



Aikiyam School (NCBS)

"Harmony • Oneness • Unity"

ஐக்கியம் பள்ளி

Vol. 8, No. 2

June 2013

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends,

This year we reopened the school 2 weeks earlier than normal in order to be closer to the schedule of other Auroville outreach schools. Certainly we see the impact on happy parents' faces. And the children, with a gleam in their eyes, walk out of the school office with new text books, notebooks and stationery; they are busy covering their new books and writing their names on them. Some children enjoy smelling their new books. We could see two sets of parents: the happy ones who managed to approach the crèche teacher in time to get places for their kids, and parents who regret that they came too late and found that the classroom was full so they can not place their child in Aikiyam. Yes, Aikiyam is full and our total strength is 252 children this year. We are supporting 126 girls and 126 boys.



"The children love the new big, yellow slide"

We are also happy that we have our long-time friend Meghan Keil, a teacher mentor with us for the beginning of this academic year. We already started meeting with her on Saturdays to brainstorm and learn how to improve our skills. We are a happy team because we are growing with our students. I thank you all for sharing our joy in these children's progress. Aum....Shankar

Oh Shell, Shell

Oh shell, shell, you have so many names!
Chippie, mollusck, barnacle, shell
Oh, shell, shell, you have so many colors!
Orange, brown, purplish red, light blue, dark blue, maybe black
Oh, shell, shell, you have so many shapes!
Square, round, or triangular like a Chinese hat
Oh, shell, shell you can be
A rattle snake, or a snake's eye,
An umbrella, a lollipop
Or a butterscotch ice cream cone.
Oh, shell, sea shell, river shell, salty or sweet
You have sounds like the waves of the sea, like death, like peace.

By the 7th standard class students, February 2013



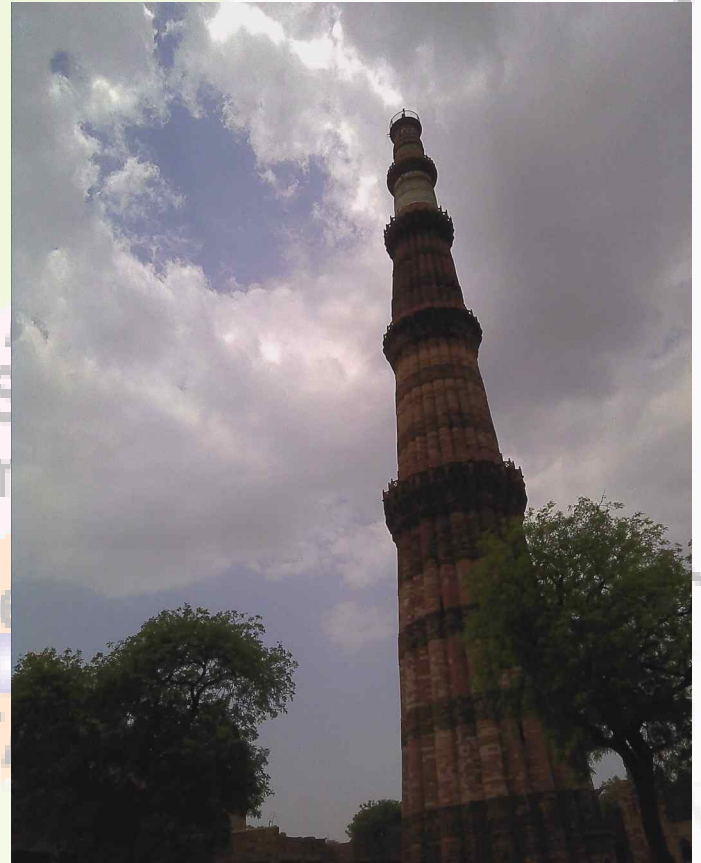
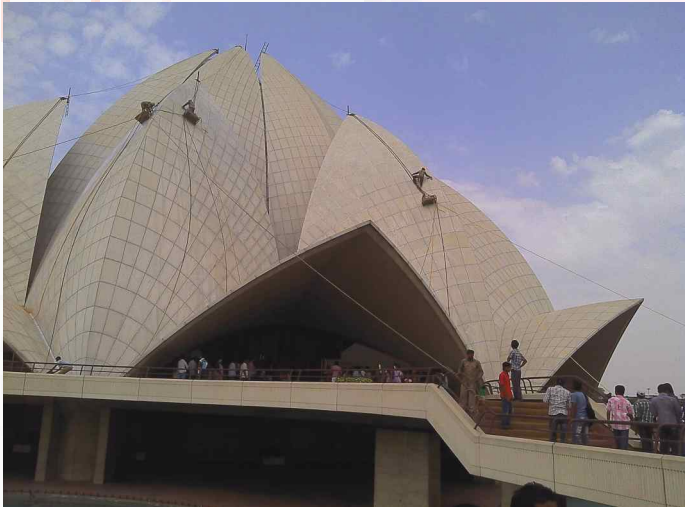
"I loved only rock climbing because it was very joyful and easy for me." G. Priyanka

"In all the things we did I loved the long trekking of 16 km." A. Vaidheki



"We went to Taj Mahal and I can't believe that I could touch Taj Mahal." I. Meenakshisundharan

