



# **SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM DELHI BRANCH**

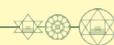


**ANNUAL REPORT  
2017—2018**



*You must always do what you say, but it is not  
always wise to speak about everything you do.  
When you speak, you must always speak the truth;  
but sometimes it is better not to speak.*

**– THE MOTHER**



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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

It is with great pride, and still greater humility that we record in this report the major activities of Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch during the year that has just gone by. Pride, because many of the activities we undertook had the Mother’s approval, and therefore could reach a point that may be called ‘successful’. Humility, because very often we could not read the Mother’s Will, and therefore we failed. Humility, still more, because even the activities which were successful, were only a drop in the ocean of work that is going on in the world towards the Master’s and the Mother’s Mission of creating a human race with a distinctly higher level of consciousness than has been the norm for thousands of years, the Mission that may be called the ‘Makeover of Man’.

### HIGHLIGHT OF THE YEAR



#### 60th anniversary of the enshrinement of the relics of Sri Aurobindo

One thing that all those who visit the Ashram are unanimous about is that the Ashram is an astonishing place. It is in the heart of the city, and yet does not seem to belong to the bustling metropolis that Delhi is. There is a miraculous change that people feel as soon as they step into the Ashram. They experience the descent of a mysterious peace into every nook and corner of the body. We attribute this miracle to the presence of the Relics of Sri Aurobindo, and the presence of the Mother who had once told the founder of the Ashram that She was more in the Delhi Ashram than in Pondicherry. We had the privilege of being the first institution to which the Mother sent the sacred Relics, which were enshrined here on 5 December 1957. The sixtieth anniversary of this very significant milestone in the history of the Ashram was celebrated from 2-9 December 2017.



*Shrine containing the sacred relics of Sri Aurobindo*

A significant feature of the celebrations was the presence of 90 young persons from Sri Aurobindo Centres in many parts of India – Orissa, Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Auroville, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka. There were a few devotees also from as far as the United States of America. Most of the Indian participants were fully sponsored through travel and accommodation allowance while some were offered free board and lodging in the ashram. It has always been the ashram's aspiration to take the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother to the youth of India, especially to those from humble backgrounds.

The theme of the celebrations was Sri Aurobindo's vision for India based on the 'Renaissance in India'. The term 'Renaissance' which means 'rebirth' in French, probably brings to mind the entry of Europe into the age of reason during the sixteenth century. This Renaissance is commonly understood as the beginning of modern science, revival of the arts and literature, change in the quality of the life-style, polity and the social order of Europe, and finally the evolution of humanism as the solution to the problems of human existence, where it failed. Sri Aurobindo's view of the Indian Renaissance has been elucidated in 'The Renaissance in India', originally published in the Arya from December 1918 onwards. By Renaissance he alluded to a reawakening of the national spirit, not only in the arts and literature, but in the very life-energy and pulse, first, of every Indian and then the world at large.

The spirit of India recognizes that life cannot be seen entirely in the light of externalities, to which she nevertheless pays heed, and due attention and care. India's unchanging spirit, however, rests with certainty on her sense of infinity. The "physical does not get its full sense until it stands in right relation to the supra-physical", says Sri Aurobindo. He envisions an India that would retain this "essential spirit, ..... her characteristic soul" while setting forth an infinity of new expressions or forms, "new philosophical, artistic, literary, cultural, political, social forms" that would inevitably reflect the spirit in progressive degrees of perfection. These forms would not contradict "the truths of life" which the time-old spirit of India embraced but rather, would express those truths more perfectly, "cured of defect, completed." How does one pursue this in one's own area of work, skill or expertise? That is what was attempted during the celebrations by





bringing together artist, architects, musicians and dancers, who had striven to retain the spirit of India intact in their work. This was a golden opportunity to collectively contemplate and reflect upon how we can allow ourselves to be part of the great movement of reawakening sweeping across India and also the world; to showcase a reawakening India through the unfolding of new expressions in various avenues such as in the arts, music, dance, design and architecture, science and technology and the religious, and ultimately a seamless integration and expression of all these guided by the Spirit.

On this onward journey, we had with us individuals practicing integral yoga in their lives and who have influenced ashrams, centres of learning and medical spaces with their aspirations and endeavours guided by a higher and wider vision. Through sessions of talks and workshops, these resource persons shared with everyone present their interpretation of Sri Aurobindo's vision and assessed the place of the theme in their own fields. Dr. Ramesh Bijlani welcomed the guests from all parts of India with a keynote address on the first day. The team of resource persons consisted of established educationists, illustrious writers, linguists, eloquent philosophers keen in the depth of any field of knowledge, medical practitioners, erudite scholars and academicians, path-breaking architects and engineers. Not only did these resource persons appeal to our mind and intellect, they were also able to touch our hearts deeply and drew our full attention towards them as they shared their journey. Amongst the stalwarts, we had Prof. Manoj Das offering two talks, *The Rishi* and *Signals for the Next Renaissance*, Dr. Ananda Reddy on *India, The Land of Sri Aurobindo and Significance of the Relics*, Dr. Alok Pandey on *Integral Health*, Dr. Sampadananda on *A Key to the Heart of India*, Dr. Anuradha on *Connecting the Dots – Pattern behind Patterns*, Ms. Ameeta Mehra on *Key Practices in the Yoga for the Future*, Shri Prashant Khanna on *Thee, Only Thee – Meditations on The Gita, The Mother and Sri Aurobindo*, Neeltje Huppel on *Self-Observation and Reflection in Indian Psychology and The Quest for Constant Remembrance*, Dr. Vijaya Ramaswamy on *Crafting Beauty, Crafting Gods – Craft Renaissance in India*, Dr. Sanjay Prakash on *Integral Design, Engineering and Architecture*, Dr. Deepti Mehrotra and Prof. Poonam Batra, who conducted the Education Forum.



