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FILMING PROJECT: "A NEW WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN"

The quiet streets of Annai Nagar resound these weeks with the sounds of "Silence, sound, camera, action" as the 6th to 8th standard students take on film production roles and complete the final stage of a six-month leadership and film-making program which has culminated with each of the children making their own 2 minute film on a societal issue they feel passionate about and a new world they want to create.

This program is a co-creation between Thamarai, Udhayam and Yatra Arts centres. It has been funded through the Auroville 50th fund and has supported children and youth to see themselves as agents of change in their own communities.

This story began in 2012 when Dr. Monica Sharma, former director of leadership and capacity development with the United Nations, started coming to Auroville to offer Stewardship for New Emergence, a leadership and capacity development program, that supports participants to get in touch

with their innate qualities, what they really care about and how to solve problems with value-based solutions for a change. Both the Yatra and Thamarai teams have had continual training with Monica ever since, and 6 months ago they shared the program with children who responded enthusiastically to it.

The children now embrace what they each stand for and are designing projects such as waste and water management, the development of sports activities, and fostering peace and unity in their village. This was followed by weekly classes on film production, skillfully guided by Srinu and the Yatra Arts Foundation team, that started from the history of film, to understanding how films are created and the techniques to script, shoot and record their own films.

The program integrates children of different castes from the three villages of Annai Nagar, Kottakurai and Kulapayalam. The children have grown in capacity, confidence and skill, and now ●●●

EDITORS' NOTE

Welcome to first edition of Thamarai's thrice yearly newsletter. We spent 2018 enhancing leadership and education in Annai Nagar, by providing continual training to village youth who support and facilitate the 60 children of our after-school. The playgroup has been embellished by early child-care experienced volunteer, Manuel, and the health education program graduated 89 women, 4 of whom have gone on to facilitate the program to other groups. With establishments of new projects like development of sports ground in Annai Nagar and a proposed after-school centre in Edayanchavadi, to be run by former Thamarai students. We look forward to what unfolds in 2019 and hope you enjoy reading this newsletter, especially the children's articles!

-Bridget & Muthukumari

THAMARAI TELEGRAPH

On February 10th, we conducted a short-trip to the Faith Farm, an animal farm of Ashram, and Usudu Lake for Grade 1-4th after-school children.

With help of Manuel and his friends Vanaver Caravan, the playgroup and after-school children were introduced to a beautiful musical experience in the month of January. Thamarai aims on developing programs to enhance children's concentration levels through music with help of Gundolf, a learned musician from Auroville, in coming months.

We would like to congratulate two facilitators of our after-school, Devaki who aced an internship in Aarupadai Veedu Medical College at Hospital Pondy for 6 months as a Renal Nurse and Hema for getting her first job and starting on her career ladder.

Our after-school children had an opportunity to be part of two Auroville events conducted at Youth Centre -Youth Centre Fair and Craft Mela. Experiencing new social environment and learning new art forms, our children cannot wait for next year!

Tracy Evans from Wales graced us with a lively drama session and a place during the 'Development through Drama' training program for educators in Auroville.

●●● understand that what goes on behind the film screen can be a lengthy and rigorous process. The children have been supported to take the necessary steps for project implementation, to reflect on the experience and to dream about the greatest impact that they can make.

What has changed because of this program?
The children have learned the skill



of film production, value-based project design and how to speak up for change. They have grown in confidence and resourcefulness. Caste and gender barriers have been subtly worked on as friendships blossomed. Now the children prepare to present their films in a carnival atmosphere in the village ground in early March so parents and neighbours also become part of this adventure!

-Bridget

CREATING CHANGE IN VILLAGE WASTE MANAGEMENT

To end the year perfectly and begin the new year with cleanliness and healthy living, one of the facilitators of Thamarai, Jagadeshwari, organised a Clean-Up Drive in Annai Nagar on December 31st, 2018.

