

# Sanskritam Auroville - SAIER Annual Report 2019-2020

**1. Title of project:** Learning and enlivening Sanskrit in Auroville

**2. Project holders:** Aravinda, Anandi, Deven and Radhika

**3. Report writer:** Deven

**4. Introduction:**

A few sentences. What was the purpose of the project?

Purpose was to increase awareness on the importance of learning Sanskrit and its relevance in realizing Auroville's goal of human unity and transformation of consciousness. The proposed plan was to organize various workshops and activities for learning Sanskrit language and collective study of sacred texts written in Sanskrit.

Most of you would be aware that on 15 December 1970, The Mother had written about four languages to be studied in Auroville as English, French, Sanskrit and Tamil. The long-term plan is to make Sanskrit a living language in Auroville and also create a team that will focus on offering Sanskrit learning to children in Auroville schools and beyond.

**5. Participants/beneficiaries:**

Who and how many?

More than 100 residents of Auroville and some more from Pondicherry and bioregion attended our workshops/activities organized between June 2019 and March 2020.

**6. Description of project:**

Who, what, when...

Here are some details:

- 1) **Workshops:** On June 1, 2019, we began with monthly workshops facilitated by Dr. Sampadananda Mishra, Director of Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture on learning Sanskrit language and also deeper understanding of sacred texts like Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita etc. Each session was attended by participant numbers ranging from 20 to 40 every month. Given below is the list of workshops we have organised with Dr Sampadananda Mishra in Auroville.

Date	Venue	Topic
June 1, 2019	SAILER Hall	Sanskritam – ‘Sculpted to Perfection’
June 29, 2019	Bharat Nivas	Sanskrit Varnamala and Chhandas
July 27, 2019	Bharat Nivas	How to approach the Sanskrit classics
August 24, 2019	Bharat Nivas	Upanishads
September 21, 2019	Bharat Nivas	Veda and Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga – 1
October 26, 2019	Bharat Nivas	Veda and Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga – 2
November 9, 2019	Bharat Nivas	Veda and Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga – 3
December 28, 2019	Savitri Bhavan	Veda and Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga – 4
January 25, 2020	Bharat Nivas	Vedic Gurukulams in the Present Context
March 14, 2020	Bharat Nivas	Scientific Heritage of India

2) **Weekly Classes:** In September 2019, we started a weekly Study Circle on Bhagavad Gita:

***Study of Bhagavad Gita:***

Date: Every Thursday\*

Time: 4:45 pm to 5:45 pm

Venue: Bharat Nivas, International Zone Hall (Near India Space)

Facilitator: Aravinda Maheshwari

In October 2019, we started weekly classes on learning written and spoken Sanskrit:

***Sanskrit Conversations:***

Date: Every Monday\*

Time: 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm

Venue: Deepanam School, Language Room

Facilitator: Rajakumari

(\*Between 5-10 participants attended these sessions and the classes happened weekly until the Covid-19 lockdown started in mid-March)

3) **Mantra Chanting:** We were invited several times to offer Sanskrit Mantra chanting at various events. A few examples of events where we offered Mantra chanting ranges from August 15<sup>th</sup> celebration at Bharat Nivas to AUM Music Festival at Youth Center.

4) **One-time Events:** We also organized events based on availability of facilitators visiting Auroville. Here are a few examples:

### **How to Memorize Bhagavad Gita Happily, Quickly, Creatively?**

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2020

Time: 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Venue: Bharat Nivas, Bhumika Hall

Facilitator: Ojasi Sukhtankar

### **Relevance of Sanskrit in Education and Law**

Date: Sunday, January 26, 2020

Time: 9:30 am to 10:30 am

Venue: Bharat Nivas, Bhumika Hall

Facilitator: Dr. K. Parameswaran

- 5) **Collaboration:** We reached out to all Auroville and Outreach Schools through the School Board and also the Teachers Resource Center, offering our support and willingness to collaborate in enhancing Sanskrit learning activities and growing together. We were invited to Deepanam School, Isai Ambalam School and NESS, so some of our team members went and attended Sanskrit classes and programs held there. We also offered some regular inputs in the classes held at Deepanam School and they were appreciated. Children from Udavi School attended the exhibition we had organised on the Scientific Heritage of India at Bharat Nivas in March 2020 and we also did collective Mantra chanting. More schools had scheduled visits to the exhibition and some programs in Sanskrit like songs, poems, short skits, conversation etc. with children were also planned, but had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

We also collaborated with other Aurovilians who were holding classes in Sanskrit and included details of their offerings in our communication. Here are a few examples:

### **Six Principles of Vedic Chanting**

Date: 2nd and 9th November, 2019

Time: 9:00 to 11:30 am

Venue: Pavilion of Tibetan Culture

Facilitator: Sangeetha Sriram

For more details, contact: [sriram.sangeetha@gmail.com](mailto:sriram.sangeetha@gmail.com)

### **Traditional Mantra Chanting**

Date: Every Monday (Beginners) and Every Friday (Advanced)

Time: 6:00 to 7:30 pm (Beginners) and 6:30 to 7:30 pm (Advanced)

Venue: Joy Community

Facilitator: Sonia Novaes

For more details, contact: [joycommunity@auroville.org.in](mailto:joycommunity@auroville.org.in)

### **Meditations with Hymns of the Rig Veda**

Date: Every Monday

Venue: Savitri Bhavan

Facilitator: Nishtha

For more details, contact: [nishtha@auroville.org.in](mailto:nishtha@auroville.org.in)

Time: 4.45 pm to 6:00 pm

### **Introduction to Sanskrit**

Date: Every Saturday

Time: 4.00 pm to 5:00 pm

Venue: Bharat Nivas, Sri Aurobindo Centre for Studies.