"I liked Delhi. At last we went to Qutub Minar, and the Baha'i Lotus Temple, and India Gate. We enjoyed those places." L. Gunavathi



2013 Summer Camps for Aikiyam School children

Last October we had the idea that we would like to send both our seventh and eighth standard students on the annual Nainital trip. This would be a transitional year, and from 2014 onwards, we would send only the seventh grade students. We wanted to make this change so that when the seventh standard children returned from Nainital they would be with us for another year. We believe the other children in school will benefit from hearing from their older classmates about their experiences. It is planned that the students design for each grade level, starting from creche, a way to communicate their experience through poems, songs, stories, small sketches, or presentations. We will create follow-up projects based on their trip to help them explore more deeply and meaningfully their experiences. In this way, we believe all the Aikiyam children, as well as teachers, will benefit.

Because of several generous donations specifically for the childrens' camps we were able to do it. A total of 30 students, along with 5 chaperones, travelled north to see some historical sights in Agra, the Taj Mahal, and Agra Fort, and in Delhi the Baha'i Lotus Temple and Qutub Minar. Then they went to Nainital to the Himalaya Centre of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Delhi) for a week and enjoyed activities such as trekking and rock-climbing.

And for the first time our sixth grade students went to Auroville's Nature Camp. One sixth grader, V. Kalaivizhi, wrote, "I loved my summer camp so much because I enjoyed trekking, swimming in the cold lake, dancing, singing, and a lot of other fun things." Another student, C. Ragavi, commented on the local fauna, "In Kodaikanal camp I was very happy. If someone asks, the first thing that comes to my mind is footprints of some animals which walked before us, and leeches."

We hope you'll enjoy the happy scenes from their adventures, as much as we have.

The children at the Auroville Nature Camp located in Kavunji among the hills of Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu



INDIAN OCEAN

Lanka

©email

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.

Meera, Art Therapy Intern, report

From September 2012 through February 2013 Meera Wilkening was with us for an internship as part of her Inclusive Education / Art Therapy studies at the Catholic University in Freiburg, Germany. Meera says, "My decision to come to Aikiyam School and to work with Tia Pleiman was influenced by my interest in her work as also in the creative work with Tamil children." In the six months of Meera's internship she had the chance to experience very practical ways to use art as a creative medium in the classroom, and in the Play of Painting studio, working with children from creche up to 8th standard. Following are a few excerpts from her report of her experiences and observations.

"In the first project with the younger children (creche, lower kindergarten, and first standard) the children discovered different colors by creating a paper rainbow: tearing, coloring, and gluing paper. Various senses were activated and the children learned new English words.

In the 2nd standard the children already had better English language skills and the communication was a lot easier. The lesson focused on peace-building skills, creative expression, communication, empathy, respect and connecting with each other. Working in small groups, the children created 'scribble-art'. They had to wait for their turn, learn to be patient, and share the colored crayons. The objective was to develop the connectivity between the children who had to work together in twos to make a sketch of each other's hands. Each child had to cut, color and design their hand so collectively the hands represented every child's part in the group. After each child made two or three hands we glued them all together with the title, 'We are all connected'.

With the third standard students, the children had to use their imagination and had to focus on themselves. Meditation and music were used and the children experienced very holistic art. One project included closing their eyes, and meditating on a 'dream'. They then were able to express their dream in a painting and after, in a story they wrote. Their English and creativity improved with each activity.

The children from 3rd to 5th standard and the students of the Supportive Learning class came once a week to the Play of Painting studio where they had the opportunity to paint freely and without any judgment or interference. Many paintings of the children showed their interest for the others by creating almost identical copies of another's painting. They had to learn to be

patient, quiet, creative and to demonstrate personal responsibility. When the students returned from lunch and were restless each child had to sit in front of their painting and close their eyes for a couple of minutes. One by one they were called to start painting. I observed that if they remained silent, huge progress was made concerning the quality of the child's creative process and ability to focus.

The three boys in the Supportive Learning class are considerably below and behind the level of their classmates in reading and writing, which makes it difficult for them to follow the other subjects. From what I observed there are still many teachers who do not understand and appreciate the Supportive Learning classroom. I think it is important for the teachers, parents and students to understand that children learn differently and have different capabilities. Some students need specific methods and materials to learn, and more individualized attention. That is exactly the purpose of the Supportive Learning class.

When I started this internship I was very motivated to learn new methods and use new tools in this very different environment. My experience in the field of art-therapy was only based on my studies and a weekly internship in Germany. The methods I learned theoretically, from books or workshops are very useful, but to use them practically is very difficult without the experience. Tia showed me how to include art in education, how to practice art-therapy in a classroom with about 20 children that supports each child's individual development. My experience working with Anbu in the Supportive Learning class was not less important. I learned a lot from Anbu and the three older boys; they are all very open minded and welcoming. The methods used in the Supportive Learning class are modern, creative and I gained a lot of inspiration. My studies are called 'Inclusive Education'. I personally always missed the educational tools. That is why I am really happy, that I had the opportunity to come to Aikiyam and to work with these wonderful children and great teachers. I came here for this internship to deepen my professional experience, but in the end, also my personal experience became and continues to become enriched by the children and the staff of Aikiyam."