Thamarai children, facilitators and women of the village made the event a big hit by their efforts and presence. Annai Nagar is one of the surrounding villages around Auroville, and where our current after-school is located. With a population of around 1700 people only, the village is small but lacks the basic amenities and hygiene facilities that a community needs. Jagadeshwari during the leadership and capacity development program training took up Waste Management as her project, as she feels this is what the village largely needs. The clean-up drive was her

first step towards spreading awareness about waste management. She and other facilitators have been actively educating the children on waste management segregation. Some of the children have also taken Waste Management as their projects in the program. The students have made creative sign boards that states how the waste needs to be segregated.



Jagdeswari and the Women's group have also approached the municipality requesting a waste separation and collection service.

-Mitali

CHILDREN ON TEMPLE RUN!

Every year, playgroup children are taken out on several trips to experience a different surrounding and practically implement all the social skills that we teach them during the year. On their first trip this year, the children were taken to temples in Panchavadi and Poothurai.



As confused as they can be, their faces looked curious to step outside of the school boundaries, enter the bus and explore, not so far, but different environment, by themselves. At the age of 2-3 years, the children of the playgroup have barely travelled outside their villages, and definitely not without their parents. Every year, we aim on bringing these children to different surroundings so that they can actually practice the social skills that are taught to them in the playgroup. This year's academic trip was to a Hanuman temple in Panchavadi and a Shiva Temple in Poothurai. These villages are at around 20 kilometres distance from the centre of Auroville.



Even though, the culture and traditions are something they experience everyday, it was a great learning experience for them and a surprisingly one for us as we saw our children quietly waiting in queue for their turn to move in. During our school hours, we would train our children with all such social, basic skills, boundaries and manners, and we have realised taking children outside in the daily environment make them understand the necessity of behaving in such manners, and the same time be practice on-ground what they learn. During one of the classes, our children also learnt to read and follow the traffic signals and were made aware of the traffic rules. Even though guided by us, it was fascinating to see how they took responsibility and looked curiously during crossing the roads.

Now, the children are looking forward to another one, and so are we, the teachers and volunteers. Even though, playgroup is a challenging task, such satisfaction, curiosity and excitement to explore more keeps us motivated everyday!

-Malliga

PORTRAIT



My name is Inès and I am 20 years old. I came to Auroville through a one-year volunteer abroad french program, Civil Services.

In Thamarai, I volunteer in an after-school program and design, strategise and develop visual communication content for social media, brochures and reports.

My experience in Thamarai was difficult in the beginning, as the system of education is so different, I went through many moments of frustration. But as time passed, I understood the vision of Thamarai and was inspired by Bridget and the team's efforts. It helped me to change my mindset and work differently.

What I really like to do is plan educative programs with the children and incorporate it English, cultural knowledge and games. Thamarai is a multicultural treasure, and I am grateful that while I contribute, I learn something new everyday.

After Auroville, I wish to continue my studies and maybe later be involved in similar projects like Thamarai in other parts of the world.



STUDENTS' CORNER

SUPPLEMENT OF SPECIAL EDITION

MY FIRST STEP TOWARDS TEACHING



I have always loved paperwork. Any Thamarai function, I would always take up a paper and would make origami for decoration. One day, Chloe asked me to teach origami in Thamarai. Now, every Fridays, I take origami classes for Thamarai children. I learnt origami little by little on internet and through books. Paula, our art teacher in Thamarai, gave me a book on Origami, which helped me learn more techniques and gave me new ideas. Chloe bought origami papers for me to take classes for the children. I feel very good and happy to teach to the children. I love to teach to make peacocks and rabbits in the class. I hope to learn more craft and art activities and teach the children all that I have learnt.

-Dinesh, Grade 7

BEATS, MOVES AND STICKS!



I have always liked dancing, and of all, I love Stick dance and Odissi dance the most. Stick dance is a Tamil Nadu folk dance. In this dance, each one has two sticks in their hands and we dance on a rhythm. I like this dance, because it lets me dance with all my friends. Stick dance has lot of different steps, which is fun. We dance in circle, rectangle formations, and we sing along with it. I really feel happy and energetic after practicing this dance. Annand Sir and Madhu Sir come every Tuesday at 7:30pm to teach us Stick dance. We are around 20 children who take these classes every week. I look forward to the dance class because it is really fun.