We also had a fair deal of exposure to the views and works of artists, including performing artistes who invoked the artist in all of us. Pandit Barun Pal made an offering of his musical talent on the Hansveena on the evening of the first day. His was a special composition revolving around 60-beats and he conceptualised the composition, “Nivedanam Shree Shashtih” on his birthday along the banks of the Ganga in Varanasi.

We were given a rare opportunity to listen to Shabnam Virmani call the Divine with all her heart through Kabir’s dohas. She explored the idea of Time where in an instance there could be a pralaya and where Time determines manifestations. We were kept enthralled for an hour and a half with proclamations of profound truths with the simplest analogies.

Miti Desai then brought us into the centre from which it all spins. She showed us the way to live life through dance.





Mrinmoyee and Mathieu through colours and free-movements once again brought out the child in us and offered possibilities to know the self for a greater re-awakening.





Dr. Ramesh Bijlani gave the gist of Sri Aurobindopanishad in words while Premsheela and Minati gave the same another life and meaning through music.



The Mother's International School (MIS) presented a play, A Life Divine. The students were polished in their acting and the setting was thoughtfully arranged. An ambience was created that brought us in close contact with Sri Aurobindo's life.



On the last day, students of music from MIS offered an interesting fusion of musical pieces and enthralled the audience. Pandit Barun Pal put the orchestra together. The skill with which the children executed their musical knowledge was remarkable.



As activities for a deeper preparation, we had Mantra chantings conducted by Dr Sampadanada Mishra alternating with Yogasanas conducted by Shri Debi Prasad every morning from 6.30 to 7.30 am. Awareness through the Body (ATB) sessions by Jayanthy were held on two days and gave us the beginnings of knowing our bodies and paved the way to understand our deeper selves. Most welcome were the sessions of outdoor play by Hira where ice-breakers eased the participants and helped build meaningful bonds with their fellow travellers. Impromptu homing sessions tended to bring the group together and within the first three days, everyone began to feel at home.



In many sharing sessions, the ambience was that of gratitude. Each morning at 9 am, for 15 minutes, was an invocation offered by MIS music teachers and students. This was perhaps one of the most significant moments of the day as it prepared us from within to centre ourselves and become receptive to what was to happen throughout the day. The last session was devoted to reflection where participants were given some time to share whatever they wished to with everyone. Following this, a written reflection session found everyone deeply engrossed in putting their thoughts and feelings onto paper. Importantly, the reflections motivated the participants to concentrate on their aspirations for their own growth.



The 8 days of grand offering culminated with Mantra chanting, a result of the work done on alternate days of Mantra Chanting sessions conducted by Dr. Sampadananda.

The eight days seemed a seamless flow of activities meant for inner growth. All of us stayed focused on this one aim, as much as we could. Participants too engaged in all activities with all their being and expressed their gratitude for the opportunity. Finally, only gratitude remains in all of us here, in the ashram. We marvel at the opportunity that was bestowed upon us for carrying out such a commemoration. We offer our gratitude to the Divine in being guided to make the 60th Anniversary of the Enshrinement of Sri Aurobindo's Relics an offering in every way possible.





### Auro-Ratna Award (2017)

On 27 September 2017, at the Nainital Center of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, Van Niwas, a special programme was organised where Tara didi was felicitated with the Auro-Ratna Award conferred on her by the Overman Foundation's founder, Mr. Anurag Banerjee, for the amazing breadth and depth of the work she has carried out in the past several decades for the realisation of Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's vision.

It was inspiring to listen to the heart-felt testimonials from Tara didi's close associates such as Ms. Prema Nandakumar, Dr. Alok Pandey, Shraddavan, and Prithwindra Mukherjee in appreciation of Tara didi, her exemplary attitude towards work, her dauntless spirit and her deep love for The Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Following the felicitation ceremony, Tara didi generously handed to all present a piece of carpet from Sri Aurobindo's room and Mother's room. It was indeed a token of Grace for all of those present as they reverently received something precious which had the rarest privilege of having been at Their Feet.

To read the testimonials, the following link can be accessed:

<http://overmanfoundation.org/2017/11/30/tara-jauhar-awarded-the-auro-ratna-award-for-the-year-2017/>

### Yoga Forum Munchen Patanjali Award (2018)

On 2 February 2018, Dr. Ramesh Bijlani received the Yoga Forum Munchen Patanjali Award instituted by the Indian Institution for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine (IASTAM) from Shri Anil Baijal, the Lieutenant-Governor of Delhi. The award is given for excellence in interdisciplinary development of yoga.





### Enshrinement of the Relics of Sri Aurobindo at Dehri-On-Sone

The sacred relics of Sri Aurobindo were enshrined by Tara didi in Sri Aurobindo Society Center at Dehri-on-Sone, Bihar, on the morning of 4 April 2017, the day on which Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry in 1910. The enshrinement was preceded by the offering of flowers to the Relics and meditation on the Mother's music.



To celebrate this significant event of the arrival of the Relics in the Center at Dehri-on-Sone, a three-day programme was organised. The morning of April 3 saw the devotees collecting at the Center for concentration, which was followed by hoisting of the Mother's flag by Dr. K. N. Verma from Maa Mandir in Madhya Pradesh. The day included discussions and talks on various topics related to Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

In addition to these sessions, a drama on "Search of New India" was also staged, which revolved around Sri Aurobindo's political life and work, his vision of India's destiny and the world's destiny. The bhajans offered by Sanjay, Gopal, Sneha, Simran, Shivani and Vinit drenched the devotees in the love for the Divine.

