

# SAIIR Annual Report – Sub-unit

**Reporting period: 2022-23**

This form is for reporting on the activities of a **SAIIR Sub-unit** (in contrast to a separate **Project**) over the last financial year. Please use as much space as you need for the report.

Please submit this report to SAIIR by **April 30, 2023**. For any questions or clarifications, please write to [saiier@auroville.org.in](mailto:saiier@auroville.org.in).

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**1. Name of sub-unit:** Vidyamandir Auroville

**2. Sub-unit executives:** Aravinda, Radhika and Deven

**3. Report writer:** Deven

**4. Introduction:**

A few sentences. Why does the sub-unit exist, what are its aims? Were there any special goals this year?

To enliven Sanskrit language and offer learning programs and tools based on Indian Knowledge Systems, in the context of Integral Yoga and Auroville's intention of realizing human unity.

**5. Enrollment/beneficiaries:**

For schools: number of students in each grade.

For other sub-units: who were the beneficiaries and how many people participated?

More than 250 residents of Auroville and some from Pondicherry and bioregion attended our workshops/activities organized between April 2022 and March 2023.

**6. Activities of the year:**

In general and/or highlights. Who, what, when...

**a) Collective Invocation with Prayers and Mantra Chanting**

What began a couple of years ago as practice sessions for Sri Aurobindo's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations now continue every week as a sacred space for collective invocation:

**Date:** Every Sunday

**Venue:** Matrimandir Amphitheatre

**Time:** 6 to 7 pm (*Time varies a bit depending on sunset time*)

In addition to these weekly gathering, throughout the year we organize several sessions for collective mantra chanting and occasional Kirtans.

**b) Study Circle on Patanjali Yoga Sutras**

In just 195 sutras, sage Patanjali has given secrets to healthy and yogic living. In this study circle we explored them through chanting, reading & reflecting, expressive arts and learning simple everyday practices. We also referred to a talk on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras by Shri M P Pandit which also puts it in context of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's Integral Yoga. We had 18 participants and all found the circle very enriching.

**Date:** May 9 to 20 (Mon-Wed-Fri)

**Time:** 11:00 am to 12:00 pm

**Venue:** Progress Hall, Bharat Nivas or Online

**c) Study Circle on Psychic Education**

The intention was to come together and learn from each other, share reflections & ideas, propose experiments & projects to implement in Auroville and beyond. We studied excerpts from the following writings:

i) The Mother on Education, CWM - Volume 12

ii) Notes on Psychic Education, by Shradhdhavan

iii) Psychic Education Workbook, by Neeltje Huppes

iv) Philosophy of Indian Pedagogy, by Kireet Joshi

**Date:** May 10 to 21 (Tue-Thu-Sat)

**Time:** 11:00 am to 12:00 pm

**Venue:** Progress Hall, Bharat Nivas Or Online

We had 15 participants which included some teachers from Auroville and Bioregion schools and all found the circle very enriching.

**d) Vipassana Meditation**

A group of Vipassana meditators, which included a core team member of Vidyamandir team, have been organizing several meditation programs since 2018, most of them at Udavi School with the support from STEM Land team. The group of people who would like to have regular Vipassana meditation sessions organized in Auroville has grown to over 100 people and there was a need to have this activity organized under a registered entity and after a discussion with SAIER and Financial Services team, it was suggested to include it under Vidyamandir as it was within the scope of our work to offer educational programs rooted in Indian Knowledge System and also offered freely to all without any fees.

In 2022-23, in addition to courses at Udavi, we also organized meditation courses at Verite and Tibetan Pavilion which included a 3-day residential Vipassana meditation refresher course in which 20 Auroville residents participated.

**Start Date:** April 1, 2022 (4:00 PM) - Friday

**End Date:** April 4, 2022 (4:00 PM) - Monday

**Venue:** Pavilion for Tibetan Culture, Auroville

e) **Bhagavad Gita Chanting**

As an offering to Sri Aurobindo's 150th birthday we chanted the full Bhagavad Gita on **August 14, 2022 (Sunday) from 7 am to 10:30 am** at Progress Hall, Bharat Nivas.