-Sona Satish Kumar, Grade 6

WHY I LIKE THAMARAI



I like thamarai because here I am learning Stick Dance, Silambam Dance, English, Tamil, Computers, Sports, and we also have a library. I like circle time very much which has sharing and games, and Thamarai also celebrates the festivals. I like all Annas and Akkas (elder brothers and sisters in Tamil) here because they will explain me always without scolding and beating.

-Vibhishnan, Grade 5

A DAY IN THAMARAI



Thamarai has been a place for me where I have learnt lot of new things. I study slowly in Thamarai but when I go home, I am able to read very well even by myself. I like many activities and I love to do them and Thamarai lets me showcase it. I have learnt so many things, for example, to speak in English. But because I know that I know only a little, I asked to Bridget for extra English classes. She made sure we have more English classes, and now we learn and practice English regularly. With English, we have so many other extra classes like Stick Dance, Odissi dance, Yoga, Origami, Computer classes, Silambam, etc. Some of my favourites are Odissi dance and Silambam. Odissi is an Indian folk dance. In my village or in my school, there are no Odissi classes and Thamarai gave us the opportunity to learn this dance form. My first class was very difficult and very painful, but later the other classes became very easy and fun. Silambam, my other favourite activity, is an ancient martial arts, especially practised in my state. Even though I feel tired, I am excited to wake up early and attend this class.

-Nithish, Grade 8

FILMS FOR A CHANGE

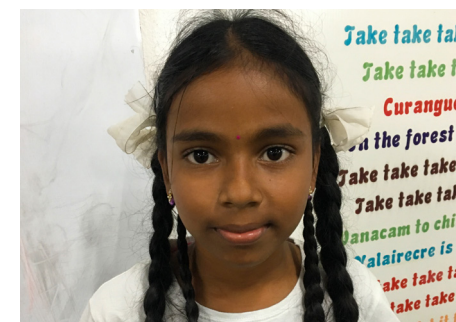


This is the first time ever that I took a film-class. This class is very different and interesting at the same time very important. Every Tuesday from 5-6pm Srinu Anna and the Yatra Arts Foundation team taught from the history of filming to how to use all the cameras, write, shoot and edit. We wrote on topics like waste management, save electricity, save water, save forest and

importance of sports. We are 13 students in the class. It is fun because I get to do it with my friends from Thamarai. I really like and enjoy the film class.

-Prithviraj, Grade 6

ALL THE THINGS THAT I GET TO LEARN!



My name is Harini and I am in sixth standard. I keep Thamarai always clean and dispose the waste by

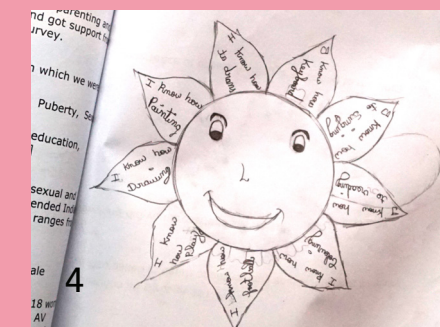
segregating it into degradable and non-degradable waste. How to manage waste is what we have learnt and practice in Thamarai. One day from Thamarai, we gathered with my friends and families, relatives, village people and all together we did village cleaning. It was a wonderful moment and I enjoyed a lot.

I like Thamarai very much and I like Thamarai facilitators! We have Tamil classes and English classes and many more. If I do not understand, the facilitators will teach me through easy ways. We also have classes like Stick dance, Odissi dance and Silambam. I like Stick dance particularly because of the songs on which we dance along.

