

Sanskritam Auroville - SAIER Annual Report 2020-21

1. **Title of project:** Sanskritam Auroville

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

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 important texts written in Sanskrit. 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 150 residents of Auroville and several more from Pondicherry and bioregion attended our workshops/activities organized between April 2020 and March 2021.

6. **Description of project:**

Who, what, when...

Here are some details of the workshops/classes/camps we organized this year.

A) Bhagavad Gita – Study Circle

After the lockdown started in March 2020, we organized two online study circles on the Bhagavad Gita which included chanting of all 700 Sanskrit Slokas and reading its interpretation in English based on Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita, followed by short reflections by the participants.

Batch 1:

Date: Everyday from April 24, 2020 to May 3, 2020

Time: 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm

Batch 2:

Date: June 2nd to 30th (Every Tue-Thu-Sat)

Time: 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm

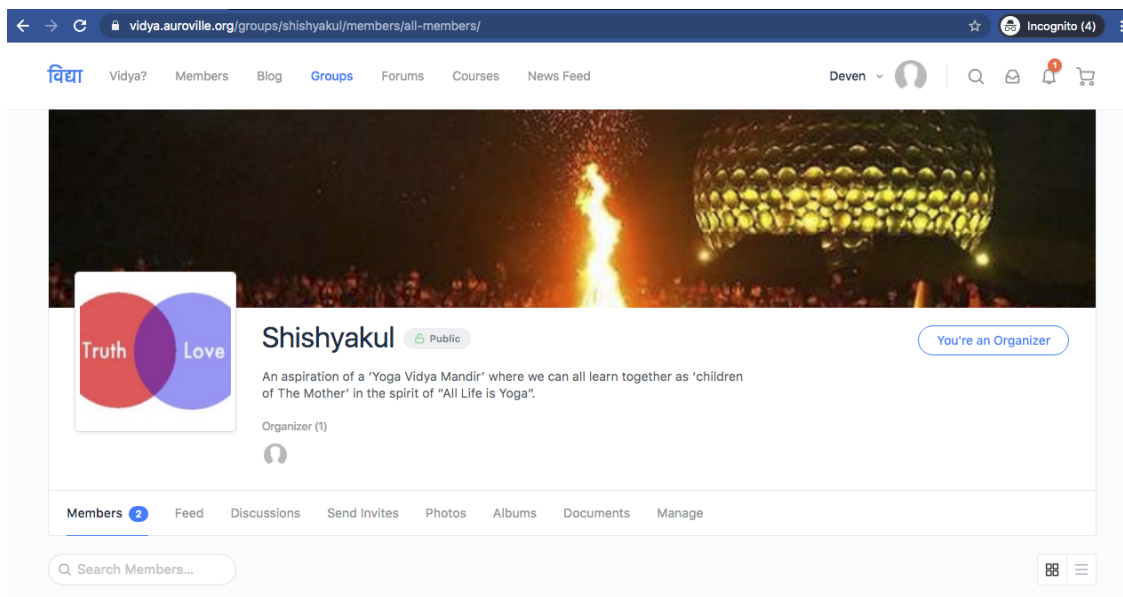
There were around 15 participants in each of the circles and it was a deeply enriching experience for all. Many participants echoed the reflection that it was like a collective 'yajna' which gave a lot of strength and courage.



Due to lockdown, physical events in person were not possible, so till early October 2020 we experimented with various other short online learning sessions on Bhagavad Gita and some special sessions like Sthithaprajnya Darshan on Janmashtami and Dhammapada on Buddha Jayanti. On August 15, 2020 we organised Mantra Chanting on Sri Aurobindo's birthday along with flag hoisting for India's Independence Day at Bharat Nivas with a small number of people permitted within Covid guidelines and broadcasted the event live on YouTube.

B) Website - vidya.auroville.org

We've started building an online learning website (vidya.auroville.org) and the work is in progress to create online courses on श्रीमद् भगवद्गीता and स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या.



