

Internet fund-raising

One of our former volunteers, Pips Rudd, started a fund-raising campaign in February 2012 using one of the many fund-raising sites now available online. In a matter of months the balance went from zero to over 1,000 British pounds. We watched the giving from our computers and were astonished at the number of people who've never been to our school, but gave from their hearts to support the work we do with the village children. The last time we checked, the amount Pips



Pips with Sathiya in 2010

and her friends had raised for Aikiyam School was 2,558 pounds. Pips has set the target at 2,700 and we're pretty sure she's going to reach it. We are deeply touched and immensely grateful. This donation is the answer to our prayers for the means to send our senior students to the Himalayas for summer camp, and visit Delhi and Agra on the way.

Another one of our well-wishers has been using www.btplc.com/mydonate which is a free fund-raising service. Our friend has had good experiences with this site, and felt an inner-call to do some fund-raising especially for the holiday season. After a short time there were close to 100 pounds donated, and the clock is ticking through December 2013. It is touching to know people around the world care about the children of Aikiyam school.

As we have said again and again, we are dependent on donations like this from people of good will. This way of sharing and giving, seems to us like a simple but wonderful thing to do. We're amazed by the way technology and generosity together can make such a positive difference even from people we've never met.