

### Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends

Aikiyam at this time of the year is always busy, and as usual we have some wonderful volunteers. Teachers have been meeting parents and sharing their programmes and the children's progress. Students are enjoying their lessons, vocational classes and sports. We are busy upgrading the campus with new class rooms. Aikiyam is also concentrating on upgrading our class and special needs teachers with the help of Auroville teacher mentors. We just wrapped up the first term, and second term will be full of classroom projects, and exhibitions in addition to the regular lessons.

With gratitude for your continuing support.  
Aum...Shankar



Shankar with 4th grade

### Focus on Grades Five to Eight

Until the fourth grade, students study most subjects with their class teachers. From the fifth grade onwards they go to a specialized teacher for each subject.

When our teachers compare Aikiyam to other schools, they all appreciate the smaller classes, the activity-based learning, the field trips, and the supportive learning available for those who need it. During the upcoming school break science teacher, Radhakrishnan is looking forward to taking the 8th grade students to Periyar Dam to see how water is used for making hydroelectricity, and to study the flora and fauna there. Arulmozhi, our Tamil teacher enjoyed taking her 5th and 6th grade students on a trip to see 3 Chola temples in the Thanjavur area, accompanied by 3 other teachers and Shankar as the tour guide. Several teachers have spoken about how much fun the children had bringing sand and plants into the classroom to recreate a forest. Another teacher expressed appreciation for the way Aikiyam children are encouraged to speak frankly to the teachers about their difficulties, and the concern that the school has about the general health of each student.



Teachers Grades 5 to 8

left to right: Poonam – Hindi, Anandi – Social Science, Sathiya– English, Anbu – Supportive Learning, Vanitha – Math, Arulmozhi – Tamil, Radhakrishnan – Science, Rabindra- Hindi

**Rajalakshmi**, a student in 8th grade writes:

My school name is Aikiyam. It's a Central Board of Secondary Education (C.B.S.E.) school. This is the best school for us. I love my school because we have many activities here apart from our subjects. We have options like Dance, Music, Carpentry, Art Class, Tailoring, Embroidery, Swimming and Clay Work.



Rajalakshmi

Our teachers are very kind and friendly. We understand clearly what they teach to us. We have Tamil, English, Maths, Science, Social Science, Hindi and Computer as our subjects. We have a library in our school. Once in a week we go along with our class teacher to take books. We take one for English and one for Tamil. We also go during our lunch break. I am so blessed to be part of my school.

We also have sports after school, where we play different kinds of games. We all enjoy it very much. My favourite games are volley ball and basket ball. I also like relay race and high jump. I am so lucky to be here in my school.

The shape of our school building is very different from other school buildings. Anyone who visits our school would admire it. I love it too! My school is very special for me.

And **Arun** who is also in the 8th grade says:

Science is my favourite class, because the concepts are new and interesting. It's not related only with our lives but also with the lives of animals and plants. Science can do lots of things. We can research and invent many things.

Science is a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe.



*Arun and friends discuss hydraulics project*

Science that deals with both plants and animals is called biology. By learning science, we can become a scientist and a research scholar. Science is related to everything that exists on earth. It's a unique subject. I love my science class.

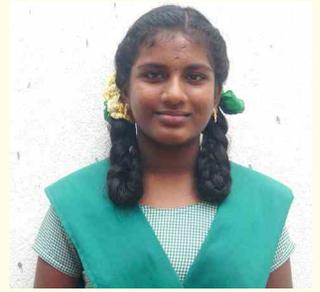
Another 8th grader, **Hemavati** hopes one day to become an I.A.S. Officer. She writes:

My aim is to become an I.A.S. officer. I.A.S. stands for Indian Administrative Service. I would like to become an I.A.S. officer because I would like to do good things to people.

I need to work very hard in order to become an I.A.S. officer. There are lots of things required for this. First, I need to prepare well, then need to pass the exam. If I pass in this examination, I would get the job.

An I.A.S. officer should face a lot of problems and challenges. It's not an easy job. One should have a good administrative power and a wide knowledge about everything to be an I.A.S. officer.

I am personally attracted to it because I would like to serve my people and do good things to them, through this I.A.S. job.



*Hemavati*

## Sports and Swimming

Swimming is an important part of the curriculum at Aikiyam, and each child from Lower Kindergarten (LKg) to 8th grade has at least one hour per week of swimming. We have a small pool on campus for the younger children, while those in grades 6, 7, and 8 go to La Piscine, the 25 metre pool at the New Creation Sports Complex.

**Savitri**, who runs the Sports and Swimming Program at New Creation Sports Complex writes:

The sports program for Aikiyam School was established in 1992; it takes place every school day from

4-5pm; 100 children from the surrounding villages of Auroville attend. They are the 4th to 8th grade students in Aikiyam School.

All the major sports activities such as basketball, volleyball, running, swimming and athletics are practiced.

In house competitions (Aurolympics) take place on a yearly basis, comprising an athletic season (jumps, running, shot put) and a team season (basketball, volleyball, running, swimming). A celebration at the end of the school year is also part of Aurolympics, when awards and sweets are handed out to all the participants.