## THE ALL US MEET (AUM)



The All US Meet (AUM), an association of the devotees of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the USA, held a conference on the theme “Forward to the Future” in Amherst College Campus in Boston, Massachusetts, in August 2017. Tara didi from Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, was invited as the guest of honour and Dr Anju Khanna from the Madhuban Ashram was invited as a resource person. The main aim of this conference was connecting people to meet, get inspired and work together in harmony for a new future.

In the AUM conference, Tara didi united all different sections of the people by answering questions raised by them on her growing up with The Mother, and her learning and time spent with The Mother in the Ashram in Puducherry, along with the Delhi Ashram’s role in spreading the work as given by The Mother when she permitted opening of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch as the only branch of the Puducherry Ashram.

Tara didi, in her unassuming and straight forward manner inspired a lot of people about walking the Sunlit Path. Dr Anju Khanna, as a resource person, took a session on integral yoga in context of the theme “Forward to the Future”. She also shared in detail the Ashram’s work in Madhuban, and this focused approach connected further the Delhi Ashram’s unique spirit of voluntary work by so many people in Delhi, Van Niwas, Kechla and now Madhuban.

Ms. Bhuvna Nandkumar did the subtle weaving and this made it so easy to meet so many others, and Mr. Amit Thakker and his family too lovingly looked after Tara didi and Anju.

The AUM conference and its invitation to Tara didi and Anju Khanna has seeded some deep connects of thoughts, feelings and exchanges of people between the Delhi Ashram and the western devotees, and this is very meaningful, as the golden chain that binds us from east to west has got strengthened.

Enroute to U.S.A., and on the way back to India, Tara didi and Anju stopped at London to use every opportunity to meet as many people as possible. They connected with people from two Sri Aurobindo Centres in London who were carrying on the work. Both the centres invited people for a special session of interaction with Tara didi, and the outcome was one of learning about the work being done in the centres and also energizing the communities’ focus on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother as the inspiration.



The architects of the trip to London were the loving and caring devotees, especially Ms. Vilas Patel, who gently wove the pattern of planning so much in her effortless manner.

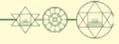
Tara didi and Anju were looked after by Mrs. Daksha and Subhash Thaker, Mrs. Nila and Navin Kuntawala, Mrs. Usha and Deepak Myanger, Mrs. Devyani and Ullas Misra, and Mr. Ramesh Patel and many, many others who came long distances to the two centres in London to meet them.

Ms. Sunayna Panda, who has done a lot of research on Sri Aurobindo's childhood in London, was kind enough to take Tara didi to Sri Aurobindo's home and also St. Paul's School in London. Visiting these places was a deeply rewarding and inspiring part of the trip.





## THE YEAR AHEAD



In the coming year we look forward to renewing our commitment to the broad goal of raising the collective consciousness of the human race.

The Mother had told our founder Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar (popularly called Chachaji in the Ashram):

*“I am hoping and expecting a lot of Sri Aurobindo’s work to be done through Delhi Ashram”.*

We pray for her Grace to come up to Her expectations.



*The world is preparing  
for a big change.*

*Will you help?*



## 2

# THE DELHI CAMPUS

### DARSHAN DAYS

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#### **The Mother's Final Arrival in Pondicherry, 24 April 2017**

The day started with an invocation of the Mother by Srila Didi. In the evening, there was a march past followed by lighting of the lamps of aspiration in the lawns near the Shrine. Then there was a musical offering by the Ashram choir in the Meditation Hall.

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*Invocation of the Mother by Srila Didi*



*Aspirants march past the Shrine*



*Lighting of the lamps of aspiration in the lawns near the Shrine*



*A musical offering by the Ashram Choir in the Meditation Hall*

## Sri Aurobindo's birthday, 15 August 2017

The day started with *Prabhat Pheri*, with vigorous chanting while going round the Ashram, which was led by the indefatigable Sukhendu Roy. This was followed by invocation of the Divine in the Meditation Hall by Srila Didi.

Later in the morning, between two short sessions of soulful music was a talk by Acharya Navneet on 'Glimpses of Sri Aurobindo's Commentary on Bhagavad Gita'.

The last item before lunch was a film show in the Hall of Joy where two films were screened, 'The Life of Sri Aurobindo' and 'What Price Freedom?'

After lunch, at 2 pm the students of Matri Kala Mandir made musical offerings in the Meditation Hall.

The highlight of the day was a 2-hour play 'Dashavatar'. The play gave glimpses of the first nine avatars, *matsya* (fish), *kurma* (tortoise), *varaha* (boar), *narasimha* (half-lion, half-man), *vamana* (dwarf), Parashurama, Rama, Krishna and Buddha, and some legends associated with each. At the end of the play was a slide show suggestive of Sri Aurobindo being the tenth avatar. A commentary that helped connect the scenes, added to the legends narrated, and brought out the evolutionary aspect of the successive avatars, was read out by Dr. Prakash Verma.

The play was the culmination of hard work put in by the youngsters of the Ashram for more than a month, often working till almost midnight. Two of the leaders who inspired them to put in the effort, and worked with them throughout were Hira Das, the man behind the idea, script and the theatrical adaptation; and Naval, who was behind the special cut-outs prepared in the handmade paper department.

Soon after the play finished, the youngsters were ready in their blue uniforms for participating in the march past and lights of aspiration in the lawns near the Shrine, where a very serene and pious atmosphere descended with the singing of Vande mataram, the Mother's music and Tara Didi's reading of the prayer dated 15 March 1914 from 'The Mother's 'Prayers and Meditations'.



After the devotees had lit the lamps of aspiration, they moved into the Meditation Hall, where Pt. Barun Pal and his team offered a soothing Hansa Veena recital.