-Harini, Grade 6

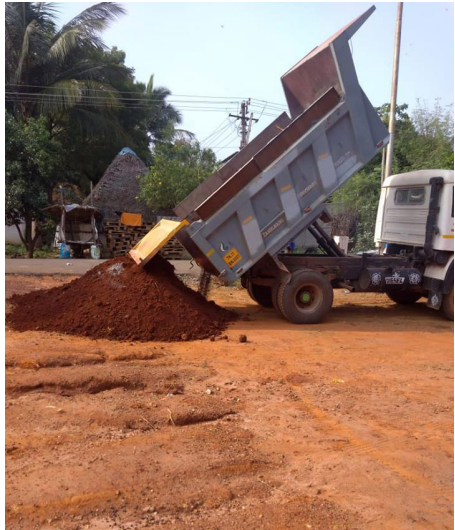
THAMARAI'S ART GALLERY

1. Hemavi's beautiful version of Thamarai (lotus flower in Tamil).
2. Vignesh's painting of a scenery, inspired from the book he was reading in after-school.
3. Kaivya and her rainbow art. A mix of reality and imagination.
4. Ines, the French volunteer, conducted an art activity where each child drew a flower and were asked to fill each petal with their wonderful qualities.



A NEW YEAR OF NEW PRO-
JECTS: SPORTS GROUND

Each Saturday evening, six Thamarai children and a number of village youth will be found gathered around a table with maps, drawings and budget sheets eagerly planning for their new sports ground. For many years a big



open piece of Auroville land within Annai Nagar village has been used by village youth and children to play on. In 2018, Thamarai applied to Auroville Town Development Council for stewardship of this land for the development of a sports ground for the village. Six months later funding was secured with Student Partners of Kedge Business School, Bordeaux, France,

and the first step of upgrading the ground has begun. In total, 95 lorry loads of Matrimandir soil has been brought to fill up the ground and level it to the road. The children and youth are now busy getting quotations from the local welders and sports suppliers to make cricket practice pitch, goal posts, badminton and volleyball courts and sourcing options for fencing. The project started with the children's enthusiasm for sports and a number of children picking up the topic of well-being through sports development as their projects during their leadership training. We hope to have the new ground up and running by April. After completion, daily program of sports training will be mentored by village and Auroville youth. For now, it's sleeves rolled up.

-Bridget

ART OF CONCENTRATION

Since November 2018, Manuel, a Spanish volunteer, experienced in early child-care education, started a Concentration Program in Thamarai playgroup and after-school. In talks with him, he shares a brief overview about the program, progress, experiences and the challenges.

When asked if the need of this program was approached after he noticed a children's lack of ability to concentrate, Manuel stated that every child needs a practice and a process to improve their concentration. He wouldn't categorize it into a setback, as each child has different level depending on the situation, the activity, subjects or even on the facilitators. Not having a statistical mode of testing their concentration level, Manuel's goal when he started the program in November was to provide a platform where children would enjoy and have fun while improving their concentration and acquiring

the ability to focus for longer. "Initially the program was designed for the children who evidently had a trouble concentrating during the class, but it is important for each and every child to work on his concentration as it will always help them to reach a level higher", says Manuel. Currently, the concentration class is conducted every Saturday for an hour, tools based on meditation, drama, music, activities through his teaching experiences and some from the Awareness Through Body workshop, which he is currently learning in Auroville. "The initial idea was to teach in small groups



but it is quite a challenge, as this is a much bigger group with different levels and abilities. But due to lack of space, time and facilitators, we decided to break the group in two", answers Manuel, on the challenges that comes along while facilitating the program. He aims on introducing these activities to children while training the facilitators how to design and conduct the classes to keep the program sustainable.

-Mitali

BRINGING BACK THE TRADITIONAL HEALING TRADITIONS AND
REMEDIES FOR HEALTHY LIVES



In today's time, if we compare our lives to ones we lived a decade ago, we can easily notice tremendous difference, changes that occurred due to the pollution of air, water, food, soil, and so on. Adding to the list, technology has made human's into an instrument, barely moving, much less exercising. Being part of health programs past 12 years, I noticed the change in living practices and how the traditional remedies once largely used are now completely replaced by medical support from Hospitals and Clinics.