Facilitator: Angelo

For more details, contact: [angelo@auroville.org.in](mailto:angelo@auroville.org.in)

### **Sanskrit Learning Resources at Auroville Language Lab (ALL)**

You can find some links to Sanskrit learning resources on:

<https://www.aurovillelanguage.org/links.php> or write to [all@auroville.org.in](mailto:all@auroville.org.in)

### **Sanskrit Research Institute (SRI), Auroville**

You can visit SRI website for tools that aid learning and appreciation of the Sanskrit language <https://sri.auroville.org> or write to [sri@auroville.org](mailto:sri@auroville.org)

This led to a collaborative and harmonious spirit and it was palpable when we all came together to organise a series of events in March 2020. Details are given below.

- 6) **Confluence:** The interest and enthusiasm to learn Sanskrit increased gradually and it very beautifully culminated into the following:

## **संस्कृत सम्मेलनम्** **SANSKRIT CONFLUENCE**

**“I have the deepest respect for Indian languages and continue to study Sanskrit when I have time. The Sanskrit ought to be the national language of India. Blessings.”**

- *The Mother, CWM Volume 12, On Education (April 19, 1971)*

To take small steps ahead towards learning Sanskrit and making it a living language in Auroville, Samskritam Auroville team and Bharat Nivas organised an exhibition on **संविज्ञानम्** - Scientific Heritage of India (developed by Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture) and a **संस्कृत-सम्मेलनम्** Sanskrit Confluence:



**Inauguration:**

Wednesday, March 4, 2020  
5:00 to 6:30 pm  
Kala Kendra, Bharat Nivas

**Ongoing Exhibition:**

March 5 - 21, 2020  
9:00 am to 4:30 pm

**Program Calendar\*\* at Kala Kendra, Bharat Nivas:**

DATE	TIME	TOPIC
March 9	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Hymns to Agni, the Psychic Flame by Nishtha
March 10	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Exploration of Isha Upanishad by Angelo
March 11	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Devotional Songs by Arunbhai Bhatt
March 12	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Sanskrit Root Sounds by Nishtha and Angelo
March 13	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Calligraphy and Sanskrit by Aravinda
March 14	9:00 AM - 4:30 PM	The Scientific Heritage of India and role of Sanskrit in the future realizations by Dr. Sampadananada Mishra
	5:00 - 6:00 PM	Vedic Chanting by Rajeev and Sangeetha
March 15	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Astrology in the Light of Sri Aurobindo by Vikram
March 16	5:00 - 6:00 PM	Mantra Chanting by Joy, Jivatman and Sonia
March 17	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Hymns to Agni, the Psychic Flame by Nishtha
March 18	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Computers and Sanskrit in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century by Martin
March 19	4:30 - 6:00 PM	Bhagavad Gita Study Circle by Aravinda
March 20	4:00 - 6:00 PM	Vedic Chanting - Module 1 by Sangeetha
March 21	9:00 - 10:00 AM	Sri Aurobindo Upanishad by Santosh
	10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	A Yogic Perspective on Wealth & Economy by Deven

\*\* The Sanskrit Confluence began with a deeply sacred energy on March 9, 2020 and it was beautifully building up with events everyday until March 16, 2020 which was the last public session and from March 17, 2020 Covid-19 lockdown started and we had to cancel some sessions. We ended with a small group doing a collective recitation and study of Sri Aurobindo Upanishad and chanting mantras for health and well being of all.

## **7. Outcomes:**

What was created; who benefited and how?

“Samskritam Auroville” group has been created which is regularly organizing a series of workshops and events for learning Sanskrit. It has brought together many people in Auroville who were interested in learning Sanskrit and collective study of the sacred texts and now they have a feeling of a ‘Samoohik Saadhana’ (Collective Spiritual Practice) through learning Sanskrit.

For instance when the Covid-19 lockdown happened, we experimented with an online study circle on Bhagavad Gita from April 24, 2020 to May 4, 2020. It ended up being a very deep and sacred gathering with around a dozen of us in Auroville and a few more from outside committed to learning the Sanskrit slokas of Bhagavad Gita and Sri Aurobindo’s interpretations in English. Many participants reflected that it was like a collective ‘yajna’ which gave a lot of strength and courage. (Details of the Bhagavad Gita online course as provided at the end of this document)

## **8. Reflections:**

What was most meaningful about this project? What was challenging and what was learned?