As the devotees came out of the Meditation Hall, they received Prasad and a card with the following message:

*In the Yoga as in life it is the man who persists unwearied to the last in the face of every defeat and disillusionment and of all confronting, hostile and contradicting events and powers who conquers in the end and finds his faith justified because to the soul and Shakti in man nothing is impossible.*

– Sri Aurobindo

*Summary of the talk on 'Glimpses of Sri Aurobindo's Commentary on Bhagavad Gita' by Acharya Navneet*



*Hansa Veena recital by Pt. Barun Pal and his team*

Acharya Navneet started with a tribute to Sri Aurobindo, who had contributed both to our political freedom and spiritual freedom, which is a rare combination. Then he went on to bring out the fragmented thinking that characterizes several commentaries on the Gita, with emphasis on action, knowledge, devotion, or renunciation of life, depending on the bias of the commentator. But Sri Aurobindo's 'Essays on the Gita' stand out in looking at the Gita as a whole. Instead of going verse by verse and commenting upon it, Sri Aurobindo has taken up topics in the same sequence as in the Gita, and while writing an essay on the topic he has taken the liberty of quoting verses from anywhere in the Gita. This shows that he had assimilated the whole of the Gita in his mind before he started writing these essays. The speaker dwelt at some length on the concept of duty. Doing one's duty in a disinterested manner is important till a person considers himself to be the doer. After that stage has been transcended, the message of the Gita is about which duty to perform out of many that may seem good and necessary in their own way.



*Reading by Tara Didi on Siddhi Day, 24 November*

## Siddhi Day, 24 November 2017

On the Siddhi Day, which is also a Darshan Day and observed on 24 November, the day started with invocation of the Divine by Srila Didi, who was accompanied by Rangamma Didi, Jayanthy and Minati. In the evening, there was a march past near the Shrine, accompanied by recital of Vande Mataram and reading by Tara Didi. After that the devotees lit lamps of aspiration, and proceeded to the Meditation Hall, where a musical offering by the Ashram choir was followed by a reading by Tara Didi.

## The Mother's Birthday, 21 Feb 2018

Celebrations for The Mother's Birthday started with Prabhat Pheri early in the morning, led by the regular and irrepressible Sukhendu Roy. Then Srila Didi and Jayanti Didi invoked the blessings of the Mother with an invocation. Later in the morning, students paid floral tributes at the Shrine. The students of the primary wing of The Mother's International School made a musical offering of devotional songs interspersed with recitations. It was a joy to see the transparent sincerity in the eyes and gestures of innocent little ones as they sang the glory of the Mother. In the afternoon the youngsters of the Ashram demonstrated the perfection of the physical through amazing feats of balance and coordination. In the evening the march past accompanied by Vande Mataram was followed by lighting of the lamps of aspiration. Then the devotees and visitors moved to the Meditation Hall where devotional music was followed by Tara Didi's reading from 'The Mother' by Sri Aurobindo.

## OTHER SPECIAL DAYS



### Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry, 4 April 2017 & Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Tapasya building

The day started with an invocation of the Divine by Srila Didi. In the evening, there was a musical offering by Ms Veena Sawale in the Tapasya circle.

## International Day of Yoga, 21 June 2017

The International Day of Yoga began with the Ashram community, guests and visitors participating in a session of yogasanas led by Debashish. In the afternoon, there was a play, 'The Journey of Life', written and directed by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani, and enacted by the girls from Govt. schools who have just finished class XII, and come to the Ashram for training through the Ratan Lal Foundation. The play had been set in a class room, in which a simple question by a student, "Why do we come to school?" led to a discussion that went on in the class for three days. In the course of the discussion, the teacher ended up giving the students the comprehensive view of yoga known as the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. She brought out how yoga can be a 24x7 practice, the goal of which is the same as the goal of human life. In the evening, there was a Bhajan Sandhya, in which Premsheela made a musical offering of devotional songs in which the focus was on yoga.

## Tara Didi's birthday, 5 July 2017

Like every year, this year also Tara Didi's birthday saw spontaneous outpouring of love, which kept her busy receiving greetings and good wishes from the ashram community and a large number of visitors. Being a workaholic, this is not how she likes to spend the day, but politeness compels her to tolerate this intrusion once a year. The day started with meditation in which Tara Didi recited prayers written by the Mother on 4 & 5 July 1914. The recitation ended with the very significant words of the Mother, "What has to be done will be done. The necessary instruments will be prepared. Strive in the calm of certitude." After the meditation, Tara Didi and Mr. Y.R. Malhotra planted a sapling each in the Samadhi Lawns. Mr. Y.R. Malhotra, a senior ashramite and an engineer by qualification, who has supervised a lot of construction work in the Ashram, has his birthday also on July 5. In the afternoon, there was a musical presentation of slides from different facets of Tara Didi's life covering several decades, bringing back some very pleasant memories, followed by the inevitable cutting of the cake amidst the chorus of 'Happy birthday to you'. After cake and tea, there was a massive tree plantation. The 7 pm meditation started with the recording of a devotional song by Karuna Didi. Then Tara Didi read a few stanzas from *Savitri*, Book 3, Canto 3 (The House of the Spirit and the New Creation). In the end was silent meditation with the Mother's music in the background.