Even though such solutions are practical and effective at present, I felt the need to educate the villages by bringing a system change and educating them on the lost traditions that are actually much

healthy and sustainable. In past years, the programs designed mainly focussed on empowering women and changing their lifestyles for their own betterment. Many women go through many physical complications due to work load and psychological complications due to stress at home, like partner's alcohol addiction, which unfortunately is very commonly seen. To overcome these issues, our program helped women realise the benefits of healthy living and how few minutes of Yoga a day can help them improve their mental and physical health.

For the past year, we focussed on the health of women workers in Auroville units and in the villages. This coming year, we aim on focusing and designing a program for government school children and some of the Auroville Outreach schools. As conducting these programs in previous years with children helped us realise even better how starting and making this as a habit since an early age can be a huge step towards change.

-Muthukumari

PORTRAIT



My name is Savithri, 24 years old, and I am from Edanyanchadi village. I am a facilitator in Thamarai after-school since 5 years.

My thamarai journey started as a student, so if there's any other place than my home that I've spent most of my life, it is Thamarai. As a student, I learnt and explored so many things from English, Drama, Singing, Karate, leadership programs to my most favourite, classical dance classes.

Being provided with all these activities, I could see myself as a multi-talented person. So, now my dream is to teach and share what I have learnt in my childhood. Being a facilitator is so rewarding, because as I teach, I learn something new everyday. The leadership programs made me realise that I stand on the values of equality, and Thamarai has been the only place where I have experienced equality, and I am very proud to be part of this family.

HELPING HANDS

January was a sweet time for us at Thamarai with visits of many old friends including teachers from both the Irish Yoga Association and The Healing Heart of Yoga school in Australia. Both groups are great partners as they have the qualities of well-being at their core and have been a great support with their student groups collecting funds for the children's activities and for Muthukumari's outreach health care programs. In January, another dear friend, Kyoung Hyoun Lee with her team held a conscious food fundraising lunch for Thamarai at Auroville Visitor's Centre. As



well as collecting much-needed funds it was a chance for us to present our work to friends from Auroville and elsewhere. We take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to Thamarai in the past volunteering time, sending good wishes or financially. Together we create change.

-Bridget

THAMARAI TEAM



Each and every program of Thamarai Education Project is a co-creation of our volunteers, some who have been with the project since it started in 2006. We are current-

ly blessed with a team of 14 who provide the caring hands, heads and hearts that are central to the educational programs and office work. A cross-cultural environment with team members from the local villages, urban India, Spain, France and Germany has been a huge benefit in developing our programs for children and youth. Playgroup is coordinated by Malliga, with help of 4 teachers and Manuel, the spanish volunteer. The health programs are solely facilitated by Muthukumari.

BE PART OF OUR ADVENTURE



If you wish to be part of Thamarai or contribute in our activities

please visit the "Get involved" page on our website (www.thamarai.org) or send us an e-mail at thamarai@auroville.org.in.

Become our ambassador and help us promote our projects to your friends and community.

Find Thamarai Educational Projects on Facebook, Youtube and Instagram to connect with us!

THAMARAI PROFILE

After-school

The after-school program works on the overall holistic development of children with various components such as languages, arts and culture, science, digital literacy, leadership interwoven while also being a facility to support the children with their homework and coursework.

Well-being

Health and well-being program aims on educating the villagers with benefits of practising healthy lifestyle, through yoga and mindful diet. We have also established a support service for patients of alcohol addiction with help of experienced counsellors.

Leadership and Capacity Development

Children, youth and adults are fostered to discover their value-based leadership skills and competencies and see themselves as agents of change.

Playgroup

The playgroup envisions to provide a thriving, safe environment for pre-school children. We have 32 children, age 2-3 years old. All playgroup children are assured a place for further education in Udavi School.

EDITORIAL TEAM

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Content editor: Mitali