

Vanakkam to all our Aikiyam friends,

The Aikiyam team is ready with fresh smelling textbooks, notebooks and joyful hearts to receive the children for the 2011-12 academic year. Some of our teachers were busy during this hot summer break to make our new library a more welcoming and child-friendly place. They helped the librarian sort the books according to age group and reading-level, colour-coded the bindings, and then arranged them nicely on the shelves. The support group has also been busy encouraging the work of renovating the kitchen and creating for our little ones a new playground under the beautiful banyan tree next to the kindergarten building. Certainly the children will start the year with lots of happy surprises. This year Aikiyam School administration received very many applications from the village parents to admit their children in Aikiyam. My sincere thanks to you all for continuing to show an interest in the progress of these village children and being with them through the dedicated work of the entire Aikiyam team of teachers, staff and support group members. Aum, Shankar (Principal)

A New Playground

About one year ago some of the kindergarten teachers, the principal and members of the Aikiyam School Support Group began 'dreaming' of a designated place for the little ones to play, explore, create, and be free ... a space all their own. We consulted Stacy, who had originally set up our Special Needs Program and had some experience in developing play areas for young children. As luck would have it, Stacy was working on another project with architect Shama, who also had some experience in setting up play areas, and who said she'd do the work at no cost; we only had to have funds for the materials and labour. After quite a few planning sessions the first on-site construction began in mid-April. In the pictures you'll see the 'tunnel of wonder'



Splash pools (left) and story-telling platform (right)

which will incorporate recycled materials chosen especially for tactile and auditory qualities. Then there's the 'chitterchatter round' where the children and their teachers can share stories and have performances. The splash pool will no doubt be very popular. And even the paths will be made of various materials to tickle the imagination.



Inviting tunnel adventure





Gathered up on top of the mountain

Aikiyam students go to camp in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu

This year Aikiyam sent its seventeen 7th graders to the Auroville 'Nature Camp' at Kavunji, Kodaikanal. The camp organizers mixed all Auroville and Auroville Outreach school children together and divided them into 3 groups under teams of camp leaders. Each group stayed at Kavunji for 8 days and nights and participated in a variety of activities. This educational activity brought together the children of Auroville and those of its surrounding villages for a collective experience of nature in the forest. Each camp offered a range of experiences designed to introduce the children to the flora and fauna of the area, to increase their environmental awareness, to awaken the spirit of adventure through treks and climbs, and to deepen their relation to and appreciation of nature. For many children, this was the first time apart from their families, and away on an adventure with others of their age group.



Taking a rest from a long trek



The 8th graders take a trip up North

I am Swapna [pictured with students], a Social Science teacher at Aikiyam school. This was my first time to visit the Nainital camp in the North of India. Actually it was a wonderful experience for me with our 8th graders. For some of the children, it was their first long-term outing experience away from home. They eagerly waited to see the train pass through the tunnels and they had fun when they were inside the tunnels by shouting. They helped each other to lift their bags. We all had a good time in Nainital. The climatic condition was new for them so it took some time to get used to it; they all enjoyed walking in the chilly weather. Everything was new for them like the North Indian food, the different way the local people dressed, and the language they spoke. After a while some of our students learnt some Hindi words from the Delhi school children and they in turn learnt some Tamil words. I felt like some kind of exchange took place in learning between students of two cultures, and English was the medium for sharing these languages. Our students also learnt about the normal peoples' life by observing their life struggles for basic needs like food, water and other things, which is not unlike their own background. For some children it was a new experience to purchase things on their own in the absence of their parents and so they came to better understand the value of money and its difficulties. The Metro train system was totally new for me as well as the students; it was exciting and challenging. They were the happiest moments for all, each and every minute we spent there.



The students were given a tour around the parliament building that included a detailed explanation of what happens there, so that they experienced a direct sense of how their country is governed.



Ganesh

First when we start to travel we were excited and in the train station we saw different people and in the train in Chennai people shout "tea, coffee" and in Delhi they shout "chaya". At Agra in the morning we went to Taj Mahal and the security there is so tight. In Delhi we took the metro train many times, which was exciting. On the last day in Nainital we went to Naina Peak and people there were such jolly types and we enjoyed the 7 days. After Nainital we stayed in the Delhi Ashram and from there we went to parliament and many places and then we returned to Chennai. I think I want to go there again. They were enjoyable days, even though there were many problems.



MISSION STATEMENT OF AIKIYAM SCHOOL (NCBS)

Aikiyam School strives to nurture and prepare Tamil village children for life in our rapidly changing world, while maintaining contact with their Tamil language and cultural heritage, through the principles of Integral Education established by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Founder of Auroville, and the English medium CBSE curriculum.