C) Mundakopnishad

The Bharat Nivas campus opened partially in October and we organized a session on मुण्डकोपनिषद् (**Muṇḍakopaniṣad**) in the light of Integral Yoga by **Dr. Sampadananda Mishra**. This was a combination of online and an on-ground session.

What is That, Knowing Which, Everything Becomes Known?

Here are a couple verses from मुण्डकोपनिषद् / Muṇḍakopaniṣad in Sanskrit along with translation in English provided by Sri Aurobindo:

महाशालः शौनकः ह वै विधिवत् उपसन्नः अङ्गिरसं पप्रच्छ नु भगवः
कस्मिन् नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ॥

Shaunaka, the great house-lord, came to Angiras in the due way of the disciple and asked of him, "Lord, by knowing what does all this that is become known?"

तस्मै स होवाच - द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह स्म यद् ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति परा चैवापरा च ॥

*To him thus spoke Angiras: **Twofold is the knowledge** that must be known of which the knowers of the Brahman tell, **the higher and the lower knowledge.***

A deeper dive into this aspect of Para Vidya (higher knowledge) and Aparā Vidya (lower knowledge) was the key focus of this session.

We also made a presentation and had an interactive meeting to co-create Samskritam Auroville programs for 2020-21.

Date: Saturday, October 24, 2020

Venue: Bhumika Hall, Bharat Nivas or Online via Zoom

Time: 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm

- **2 pm – 3:30 pm:** A talk on मुण्डकोपनिषद् (Muṇḍakopaniṣad) by Dr Sampadananda Mishra
- **3:30 – 4:00 pm:** Break
- **4:00 – 5:00 pm:** A presentation and an interactive conversation to collaborate and co-create various programs for Samskritam Auroville in 2020-21.



D) Scientific Heritage of India

“The great mass of Sanskrit literature is a literature of human life” - Sri Aurobindo

We re-inaugurated the exhibition on 'संविज्ञानम् - Scientific Heritage of India' which had to be closed abruptly in March 2020 due to the lockdown. The significance of ancient Indian contributions in the field of science and technology remains relatively unknown, especially among the younger generation. With an intention to learn from the ancient wisdom and boldly spring towards future realisations, Samskritam Auroville and Bharat Nivas brought this exhibition prepared by (Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture) to Auroville.



***Reinauguration:**

Saturday, November 14, 2020

4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Venue: Kala Kendra, Bharat Nivas

Ongoing Exhibition:

November 16 to 30, 2020 (Mon-Sat)

9:00 am to 4:30 pm

Venue: Kala Kendra, Bharat Nivas

Along with the exhibition, we also organized Vedic Chanting on the auspicious day of दीपावली (Deepavali).



E) A session on “Sanskrit as Yoga”

We organized an interactive session with Dr. Anuradha Choudry on "Sanskrit as Yoga". We all have an intimate engagement with language in our lives and yet we seldom pause to ask ourselves fundamental questions about it like, 'What role does it play in formatting who we are, how we look at the world and relate to it?' 'Is the sole purpose of language thought-expression or do different languages generate different thought-formations altogether?' 'When a community like Auroville with people from 50+ countries succeeds in making Sanskrit a living language, how does that impact the world?' This session was an invitation for an open exploration of what Sanskrit is, what it offers as a method of yoga in itself and what is its importance for the world of yoga.

The session was very well attended and received and led to more engagement with Dr. Anuradha Choudry in Auroville. It includes translation of “12 Qualities of The Mother” in Sanskrit and collaboration with Auroville Language Lab to learn Sanskrit language based on an online courses conducted by her.



We welcome you for an interactive session with Dr. Anuradha Choudry on:

SANSKRIT AS YOGA



Dr. Anuradha Choudry teaches Sanskrit, Indian Psychology, French and Language Sciences at IIT Kharagpur. She is an alumna of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Puducherry.



SATURDAY - 19 DEC, 2020
2:30 PM TO 4:00 PM
PROGRESS HALL, BHARAT NIVAS

For questions or registration, please write to:
devabhasha@auroville.org.in
Warmly, Samskritam Auroville Team

F) Full Bhagavad Geeta Chanting

According to the Indian calendar, Gita Jayanti, the anniversary of the colloquy of Arjuna and Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, came on Christmas Day, December 25th, 2020.