The main great progress and innovation has been the swimming program in the 25m swimming pool; students from 6th to 8th grades are able to develop their swimming skills, even the girls, which is unique in rural India. It's been wonderful to see the Aikiyam school girls adopt swimming suits and fearlessly jump into the water. The swimming program, which has been happening since 2004, has definitely pioneered a novel approach to sports in this region

Goals for next year:  
To teach 'life saving' at the swimming pool, thereby enabling students to know how to save lives and help others. This activity was started at the beginning of 2015 school year and the students have so far enjoyed it a lot.



*At la piscine with Savitri*

**Thanajayan** is the swimming instructor at the small pool. He explains that in Lower Kindergarten (LKg) the idea is for the child to get used to the water and to overcome his or her fear of water, which has been instilled by the parents. These children have never been taken by their parents to the ocean or to a pond or river. In the crèche they proceed very

slowly so the child gets used to water, touching and feeling the water. Later they learn to swim. For LKg he is assisted by class teachers. For the older children this is not necessary because they all know how to swim. They do exercises such as breathing and blowing, lap stretching, leg stretching, and frog movement.



*The little ones learn the basics with Thanajayan*

For the past several years we have had one or two volunteers from the German Weltwaerts Program, who stayed with us for a full year. **Kaya Goettker** who recently left us, after completing a year at Aikiyam, writes:

I worked one year as an assistant teacher in the 4th grade and really enjoyed each day being in Aikiyam school together with all the teachers and the students. I still remember my first day, when I entered my classroom and 25 children were smiling at me and gave me immediately the feeling of being a part of the big Aikiyam family. Being together with these children was a huge chance for me to understand more and more about a completely different culture.



*Kaya with students*

Although I just worked as a volunteer, the school (especially the principal and my class teacher) gave me a lot of opportunities to develop myself. I helped teaching in English, Math, Science and Social Science.

After a while I concentrated on teaching through games or any other physical activities, because I recognized how it increased the children's interest in learning, as well as their motivation and enthusiasm. I prepared different kinds of games for this reason, games for starting the lesson to get the children's attention, games for introducing new topics (e.g. partner-memory with adjectives), focussing on certain

problems (running dictation) or just for fun and relaxing. At least once a week we tried to play a game, which supports the team spirit. We were also eating together once in a month, where everybody brought food for sharing with the others.

When I started teaching in Aikiyam all the student were sitting separately, divided into boys and girls. Now after one year working on this 'problem' (sometimes students refused to work with the opposite sex) through games and a buddy-system (always one girl and one boy are sitting together and working as partners) the students from my class mingle during class and mostly at break time as well.

At this point I tried to work with the teachers, because I wanted to show them that they are the role-models for the students and that they may have to change first themselves before teaching new principles.

At snack time all the teachers sit separately as well. All male teachers sit at one table and all female teachers at the other. Although most of the teachers recognized this and try avoiding sex separation in their classroom, they are helpless with their own working colleagues. So some of the teachers and I started a snack duty, where every day another teacher would bring some special snacks for everyone. After a while more and more teachers came and joined the 'special snacks-table' until all the teachers were sitting together. This was a really nice moment for me to see that small steps can bring a huge result.

During my time at Aikiyam School, I have gained a lot of experiences and for this I really want to thank and appreciate the whole staff. It was a wonderful year!

### **Financial Matters and Appeal for Donations**

When Auroville began, the Mother said that it should provide the villagers with education, employment, and healthcare. As the villagers were very poor, health care and education would be offered free of charge. This ethos of providing free education for village children lasted for a very long time, and when New Creation School began in the early 1980's people were still poor and education was free.

Since that time much has changed in the villages and in India, and many people from the villages are earning decent incomes, and can afford to pay for the education of their children. Therefore, for the past few years, we have been asking parents to pay for their children's books, and to make a voluntary contribution as well. Between April 1 2014 and March 31 2015, we received Rs304,000. from students, about half of which was for books. We intend, over the next two or three years, to increase the student contribution to Rs500 per child per month and to make it compulsory for students, who can afford to pay. As our principal and many of our teachers are from Kulapalayam, we know which students genuinely cannot pay, and we will cover them. And we will continue to accept new students who cannot pay as well as those who can.

This does not mean that we will not continue to depend heavily on donations. Last year it cost us Rs4,825,000 (€64,747) to run the school, and we only received Rs2,763,000 (€37,089) from Auroville. We have been told, by Auroville's Budget Coordination Committee (BCC), that this amount will be gradually reduced over the next few years because of Auroville's financial difficulties.

The cost of an Aikiyam education is higher than that of most other schools in the area, mainly because we have a better teacher - student ratio, smaller classes, and teachers who provide supportive learning for those who need extra help. We have a number of computers for our students, which require maintenance, and we offer a number of activities such as carpentry, tailoring, clay work, arts and crafts, dance, music, sports and swimming. Some of these activities use a lot of materials. We also provide a nutritious lunch and 2 snacks every day, and we make several field trips during the year. We know that providing these extras is well worth it. Our students are the village leaders of tomorrow, with whom we will be co-creating Auroville and its surroundings. We need neighbours who can think creatively to work with us, and the kind of education that Aikiyam provides will contribute to this.

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/](http://auroville.com/donations/) and following the instructions.

**Aikiyam School, New Creation, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, INDIA. e-mail: [assg@auroville.org.in](mailto:assg@auroville.org.in);**  
**ph: +91 (413)-2622358 or +91 (0)8940193339;**  
**Our newsletters from 2006 onwards can be read online at:**  
**<http://aikiyamschool.wix.com/bilingualschool>**