Anandh

On April 25th we moved from here to Delhi for education trip. First we went to Agra and saw the Taj Mahal and the teachers told us that Shahjahan built it as a tomb for Mumtaz. Then we went to Red Fort and were amazed because it's very big. In Nainital we went trekking and did other things we enjoyed. After 7 days we returned to Delhi and visited parliament and saw the inside rooms of Lok Sabha, Raja Sabha, and the central place. We have a short meeting with Lok Sabha director and also we take picture with him. When I see any news about parliament I think about that.



Priya

I am so happy on the trip to Delhi and Nainital and I learn many things like rock climbing, river crossing and we went to Taj Mahal. In Delhi we stay in Sri Aurobindo Ashram and one day we go to shopping there and we brought sarees, dresses etc. And coming back in the train we are enjoying being with our friends.

Machagandhi

In Agra we took a room and went to Taj Mahal. It was interesting because it was silent, clean and beautiful. Kamala teacher told the story how Shahjahan married Mumtaj. In Nainital when I went to night trekking it was most interesting. Someone told here will be dangerous animals. It made me scared the first time. When I went trekking for 16km it was interesting because I never did that before. Rock climbing was easy, just jumping and walking, and river crossing was easy. In Delhi we went to parliament and I was very happy about that.



Sathishkumar

On April 25th afternoon 3:00 we moved from school to Chennai Railway Station. We started the train journey at 10.00pm. Two nights and one day was a very good and long trip. We visited the Taj Mahal and Red Fort in Agra and then we went to Nainital. In Nainital we did exercise every morning. We did rock climbing and river crossing. We passed 7 days very happy. Then we took train and reached Delhi Ashram. Daily we saw airplanes a short distance away. We visited parliament and took a group photo. We enjoyed the metro train and shopping place.





At Aikiyam School we understand that ultimately everything is a grace, and our trust in receiving what is needed to daily offer the children a quality education is great. We know very well from years of experience that we're able to continue our work because of donations received from you, our friends, past and current volunteers, Auroville International Centres from around the world, as well as fellow Aurovilians. By now you likely know that Aikiyam School receives about 50% of its annual running budget from Auroville via the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIER). Generally, the other half flows together through you. On a monthly basis we need an additional Rs. 800 (€13; \$18) per child to run

the school. We just wanted to write a few lines to say we are incredibly grateful for this experience, for the surrender and trust that's required of us, to do our work with the assurance that what is needed will come. If you wish to make a donation you can send it through the Auroville International Centre in your country, or send a cheque made payable to "Auroville Unity Fund", Town Hall, Auroville, 605101, Tamil Nadu, INDIA. Please be sure to write in the memo or indicate clearly: "for Aikiyam School".

Kitchen renovation



The work is done with precision

for the very generous specified donation of a long-time well-wisher of Aikiyam School. The next biggest challenge has been the timing. Ideally the work would be done, or just about, before the students return to class at the beginning of July. Renovation began around mid-April, even though we had tried for the first of the month. The initial stage of any renovation, of course, is destruction, and what a noise that made! By now the reconstruction phase is in full swing and the work more quiet. We hope you will share in our excitement with these photos ... and imagine the children singing, dancing and exploring their inner-self in this new space.

You may remember that we finished our new kitchen in 2008. The beautiful airy dining space, which is enjoyed for most of the year, gets really wet when we have rain and wind at the same time. After discussing the matter with our architect, we decided that the solution for keeping dry was to lower the roof and increase the overhang. As it was not possible to increase the overhang of the existing sheet-metal roof, we decided to make a cement roof, and use the old roofing material for a second floor. This would provide a perfect place where performing arts such as drama, dance, and musical-instrument playing, as well as Awareness Through the Body sessions could be offered. And so we took the plunge, which could not have happened if it had not been



The concrete was poured in 1 day

Newsletter Distribution Change

We had an interesting insight during the newsletter. It occurred to us that our material that required 'snail mail' posting are pleased to share our good news with started to consider that maybe it's a good conscious and technologically savvy. newsletter we plan to distribute it primarily each of you we need and want to receive step is easy ... simply send an email to the subject line write "Email Newsletter printed issue, please just let us know and



process of distributing the February 2011 default distribution relied on printed to places all over the world. While we all of you through this medium we time to be more environmentally Starting with the October 2011 through email. This then means that for your current email address. The next akiyamschool@auroville.org.in and in Distribution". If you just have to have a we'll send one along in the post.