*Siddhi Day, 24 November 2017: Left to right – Invocation of the Divine by Srila Didi, accompanied by Rangamma Didi, Jayanthy and Minati; Lighting of the lamps of aspiration; A musical offering by the Ashram choir*



*The Mother's Birthday, 21 Feb 2018: Top left – MIS primary wing students singing devotional songs interspersed with recitations; Remaining images – Ashram youngsters performing amazing feats of strength, balance and coordination*



*Above: Celebrating the day of Sri Aurobindo's arrival in Pondicherry & Tapasya building Inauguration Anniversary; Right: International Day of Yog celebration on 21 June 2017*



*Left & below: Tara Didi's birthday celebration on 5 July 2017*

## Chacha ji's Birthday, 13 August 2017

Since 13 August was a Sunday this year, the students of The Mother's International School paid a tribute to the Founder of the school, Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar (popularly called *Chachaji*) on 11 August 2017. The students of the senior school had a special assembly in the Meditation Hall of the Ashram, which started with devotional music offered by the students. This was followed by recitation by the students in which they gave a glimpse of the life, character, personality and works of Chachaji briefly in chaste Hindi. The event came to a close with meditation with The Mother's music in the background.

The students of the junior school organized an inter-school patriotic song festival. The program started with a song and dance presentation and a few patriotic songs by the students of The Mother's International School.

On 12 August, Ramesh Bhaiya narrated in the Meditation Hall Chachaji's illustrious life, and a story told by him. The story is about a group of sadhus who lived with a few cows a happy life, and also enjoyed the milk and milk products they got from the cows. A jealous neighbour of theirs once stole the cows. He found the sadhus were still happy, and overheard one of them saying how much time they would save now because they did not have to look after the cows any more. Having failed in his mission to make the sadhus miserable, he left the cows back. The sadhus were still happy, and he overheard one of them saying that they had got back the opportunity to serve the cows. The jealous neighbour learnt that happiness did not depend on external circumstances.

On 13 August there was a Havan and offering of flowers at Chachaji's samadhi. In the Sunday satsang, there was a musical offering by Preamsheela, who was accompanied by Srila, Jayanthy, Minati and Pushpashree, which included a few favourite bhajans of Chachaji, such as *wah wah mauj faqiran di*. This was followed by a talk by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani. He spoke about the life and works of Chachaji, specially bringing out a few general principles of spiritual life. First, he pointed out two major decisions which Chacha ji took in life which were based on the voice of the psychic being – one, responding to Mahatma Gandhi's call for participating in the freedom struggle at age 18 even if it meant dropping out of college; and two, after independence deciding not to continue with politics but instead getting more involved

in working for The Mother. Secondly, he pointed out that Chacha ji's participation in the freedom struggle for nearly thirty years was still, in the language of the Mother, his 'temporary occupation'. He discovered his 'final calling' through a 'chance' visit to Pondicherry in 1939. A person discovers his final calling only if he handles his temporary occupation in the spirit of karma yoga, and that is what Chacha ji did.

In the evening there was a musical offering by Preamsheela, who was accompanied by Mithu, Srila, Jayanthy, Lin and Neeraj. She sang some more bhajans which were the favourites of Chacha ji, such as *man lagyo yaar faqiri mein*. After that Tara Didi read out the chapter 'My Supreme Discovery' from Chacha ji's memoirs, in which he has described in candid detail laced with humour his visit to Pondicherry in 1939, which was a turning point in his life.

## Swachh Bharat Divas, 2 October 2017

Swachh Bharat Divas was observed in the Ashram with a grand shramdaan with focus on cleaning up of the Ashram by the Ashram community, students of the Teaching Yoga program, and school girls participating in the collaborative program between the Ashram and Ratanlal Foundation, guests and visitors. In addition, there were Bhajans, including Mahatma Gandhi's favourite, *Vaishnava janato tene kahiye...*, and short films on the 'Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi Today', 'Yoga Can Be Fun' and 'What Price Freedom?'

## Diwali, 19 October 2017

On Diwali, the festival of lights, the Ashram wore a festive look, thanks to Naval Bhaiya, Ramani Didi, and the hand-made paper section. The youngsters played games, cooked their favourite dishes which everybody enjoyed, and in the evening lamps of aspiration were lit, followed by a musical offering by Srila Didi and her team, and readings from Sri Aurobindo's 'The Mother' by Tara Didi.

## Dhammapada Chanting, 4 November 2017

The Ashram had once again the opportunity to welcome 30 monks from Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and India who chanted verses of the Dhammapada, the best known scripture of the Buddhist tradition, which is a simple but very comprehensive exposition of human values. Although the chanting was in the original Pali



Above: Devotional music sung by the senior students of MIS; A song and dance performed by the students of MIS; Inter-school patriotic song festival organized by students of the junior school on Chachaji's Birthday, 13 August 2017.  
Below: Cleaning up of the Ashram by the the Ashram community on Swachh Bharat Divas, 2 October 2017 and short film screenings.

Above: Havan and offering of flowers at Chachaji's samadhi; A talk by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani on the life and works of Chachaji.  
Below: Diwali celebration, 5 July 2017



language, the atmosphere created by the chants had a soothing and uplifting influence even on those who did not understand the language. The group was led by Ms. Wangmo Dixey. In the evening, there was a talk by Prof. Pant.

#### *Summary of the talk by Prof. Pant*

Dr. Pant from Gautam Buddha University, New Delhi, gave a talk on “Dhammpada: an exposition of human values for better living”. While discussing the tough times through which humanity is passing, he said that the desire for material wealth, power, and pleasure has led to conflict, crisis, destruction and disharmony everywhere. The solution lies in Dhamma (in Pali) or Dharma (in Sanskrit). It is the practice of Dhamma which will help in reviving the humanitarian values needed to bring about a balance between material

development and spiritual values. Dhamma serves as an interface between individuals and discovers the interconnectedness of all, thereby avoiding conflicts. Dhammapada is a text that discusses spiritual values and shows how to practice them in our daily life.

