

# thamarai

Issue # 1•2

NEWSLETTER

May 2010



## WE HAVE A DREAM..... by Bridget



How do we secure a base for responsible common management of collective natural resources ? How do we build a future where the security, health and prosperity of both communities are supported and where each is helped to realise its full potential ? How do we establish conditions to realise human unity with our immediate neighbours?

All these questions are to the fore front of Thamarai's collective mind as we head into

Auroville is a unique experiment in the middle of rural Tamil Nadu. The two communities, Auroville and the Villages, often hold diverse world views due to very different life experiences and cultural contexts but also hold so much opportunity for unity, harmonious co-existence, co-evolution and co-development.

How we find unity together is crucial for the future of both communities.

our fourth year in operation. We have a dream of working towards forstnering these ideals, and invisage forums that develop communications, vibrant community spaces where villagers and Aurovilians can meet, share and create together, quality cultural programs, forums that develop suitable strategy for future agricultural, energy, health and education needs so that both communities can support each other to thrive, places where the youth of both communities can co-create together.

We invite others that share these dreams to join our team and to help us take small steps towards the realisation of closer connection, harmonious co-existence and building opportunities where both communities can be supported to realise their full potential.



### EDITORS' POND

Dear Friends, Welcome to the second issue of the Thamarai news. As the heat is rising steadily we are preparing for summer holidays, but before that a busy time ahead!

The children are fully engaged in Earth Day activities (April 22nd), doing a campaign on solid waste management, recycling initiatives for their homes and a poster campaign to promote segregation of waste and proper disposal. The youth group have launched a postcard campaign to the President of India requesting her help in getting separation facilities at the Pondicherry municipal dump and organising the screening of Yatra's latest movie on the subject "Maatram", in the village square.

In between, the team is organising summer activities and an end of year performance which will be an offering from the children of traditional song, dance and drama with some special guest artists from Auroville but before, exams are looming, so its head down at the moment busy in concentration before the freedom of the summer calls.

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**Publisher :** Thamarai Community Centre

**Distribution :** Free of charge

*This Newsletter is published trice a year.  
If you wish to read it in a .pdf version,  
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"Newsletter please" in the subject field.  
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## THAMARAI TELEGRAPH

*Thamarai is helping to establish Udhayam(sunrise), community centre in neighbouring Ambethdkar Nagar(Kottakarai village). A festival marked the 20th year anniversary of the building which has been renovated to host a nightly after school program for 35 children from the village. Over 700 people attended the lively cultural program on Sat March 13th. (more in next issue).*

Hedia, a daily, smiling presence at Thamarai's after school program has returned to her country but we hope to see her soon again as she plans to come back to Auroville as a newcomer.

*Marie has just arrived, a medical intern from Germany, she is providing administrative help at Thamarai's Healing and Health Education centre and working with the children in the after school program.*

Adriana, from Colombia generously shared her talents in yoga, mandala creation and handicrafts with children and the team .

*Katie Kingshott from Tasmania raised \$5,500AU from the very creative "The craft of Adventure" music, film and photo exhibition fundraiser.*

Kathy and Bridget presented Thamarai's work to the International Advisory Board who appreciated the efforts and advised follow up with UNESCO.

*They are participating in the ongoing integral sustainability planning platform that is looking at Auroville's relationship with the villages as a basis for sustainable planning for the next 5 years.*

## ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND by Kathy



For many years, we have carried the dream to create a public playground for the residents of Edayanchavady village. Adventure community, neighboring the village, always seemed like the perfect location as many years back, when Auroville purchased the 50 acre land, an agreement was reached with village leaders that a portion would be earmarked for sport and recreation facilities for the village. In the years following, apart from a few badminton courts, nothing more was able to materialize due to lack of funds and co-ordinated effort. Last year, when we took the opportunity to apply for funds from the German Government (Ministry for economic co-operation and development), we were delighted with a positive response that the 2 lakhs we requested would be sanctioned!

With 6 months to bring this to fruition, we set to work to begin the various negotiations with the Edayanchavady Development Council (stewards for the land), and to develop a design and plan for execution. The development council allocated a suitable portion of land (about 1/3 acre) and we quickly found enthusiastic responses from Poonam and Johnny to design a creative multi purpose play area that would be a safe and attractive place for women and children to play and gather in nature. The youth club eagerly volunteered their help to maintain the site into the future and added their

ideas for design to the melting pot. The elements were in place!

The result is an unusual playground featuring landscaped areas for both traditional and non traditional games, a large dome for swings and hanging ropes, a smaller climbing frame, and for the little children a shady sand pit!

The playground was opened on Indian Republic Day - January 26th - We were graced with the presence of the Panchayat president who presided over the opening activities - flag hoisting, tree planting and symbolic cutting of garland of Jasmine by women's group leader Meenakshi.



Tiago and Ana added to the festive atmosphere with music and songs with the children who had decorated the playground with many flowers and balloons.

This has been another good example of cooperation and co-creation which has carried Thamarai from the beginning. To catch the spirit of the creation and opening event, enjoy the short video filmed by Manohar (link below).