The most meaningful aspect of this project was to witness how through learning Sanskrit our commitments towards the spiritual aspect of our life and work in Auroville increased. It has been a reflection of several people that “to be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness” became more natural while learning and communicating in Sanskrit.

What is also very meaningful is the harmony and joy with which the Samskritam Auroville team is working together and openly sharing and collaborating with all who are working towards realising the wish of the Mother to have Sanskrit as one of the four key languages in Auroville.

One of our guiding principles has been to not put a price-tag on any of our learning programs. People can offer contributions at the end of the program if they wish to do so but they are not obliged to do so. The participants really appreciate this “offering” made in the spirit of gift and when their cup of gratitude overflows, they come forward and support the work in multiple ways. So it has become a collaborative effort with a very good community spirit.

The challenge is to sustain the initial enthusiasm of learning Sanskrit and transforming the aspiration into a commitment of regular practice. What we are learning is that even if a small group sustains with commitment, eventually it will spread to a larger group when the time ripens. We are learning to trust in the power of Sincerity, Perseverance and Surrender.

## 9. Conclusion:

Any final remarks, and/or intentions for the future.

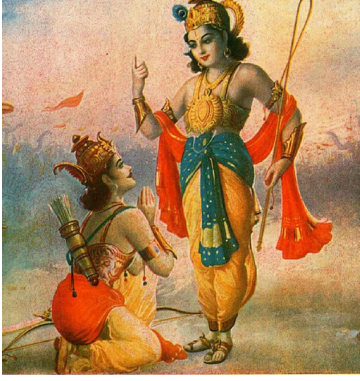
We feel deeply committed to continue this Sanskrit learning यज्ञ in Auroville as willing servitors of the Divine Consciousness.

ॐ आनन्दमायि चैतन्यमायि सत्यमायि परमे  
OM anandemayi chaitanyemayi  
satyamayi parama

## 10. Links and attachments:

Photos (please attach as separate files), links to videos and websites, any other supplementary material that you would like to share.

- Summary of the Sanskrit Appreciation workshop, held on June 1, 2019:  
<https://www.facebook.com/sampadananda.mishra/posts/2369499479737421>
- Summary of the workshop on Sanskrit Varnamala and Chhandas, held on June 29, 2019:  
<https://www.facebook.com/sampadananda.mishra/posts/2398187263535309>
- Summary of the workshop on How to approach the Sanskrit classics, held on July 27, 2019:  
<https://www.facebook.com/sampadananda.mishra/posts/2450893321598036>
- A part of the workshop on Vedic Gurukulams in the Present Context, held on January 25, 2020 was recorded and published by Auroville Radio:  
<https://www.aurovillerradio.org/talk-of-dr-sampadananda-mishra-on-the-vision-of-vedic-gurukulams/>
- Summary of the workshop The Scientific Heritage of India and role of Sanskrit in the future realizations, held on March 14, 2020:  
<https://safic.in/the-scientific-heritage-of-india-and-role-of-sanskrit-in-the-future-realizations/>
- On the next page is the information about the Bhagavad Gita online course we conducted during the lock-down. When we began, we had no expectations of how it would go and it ended up being a deeply sacred experience of collective sadhana.



“The most practical teaching of the Gita and one for which it is of abiding interest and value to the men of the world with whom life is a series of struggles is not to give way to any morbid sentimentality when duty demands sternness and boldness to face terrible things.”  
– Sri Aurobindo (Bande Mataram — 29-9-1907)

Samskritam Auroville team is pleased to organize a 10-day Bhagavad Gita class online. All are welcome.

### **Bhagavad Gita - Chanting and Meaning**

*(Over a period of 10 days and a 90-minute session everyday, we will chant all the Slokas from Bhagavad Gita in Sanskrit and also read Sri Aurobindo's interpretation in English.)*

**Date:** Everyday from Friday, April 24, 2020 to Sunday, May 3, 2020

**Time:** 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm

**Venue:** Online (using Zoom video-conferencing)

**Facilitators:** Aravinda Maheshwari and Santosh Chandak

### **Test Video Call**

For those who are new to Zoom video-conferencing software, we will do a test video call on:

**Date:** Thursday, April 23, 2020

**Time:** 2:30 pm to 3:00 pm

**Venue:** Online (using Zoom video-conferencing)

Register on [devabhasha@auroville.org.in](mailto:devabhasha@auroville.org.in) and we will send you more details.

When Sri Aurobindo was in Alipore Central Jail in 1908, he utilized this period of solitary confinement for an intense study and practice of the Bhagavad Gita which led him to many deep spiritual experiences. He later wrote: “...I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover.”

The timeless wisdom of Bhagavad Gita continues to guide humanity. In this phase of lockdown due to the spread of Corona Virus, which requires us to maintain a certain amount of ‘physical distancing’, we welcome you to join this online Gita class and strengthen the aspiration of ‘collective yoga’ in Auroville.

Warmly,  
Aravinda, Anandi, Deven and Radhika  
For Samskritam Auroville