#### **The Mother’s Mahasamadhi Day, 17 November**

Like every year, the Mother’s Mahasamadhi Day, 17 November, was observed in the Ashram as the day of silence. In keeping with the Mother’s teachings, the silence is not absolute, but the day is used as a reminder of her advice to talk only as much as is necessary. The day started with a havan. In the evening, the devotees lit the lamps of aspiration around the Shrine. After that, there was silent meditation in the Meditation Hall.



*30 monks from Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and India chanting verses of the Dhammapada on 4 November 2017*



### Sunday Satsangs

The 10 am Sunday Satsangs have been a tradition at the Ashram since its inception. A discourse, sandwiched between musical offerings, provides much needed relaxation, peace, and spiritual lessons in small doses. The numbers attending the satsangs is increasing steadily, and more and more young people are showing up at these sessions.

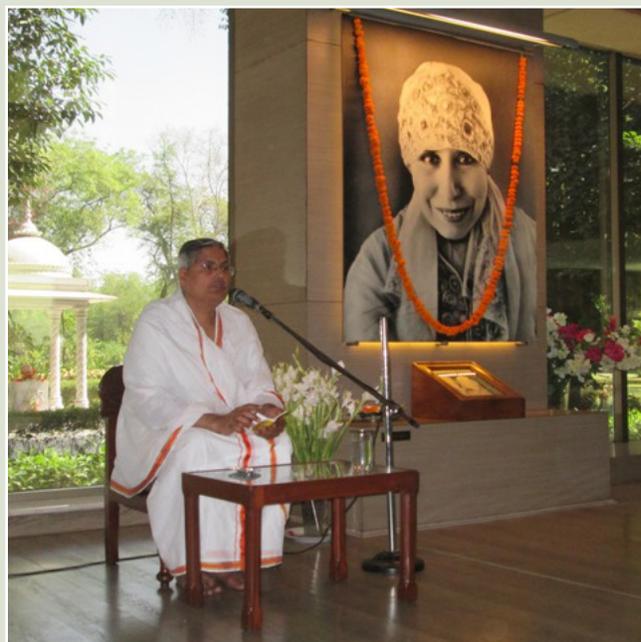
The discourses were given regularly by Ms Aparna Roy, Shri Prashant Khanna, Dr Ramesh Bijlani and Dr Mithu Pal. Ms Aparna Roy is doing a series on *Hamare Prashn, Sri Maa ke Uttar*, Shri Prashant Khanna a series on Sri Aurobindo's *Sonnets*, Dr Ramesh Bijlani a series on The Mother's *The Great Adventure*, and Dr Mithu Pal started a series on The Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*. The musical offerings during the Sunday Satsangs were usually by Ms Preamsheela, Ms Sapna Mukherjee and Dr. Mithu Pal. But on some Sundays, musical offerings were made by Ms Shruti Gupta, Ms Sowmya Narayanan, Ms OIshani Dutta, Dr Maitreyee Karak, Mr Tapan Bhowmick, Mr Avnish Bhardwaj, Ms Samadrita Barua, Ms Lin Thoi, Ms Sangeeta Trehan, Ms Sushmita Mitra and Ms Pragya Taneja.

#### **On some Sundays we had other distinguished speakers:**

- Acharya Navneet, an IIT graduate and a Vedanta scholar, spoke on 'The three tapas in the Bhagavad Gita', 'Aasuri and Daivi Forces in the Bhagavad Gita', 'Social Theft and Its Consequences', and 'Three types of helpless habits born out of ignorance'.
- Dr. Bharat Gupt, an authority on Sri Aurobindo's literature and Indian culture, spoke on 'Rashtravaada Ishta ya Anishta' and 'Sri Aurobindo and the Youth'.
- Mr Udhav Sureka spoke on 'Nachiketa – the Ideal Student'.
- Dr Garima Sharma spoke on 'The Truth About Economic Development'.

#### **On some Sundays the topic was tailor-made to suit the occasion:**

- On 2 April 2017, Dr. Ramesh Bijlani spoke on 'Integral Yoga: Beyond the Individual', because of the proximity to 4 April, the day on which Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry.



*A talks by Acharya Navneet, a Vedanta scholar*

- On 23 April 2017, Dr. Ramesh Bijlani spoke on 'Sadhana in Integral Yoga', because of the proximity to 24 April, the day of The Mother's final arrival in Pondicherry.
- On 13 August 2017, Dr. Ramesh Bijlani spoke on 'Shri Surendra Nath Jauhar (Chacha ji): A Spiritual Biography' because 13 August is Chacha ji's birthday.
- On 3 Dec 2017, Dr. Ramesh Bijlani, Ms Preamsheela and Ms Minati Pradhan made a joint presentation on Sri Aurobindopanishad as a part of the 60th anniversary of the Enshrinement of the Relics of Sri Aurobindo at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch.
- On 31 Dec 2017, Dr. Ramesh Bijlani spoke on 'Spiritual Health' to mark the beginning of 2018, which has been declared by the Ashram as the year of spiritual health.

#### **Classes on the major works of Sri Aurobindo**

Shri Prashant Khanna, besides speaking on Sri Aurobindo's *Sonnets* on the third Sunday of every month in the Sunday Satsang series, spoke on the *Sonnets* also on other Sundays at 11.30 am. He also gave a talk based on Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* every Thursday at 11.30 am.

## Evening Meditation

Collective meditation at 7 pm, Monday through Saturday, is also an unbroken tradition of the Ashram ever since its inception. This year, during the meditation period we had musical offerings readings from the Mother's works by Tara Didi and Prakash Verma, talks based on short stories by Dr Bijlani, and several guest lectures.