Around 25 people participated in the full chanting and another 35-40 people participated for a part of the chanting. As a preparation, we also had daily chanting practices sessions for a week:

**Date:** Everyday from Saturday, August 6 to 13, 2022

**Time:** 6:30 am to 7:30 am

**Venue:** Progress Hall - Bharat Nivas, Auroville

A similar program also happened with practice sessions leading to full Bhagavad Gita chanting on **Gita Day - 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2022.**

This year we also concluded the weekly study circle on Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita in which we studied all the chapters from start to end over a year and reflected on principles and practices in everyday life to truly embody The Mother's vision of: "Auroville is a place for Karmayoga."

We continued our exploration of the Bhagavad Gita with Dr Sampadananda Mishra and took a pause after completing the reflections on Chapter 7 - ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगः / The Yoga of Essential and Comprehensive Knowledge. We also did collective invocation by chanting all the verses of ज्ञानविज्ञानयोगः to inaugurate the event on Science, Spirituality and Human Awakening that was organised by Auroville Foundation team in February 2023. We will resume the deeper study of Bhagavad Gita with Dr Sampadananda Mishra from Chapter 8 onwards in 2023-24.

f) **World Sanskrit Day**

To celebrate the World Sanskrit Day 2022, we began the day with collective Agnihotra followed by some Mantra chanting. Agnihotra is a Vedic ceremony which purifies and harmonises the inner and outer atmosphere through a specially prepared "Fire" and is performed at sunrise and sunset.

**Date:** Friday - August 12, 2022

**Time:** 6 am to 6:30 am

**Venue:** Progress Hall, Bharat Nivas

In 2022, World Sanskrit Day and UN's International Youth Day happened on the same date. In partnership with YouthLink, we organized an interactive session for youth of all ages to come and experience the joy and wonder of Sanskrit.

**When:** Friday - 12 August | 3 pm to 4 pm

**Where:** Tibetan Pavilion, Auroville

Around 25 participants attended and we received an encouraging feedback from the youth.

### **g) Jeevan Vidya Introductory Course (in English)**

We organized a Jeevan Vidya Introductory Course from 2nd to 7th February 2023, facilitated by Ashok Gopala (and assisted by his daughter Drishta Gopala). The course was delivered in sessions of 26 hours that were spread over 6 days, including two full days from 9am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday, and 4 weekdays with evening slots between 5.30 pm and 8.00 pm.

All Jeevan Vidya workshops are offered as a gift to the society, with the sole purpose being to bring about co-existential harmony through awareness and understanding.

About the Jeevan Vidya course:

- Jeevan Vidya is a proposal for understanding all of life - self, relationships, society and the natural world - through exploration and inquiry.
- It offers a road map towards greater clarity and insight, to enable living with integrity and harmony at all levels of existence.
- Jeevan Vidya focuses on the study of the human being, and proposes self-verification as the tool through which a lived (embodied) understanding is possible. This brings a coherence in our thinking, choices and behaviour at all levels.

While the Jeevan Vidya course is based on Madhyasth Darshan ([madhyasth.org](http://madhyasth.org)) by Shri A. Nagraj (1920-2016), the format of the course is about exploring universal aspects of life by learning from each other through dialogue and reflections.

- ▶ It does not aspire to establish a sect or a commune.
- ▶ It is not based on any prevalent religion, spiritual school, philosophy or ideology.
- ▶ It is not for making money or achieving fame.

**Venue:** Progress Hall, Bharat Nivas, Auroville

**Dates:** 2nd to 7th February 2023

Over 30 participants attended the course with a wide age group from teenagers to elders with age 80+ which led to a very rich inter-generational dialogue and enriching reflections.