Explaining the meaning of Christmas Day, the Mother said: “Long before the Christian religion made December 25th the day of Christ's birth, this day was the festival of the return of the sun, the Day of Light. It is this very ancient symbol of the rebirth of the Light that we wish to celebrate here.”

On this special day we organized a Bhagavad Gita chanting at Bharat Nivas and the newly renovated Harmony Hall (which was formerly known as CIC, Center of Indian Culture) was also inaugurated on that day.

This chanting of the full text of Bhagavad Gita (700 verses in 18 chapters) was a deeply inspiring and memorable experience for more than 50 aurovilians, guests and friends who attended. About 20 participants had also taken part in the daily practice sessions during the 4 weeks prior to the Gita Jayanti day. The whole experience was deeply uniting and elevating for every one.

Date: Friday, December 25, 2020

Venue: Harmony Hall, Bharat Nivas

Time: 6:30 am to 11:30 am



After this we restarted weekly Bhagavad Gita Chanting sessions from January 2021 and was happening regularly till end of April and then again Covid restrictions/lockdown happened:

Date: Every Thursday

Time: 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm

Venue: Progress Hall, Bharat Nivas

G) Naada Yoga workshop and regular sessions.


We organized a 2-day experiential workshop on नादयोग साधना Naada Yoga Saadhana and regular sessions (4 sessions a week for 3 months from January 2021 to April 2021) that were facilitated by Mandar Karanjkar and Dakshayani Athalye. They were groomed and steeped in one of the very deepest and most refined traditions of Indian Classical Music, in the direct lineage of the legendary Ma Annapurna Devi (who in turn was inwardly connected to Sri Aurobindo and the Ashram). They have also studied Indian Classical Music from Pandit Vijay Sardeshmukh.

Perhaps the most significant testimony for the musical and inner quality of the teaching transmitted, and the pedagogic skill and experience of the facilitators, was the steady and increasing attendance of the regular classes (even at 6.30am!) over the three months of their stay. Their unobtrusive presence and generosity in sharing their art and themselves also contributed positively to re-enlivening the Bharat Nivas campus where they were staying and nurtured its culturally and spiritually tuned atmosphere.

We will share detailed feedback from the participants in a separate PDF file.

We welcome you for an experiential workshop on:

नादयोग NAADA YOGA



- What is Naada Yoga Sadhana?
- How does sound impact us?
- How can awareness of sound support in Integral Well-being?

Let us learn together through personal experiences of deep listening as well as chanting and singing. All are welcome.

Facilitated by Mandar
(mandarkaranjkar.com)

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SAT-SUN, JAN 16-17, 2021
08:30 AM TO 12:00 PM
PROGRESS HALL, BHARAT NIVAS

For questions or registration, please write to:
devabhasha@auroville.org.in
Warmly, Samskritam Auroville Team

We welcome you for practice sessions on:

नादयोग NAADA YOGA

Facilitators: Mandar and Dakshayani (baithak.org)



Welcome to join for one/more of the following sessions.
Later we'll create a regular practice schedule.

JAN 23 & JAN 30 (SAT EVENING): 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
JAN 26 & FEB 02 (TUE MORNING): 6:30 AM - 7:30 AM
VENUE: PROGRESS HALL, BHARAT NIVAS

For questions or registration, please write to:
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Warmly, Samskritam Auroville Team

Due to the spike in Covid cases in April, they returned to Pune to support their families; but we are very happy about their intention to join the Auroville community as soon as the situation permits. In the meantime, their online accessibility, and the baithak.org website of their non-profit Baithak Foundation with its rich audio library, dedicated to fostering a deep engagement with Indian Classical Music is helping us to maintain the connection and to keep growing the seeds planted during their three months stay in Auroville.

H) Indian Classical Music and Sanskrit in Schools

We organized a 3-month pilot program with weekly sessions on Indian Classical Music for children at Deepanam School. We also experimented with learning Sanskrit through songs. The group of 7 & 8 year olds learnt a song about the Sun in Sanskrit.