## Classes on the Upanishads

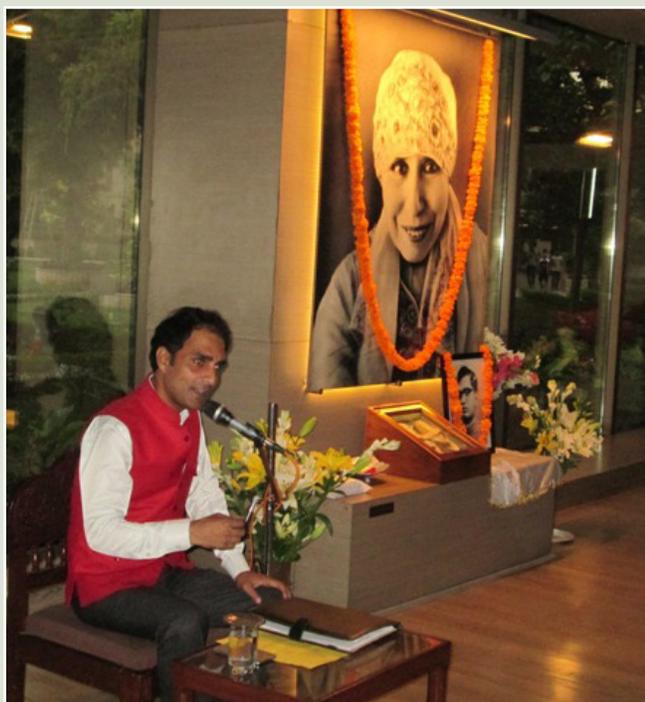
Dr. Tarun Baveja continued with his classes on the Upanishads and the Gita, four afternoons a week.

## Guest Lectures

There were several guest lectures during the year as a part of the sixtieth anniversary of the enshrinement of the Relics of Sri Aurobindo from 2-9 December 2017 (Chapter 1).

## D.N. Jhunjhunwala Lecture, 14 August 2017

This year's D.N. Jhunjhunwala Lecture was delivered by Dr. Rahul Awasthy, a poet, and Lecturer in Hindi at Bareilly College. The title of the talk was 'Sri Aravind va Akhand Bharat'. The speaker spoke with great enthusiasm in chaste Hindi about the essential



indivisibility and unity of India. While drawing cues from the biography and writings of Sri Aurobindo, he talked about the psychological and spiritual basis of nationalism. The speaker kept the audience mesmerized with his passionate delivery which came straight from his heart.

## Tana Bana: Workshop on music and art, 15-30 May 2017

This 2-week workshop was conducted once again this year during the summer vacation by Preamsheela and Kamlesh. With their expertise, their dedication, and their love for children, they created magic. By the end of the workshop, the children loved them as much as the workshop, and did not want the workshop to ever end. The activities in music included sargam, raga bhupali, and children's songs. Besides inspiring songs such as *hum honge kaamyaaab*, there were tongue twisters and songs designed to improve attention and concentration. The activities in art included clay modelling, making hand fans, jigsaw puzzle sculptures, puppet making, and face painting. Some unconventional activities on a few days included water play, and collection of leaves and twigs outdoors, and using them to create pieces of art. On the last day, the children presented a few songs that they had learnt, and the pieces of art that they had created were handed over to them to take home as souvenirs. Some of the comments received from parents at the end of the workshop were: "Anvita enjoyed every bit of it", "Shreya was excited to be a part of the camp", "Rudraansh was very happy and excited to come for the classes", "Want to join next year", "Lovely songs, amazing confidence and compassion", "The teachers passed on very precious values of simplicity, humility and being grounded to the kids", "Will miss Kamlesh Bhaiya and Preamsheela Didi".





Clay modelling done by the children



Creating art using leaves

### Course on ‘Decision Making Based on Self-Discovery’ for students of IIT-Delhi

A group of 20 IIT-Delhi students attended a course, ‘Decision making based on self-discovery’, consisting of 4 sessions of 4 hours each in September 2017, which was organized partly in IIT and partly in Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. Besides four sessions of asanas and pranayamas, the program consisted of talks on yoga, the process of meditation, the spiritual worldview and the purpose of life, stress management, mind-body relationship in relation to health and disease, and on ancient wisdom in a global context.

Some of the comments received as feedback at the end of the program were:

*“a beautiful, profound, informative, very helpful and life changing course”*

*“learned where my life is taking me”*

*“solidified my belief that materialistic goals are not what we should seek...temporary happiness won’t do any good to us in the long run”*

*“very insightful and put in a modern and understandable fashion”, “one of the rare courses which changed my view of life”*

*“visits to the Ashram were really good”*



## BHAJAN SANDHYAS



We have frequently an evening of devotional music by invited singers, some of them budding artistes, and some highly accomplished and experienced ones. Besides creating a pious and peaceful atmosphere, these sessions provide encouragement to budding artistes, and inspiration to the youngsters of the Ashram.

Date	Singer	Accompanied by
12 April 2017	Dr. Amrit Walia	Dr. Joginder Kaur, Dr. Surendra Katoch and Dr. Mukta Katoc
14 April 2017	Ms. Samadrita Barua	Mr. Sukant Bajpai and Dr. Jayanthy Ramachandran
22 April 2017	Oishani Dutta	
8 May 2017	Ms Samadrita Barua	
27 May 2017	Ms. Pavithra Chari	
3 June 2017	Dr. Mithu Pal	
29 July 2017	Ms. Samadrita Barua	
16 September 2017	Ms Shruti Gupta	
7 October 2017	Shri Tapan Chandra Bhowmick	
30 October 2017	Mr. Prahlad Singh Tipaniya	
11 November 2017	Ms Sapna Mukherjee	Mr Jaskanwal Singh
22 November 2017	Parvati Baul	
23 November 2017	Prof. Sehdev Kumar, Ms. Sukriti Sen	Mr. Shambhunath Bhattacharya, Mr. Manish Sharma
25 November 2017	Mr. Evgenii Krasilnikov	
16 December 2017	Ms. Nirmala Rodrigo	
6 Jan 2018	Sarod Baba and Gayaki Mata	



The Mother's Integral Health Centre provides a wide range of preventive and curative services based on a variety of systems of medicine and yoga. The services are provided by volunteers from different specialities of allopathy, and also experts in ayurveda, naturopathy, homeopathy and acupuncture. We also have a popular physiotherapy unit.