### **h) Satvic Movement**

Continuing our experiments of healing diseases naturally through deeper connection with the five elements (Pancha Mahabhuta) and faith in Divine Grace, this year we partnered with the Satvic Movement team and organized programs that were a combination of online, in-person and hybrid. Last year we had organized a 5-day full-time intensive program based on Swaadheena Swaasthya Mahavidya text in which participants experienced tremendous health benefits and reversal of diseases. This year we created a local support group in Auroville for the a 21-day online program offered by Satvic Movement and between September 2022 and March 2023, over 100 residents from Auroville and the bio-region participated in the program.

The local support was offered in the form of collective study and reflection circles, potluck meals, Satvic cooking workshop, exploration of a community kitchen experiment at Neem Tree to serve whole-food plant-based vegan dishes. Some of us also read and reflected on excerpts from the book 'Integral Healing' which has a compilation of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's writings on health and healing.

We also participated in Sadhana Forest's Vegan Festival in February 2023 and invited some experts like Dr Shailesh Rao to Auroville city area for talks, discussions and practical cooking sessions. This helped in co-creating a dedicated group that supports each other in the journey of natural healing of Self and Planet earth.

### **7. Outcomes:**

What was created; how did participants benefit?

A good range of learning programs has got created and based on the requests made by Auroville residents, this year we have added new programs like Jeevan Vidya, Patanjali Yogasutra, partnership with Satvic Movement etc. Participants are finding the process of learning very enriching and joyful. At a subtler level, Psychic discovery and becoming better servitors of the Divine Consciousness is at the core of all our work. The joy and peace we witness in the participants during and after attending our programs is the most precious outcome that keeps us going.

### **8. Research highlights:**

Please describe anything done in the last year which was especially research-oriented or innovative. What did you find out, and will you take it further?

We hosted the founders and core team members of Satvic Movement at Bharat Nivas for a few weeks to explore a research program to document the experiences of disease reversals and health improvements through natural means and lifestyle changes. Over the last few years, they have documented many cases through video-based stories (link given in the end) and we are exploring how can this be documented as a research paper in partnership with a Health Institute in Auroville and beyond. Also, participants' experience while chanting or learning and reflecting on the mantras, shlokas, sutras etc. have also been deeply transformative but as the changes are so subtle and subjective, we are still figuring how to put them into a research report format.

### **9. Reflections:**

What was most meaningful this year? What was challenging and what was learned?

All our programs are held with an intention to discover our inmost being and to realize unity. While the Auroville governance systems are undergoing big changes, with its share of conflicts along the way, what is heartening to see is that in our programs participants with "opposing views" are able to sit in the same circle and learn and chant together and we do see sparks of a shift towards unity in those moments. The key learning is to witness the

power in purity of intentions. Holding space full of Light and experiencing unity even during the atmosphere of intense conflicts has been one of the most meaningful gifts we have offered.

#### **10. Conclusion:**

Any final remarks, and/or intentions for next year.

Two of our executives could not participate much in organizing the learning programs during this year due to their other work commitments and hence projects for next year and whether we need to restructure the team is being discussed presently. With complete श्रद्धा /faith and आत्मसमर्पण / surrender to the Divine Consciousness, we are committed on this adventure of collective yoga for human unity.

#### **11. Links and attachments:**

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

*Auronet posts about some of our events and learning programs:*

- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/17974>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18035>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18066>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18067>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18172>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18198>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18297>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18366>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18473>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18502>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18577>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18588>
- <https://events.auroville.org.in/events/18675>

*Recording of some of programs:*

- Full Bhagavad Gita Chanting:  
Sri Aurobindo's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kWhRDegoWo>  
Gita Day 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9qUmr30Rso>
  
  - Playlist of Healing Stories created by Satvic Movement team:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v79\\_9PSBFyg&list=PLTkhn8oUI3aBW7sy-Frijwlyavx8YNtZOi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v79_9PSBFyg&list=PLTkhn8oUI3aBW7sy-Frijwlyavx8YNtZOi)
- Interactive session with founders of Satvic Movement at Bharat Nivas, Auroville:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xonUDVVfeqE>
- One of the Kirtans we organized with Matthew Andrews:  
<https://www.youtube.com/live/Vwn1DzllqYk?feature=share&t=78>