Dakshayani conducted weekly music lessons during the last term of the year. The joy of learning a classical art-form from a passionate teacher and singing together as a group is an experience that the children will cherish for a long time. Attached is a snippet of a class in progress where they are led effortlessly into the theory and practice of listening to the rhythm and beats and then the lyrics. The children also learnt to play the Tanpura, to listen and tune into the pitch and also explored how the harmonium works with the help of a professional. The curiosity and enthusiasm of the children to explore the musical instruments was heartening and motivating for the adults holding space.

She also facilitated short introductory sessions for teachers at Deepanam School and Nandanam Kindergarten which also led to a few sessions with the children at Nandanam which were also well appreciated by all.



1) स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या (also known as *Divine Science of Health or Nature Cure*)

A half-day workshop on स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या was organized in January 2021. It was facilitated by Dr Arun Sharma, who has guided countless beings to live a healthy life (and cure all kinds of diseases) through simple and timeless laws of nature. You can know more about him and his work on www.imanah.com and www.akarma.life/inspiration/

He shared insights on Integral Health through key verses in Sanskrit (translated in English) along with suggestions on daily practices for healthy living.

Date: Sunday - 31 January, 2021

Time: 6:30 AM Sunrise to 11:30 AM

Venue: Progress Hall, Bharat Nivas

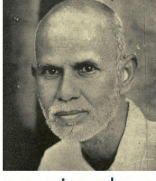


Around 40 participants attended the camp and the experience was deeply enriching and there was an intention to go deeper. So we organized a 5-day Health Camp in March 2021.

We welcome you for a 5-day camp on:

स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या

Also known as **Practical Nature Cure**



Acharya Lakshmana Sarma synthesised the wisdom from Upanishads and Gita with the science of health. He guided countless beings to live a healthy life based on simple and timeless laws of nature. He was a close disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi and a few books written "through him" are स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या, Practical Nature Cure and Mahayoga. - www.akarma.life/inspiration/



Dr Arun Sarma (grandson) continues the tradition, developing and sharing the experiential knowledge and practices across the world. He will facilitate this camp. - www.imanah.com

This short camp in Auroville will include: Asana, Pranayama, Meditation, Chanting, Theory Sessions, Simple Therapies, Classical Music and Healthy Food.

**"Nature is the all-round healer."
- The Mother**

After the half day introductory workshop in January, a five-day immersive Health Camp on स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या was organised from 27th to 30th March 2021. About 38 Aurovilians and newcomers participated from different backgrounds. Dr. Arun Sharma has very well conducted the camp addressing this diversity and availability. The routine was composed of various physical exercises like yoga, pranayama, running with some therapies like sun gazing, sun basking, wet cloth wraps and theory sessions with the base readings of Sanskrit verses. The food prepared was based on the guidelines and cooking team at Atithi Griha was guided by Jinal Radthod (often referred to as a Kitchen Doctor) who volunteered to come along with Arunji to serve at the camp.

This immersive has inspired and transformed most of the participants' lifestyle and health approach. There is beautiful organic dynamism flowing and a small support group has emerged, which includes 3 team members from Sante who attended the camp. We are also trying different ways to share this knowledge and practices with the larger Auroville community.

स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या

First of the 1,500 verses begins with:

सच्चिदानन्दरूपस्य परस्य कृपयोदिता ।
प्राकृती स्वास्थ्यविद्येयं लिख्यते भूतये सताम् ॥१॥

("Obtained by the Grace of the Supreme Being, whose Nature is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss; Herein is set forth the true science of natural health for the happiness of people with goodwill.")



With faith in Nature and Divine Grace, you can be your own doctor with food (gross and subtle) from the five elements of space, air, fire (sun), water and earth (plants) as the only "medicine" you will need and enjoy.



**27 TO 31 MARCH, 2021
6:00 AM TO 6:00 PM
BHARAT NIVAS, AUROVILLE
(Covid protocols to be respected.)**

Register before March 23 on:
tinyurl.com/avnc2021

Warmly, Samskritam Auroville Team
devabhasha@auroville.org.in

7. Outcomes:

What was created; who benefited and how?