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=44zYcNQFPjU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44zYcNQFPjU)



## AROUND THE WORLD .... IN A PROJECTOR !

by Bade and Satheesh

*One Saturday evening last September, a thirteen-year old village boy approached us, as we were wrapping up our weekend story session at Thamarai.*

*« Are you issuing passports ? » he asked anxiously.*

*« Yes » we replied.*

*« Really ? ! What do you do with these passports ? »*

*« We travel every weekend to a different country. »*

*« Really ? » he exclaimed – both incredulously and yearningly.*

As we prepared to elucidate that ours are just model passports to get Thamarai kids excited about imaginary global travel, an eight-year old intervened. Smacking the older kid gently and pointing him to the device in the center of the room, he expounded: "Do you see the projector there? We travel to one country a week "in" a projector!"



We could not have articulated it better. Ours is not real travel in an airplane, but neither are they as imaginary as we had earlier thought – at least for this boy who felt being transported through the visual projections.

Our weekend sessions have a core purpose of opening kids' minds to the fact that the world is bigger than their village; but it is small enough for us all to be interconnected. Towards this end, we began by telling stories from different cultures. Soon, we realized the need for continuity in our themes and vivacity in our sessions. To get kids more excited, we co-developed colorful passports with kids'

real pictures; issued visa stickers; and brought real people – from our country of travel – to share stories, songs, music, dance, costumes or art works from their cultures.

Access to Auroville made it easy to bring people from various countries to intermingle with village kids during our sessions. For example, we have had sufi music and dance demonstrations for Turkey travel; capoeira performance for Brazil; "naked worm" songs for France; mandala art for Tibet; and djellaba dress and drums for Morocco. We have thus traveled to 20 countries, so far, both educating and entertaining kids along the way. We are very grateful to Thamarai for hosting our

sessions and also to Saboura for her dance lessons.



### PORTRAIT

**Hi !** I am Priya, currently doing a diploma in corporate secretaryship in Auroville Institute of Applied Technology, I hope to be an accounting assistant soon.

I am from Edayanchavadi and working in Thamarai as a volunteer for the after school program. I help the children with their homework and give clay, song and english classes that we all enjoy. By Thamarai, our village students very much benefit. This is a good place where they can do their homework as well as learn extracurricular activities.

In my village only the men's can be the village leaders, they don't give preference to women so, I have decided, when I become more mature I will raise my voice for the development of women in my village. I would like to see women having equal rights. In most homes decisions are taken by men, I feel women's voices should be equal. I want to be independent, my first step was when I joined Thamarai. I want to stand on my own feet. I don't want to get married early, I want my own career.

My wish is to develop my singing voice, I learnt Karnatic singing in school. I want to develop this skill.



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS by Ranjitha - 14

*In conversation with Hedia after Ranjitha's school essay on equality.*



My name is Ranjitha, I'm studying in Udavi school, 9th std. I like poetry, drawing, tailoring and computer science very much! I like to sing cinema songs. I have two sisters and a good family to take care of me. I like Thamarai, I come here to class, the children here, when I see them, make me feel happy.

From ancient times women don't

have equal rights. Women have to do the house work, the men have the education. Women fought for education, they now have equal rights in India. It's not total yet, but it's better compared to other countries. In India there are 4 castes : brahmins, kshatriyas, shudras and vaishyas. I come from a kshatriya family. Most of the families in the village around Thamarai are kshatriyas and vaishyas. The untouchables (shudras) live 3 streets after Thamarai. This system is very bad and rude, the low class people are separated from the village. They feel very sad. The only way to change the system is to educate the people. I like very much that Thamarai accepts every child, whatever the caste.



## THAMARAI PROFILE

### Thamarai

"Thamarai aspires towards the ideals of Human Unity and Evolution of Consciousness by providing spaces and opportunities that support relationship building , progressive learning and growth" between Auroville and the surrounding villages.

### Thamarai Community & Learning Centre

Founded in November 2006, offers daily play group sessions for pre school children, after school programs for school children and special weekend programs including educational tours and exchange programs for children, youth and women. The lively Centre, hosted in a restored traditional Tamil house, is also a meeting place for Aurovilians and village groups.

### Thamarai's Health Education Centre

Now a year old, offers daily health education and yoga classes and basic healing facilities in its own premises.

Both Centers are run on donation basis and activities are offered by a team of thirty volunteers from the village and Auroville as a co-creative, cross-cultural learning adventure.

## THAMARAI A TEAM EFFORT

We see Thamarai neither as an Auroville nor an Edayanchavadi project, rather as a co-creative learning experiment. Our volunteer team is made up of people from both places, as well as

the wider world. We strive to build relationship, understanding and mutual respect in our working process and celebrate our unity, diversity and multiplicity of energies.



(front row, left to right) Malliga, Anbu, Raji (back row, left to right) Jasmine, Lucas, Bridget, Balu, Kathy, Priya (missing) Uma, Michelle, Boobalan, Sundar.

## SHARING THE ADVENTURE...

If you wish to get involved please visit the "How to Help" section on the Thamarai website [www.thamarai.org](http://www.thamarai.org) or send us an E-mail on [thamarai@auroville.org.in](mailto:thamarai@auroville.org.in)

Thamarai is self supporting therefore we gladly welcome financial support and volunteers. Why not contact us to receive the Thamarai Children's Songs CD or become an ambassador promoting it around you ! **All funds raised** will be spent on programs for the village of Edayanchavady in South East India. All donations are acknowledged with **official receipt**.