One of the biggest shifts in outcome this year was a transformation from theory based understanding to experience-based learning with collective practices. For instance the sessions on Nada Yoga had a wonderful commitment from participants attending twice a week for 3 months. In the Swaadheena Swaasthya Mahavidya (Nature Cure) health camp, 38 Aurovilians/Newcomers were together from 6 am to 6 pm for five days in a row learning and practicing together which created a deep bond. Even after the camp many participants are sharing and supporting each other. Through these practice-based engagements, the process of community building happened very naturally and beautifully.

Introducing Sanskrit learning through Indian Classical Music at Deepanam School and Nandanam Kindergarten was a wonderful experiment. Teachers and students would like to continue next year also.

Deepening in regular Bhagavad Geeta Chanting collectively is shifting the subtle energies. Our work is also helping in energizing the Bharat Nivas campus as our work is deeply aligned with the vision of the Indian Pavilion and we collaborate closely with the BN team. They have offered us a space dedicated to learning Sanskrit and other programs rooted in Indic Wisdom.

8. Reflections:

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

We realised that the most important skills as project holders in the present time is to be able to adapt with rapidly changing and uncertain environments. We were able to flow with the emerging situation and were able to execute so many workshops, classes and a camp despite the Covid situation. Many participants from our programs are coming forward as volunteers and the harmony and joy with which the Samskritam Auroville team is working together and openly sharing and collaborating continues to be a deeply enriching experience.

The biggest challenge of-course was uncertainty around Covid. For instance, we had planned the "Sanskrit Sammelanam" in March 2021 with a series of events for a much wider audience but due to Covid restrictions we had to restrict it to a 5-day camp for a smaller audience. At the same time, there were several events like Nada Yoga workshops, classes, sessions for children on Indian Classical Music and Sanskrit, classes with Prof. Anuradha Choudry etc. that were not planned earlier and they happened because certain conditions came together and the team could quickly adapt and make things happen.

With good community support we were also able to execute projects like a 5-day health camp which had several expenses like food, venue, facilitators travel, stay, honorarium etc. for which we had not budgeted as it was not planned. We are able to continue offering all the learning programs without a price-tag and that has led to a beautiful energy of mutual support and care.

9. Conclusion:

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

We are deeply committed to continue this Sanskrit learning यज्ञ in Auroville as willing servitors of the Divine Consciousness. We thank SAIER for the continued support.

ॐ आनन्दमायि चैतन्यमायि सत्यमायि परमे
OM anandamayī chaitanyamayī
satyamayī paramē

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.

- This video gives a glimpse of the sessions facilitated by Dakshayani on Indian Classical Music at Deepanam School and Nandanam Kindergarten:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mV2cVtr9jA>
- These two videos give a glimpse of some of the Nada Yoga sessions facilitated by Mandar Karanjkar at Bharat Nivas:
 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZatQsKNI2M&t=3s>
 2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leJTwpUfON4>
- This video gives a glimpse into the gathering on August 15, 2020 at Bharat Nivas:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJPA019IIPU&t=102s>
- This video is the recording of a part of the event on Mundakopnishad by Dr Sampadananda Mishra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p19q3X45mqA&t=495s>
- This is a video recording of a live webinar organised by Bharat Nivas team in which the Samskritam Auroville shared about the significance and experience of Bhagavad Geeta chanting: <https://www.facebook.com/1081237235310968/videos/163710881760775>
- Auroville Radio covered the talk by Dr. Anuradha Choudry on “Sanskrit as Yoga” that we had organised in Bharat Nivas. Here’s the audio recording:
<https://www.aurovillerradio.org/a-talk-by-dr-anuradha-choudry-sanskrit-as-yoga/>
- These 17 videos give a glimpse of some of principles and concepts of the Divine Science of Health that we learnt and experienced at 5-day camp facilitated by Dr Arun Sharma in the स्वाधीन स्वास्थ्य महाविद्या camp at Bharat Nivas:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_4f8cBDSbfEVWAfo3NQmWTsu0HFbulji