### YOGA

#### Course on Teaching Yoga

A 20-week 200-hour level-1 course on Teaching Yoga was conducted from 2 August 2017 - 15 December 2017. Thirty-five students were enrolled for the course after going through a selection process. Of them, 32 completed the course successfully, and were awarded certificates on 18 January 2018. In this course, hackneyed expressions such as 'yoga is a spiritual discipline' and 'yoga is a way of life' are brought to life. Further, the students have an opportunity to initiate in themselves the process of psycho-spiritual transformation so that they undergo a change in their basic nature, which in turn brings more love, peace and joy in their lives.

#### Orientation to Integral Yoga

Weekend Orientations to Integral Yoga (Saturday and Sunday, 8 am-12.30 pm both days) were conducted on 22 & 23 April 2017, 16-17 September 2017 and 16 & 17 December 2017, which were attended by a total of about 100 participants. In response to popular demand, the Sunday only option is also available. In these Orientations, the participants get two rounds of basic asanas and pranayamas, and a few talks on yoga and spirituality interspersed with musical breaks. The overall effect is remarkable relaxation and rejuvenation, besides the program also being highly educative.

#### Round-the-year classes

Although we like to teach only integral yoga, as a concession to popular demand, we also have year-round classes on the physical practices of yoga. We have slots to suit different categories: 6.45 am, 8 am, 11 am, 4 pm and 5.30 pm; and a special slot for senior citizens at 9.45 am. Each of these classes is of one hour duration, three days a week. Classes in the 8 am, 9.45 am and 11 am slots are given by those who have done the course on Teaching Yoga in the Ashram. During the year 2017-2018, 520 persons benefited from these classes.



*Students attending the 20 week course on Teaching Yoga*



*Musical break during the orientations to Integral Yoga*



*Participants of the orientations to Integral Yoga course*



*Talks on yoga and spirituality.....*

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- **General OPD**  
Men 1371; Women 1285; Children 3696. Total: 6352
- **Speciality Clinics**  
The following clinics functioned with the help of visiting consultants  
Orthopedics 177; Gynecology 42; General Surgery 64; Skin 45; Eye 90; Dental 737; Psychiatry 110; Ayurveda 136; Physiotherapy 4777; Acupressure 635; Homoeopathy 742; Counseling 357; Naturopathy 20.
- **Total number of patients seen in Speciality Clinics: 7932**
- **Paramedical Training:** 1 student was given 1-year training.
- **First Aid and Health Education Training:** A course was run for 29 vocational trainees.
- **Vision Improvement Camps:** Twenty five, 6-day camps were conducted for 560 participants. An eye exercise kit was given to each participant.
- **Yoga Classes:** 520 persons participated in Yoga classes conducted by The Mother's Integral Health Centre.
- **Medical help rendered to residents of Village Kechla, Dist-Koraput, Odisha**
  1. Children from Kechla were brought to Delhi. Their Integral Health Check-up done. Problems identified related to Dental, Eye, Skin and Psychological issues. They were referred to the concerned Specialists for management.
  2. Master Madhumata Sahu was sent to Sir Gangaram Hospital, New Delhi for his Autoimmune Arthritis for Serial follow ups.
  3. The Tele-Medicine activity continued as during previous years.

## CLEAN MIND PROGRAMME

2017 was declared as the Year of the Mind, and it was decided to launch a 'Clean Mind Programme' (CMP). Under this programme, activities were conducted:

1. At Delhi Ashram (SAA) for local or NCR participants
2. Outside the Ashram: Outreach Camps
3. At the Delhi Ashram for visitors from long distances ('reverse outreach')

### 1. CMP at the Delhi Ashram

Total Camps: 80

Total participants: 1624

Each camp included Havan, Yogasanas, Talk, Shramdan and Prasad.

### 2. Outreach CMP camps

- **Ramgarh, Madhuban**  
Two Camps were conducted  
Total no. examined: 365
- **Rishikesh, Sivananda Ashram**  
55 students came from Kashika, an NGO at Uttarkashi, to Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh. For them, there was a three-day camp. The activities in the camp included Yogasanas, Ganga Cleaning, Health check-up, talks, Satsang, Ganga Aarti and town visit.
- **Om Indu Jain Rural Hospital, Village Dhankot, Gurugram, Haryana**  
Total no. of Camps: 6 / Total no of participants: 280

- **Navjeevan Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Begumpur, New Delhi**

A five-day Camp was conducted in March 2017. The camp had sessions on integral health, value education, making compost from kitchen waste, duties, and physical practices of yoga.

Total no of students: 300

- **Swami Dayananda Ashram School, Rishikesh**  
Six Camps were conducted at Swami Dayananda Ashram School, Rishikesh  
Total no. of children: 648

- **Dehradun**

Camps were conducted on 27 & 28 January 2018

<u>Venue</u>	<u>Participants</u>
1. DAV School, Premnagar (Centre 1)	88
2. DAV School, Sangrilla, Bansiwala. (Centre 2)	81

Total Camps: 2 / Total Participants 169

### 3. Programs for Visitors

- **Ashiana Children Home Panchkula, Chandigarh**  
2-day camps were conducted at the Delhi Ashram  
Total no. of participants: 268
- **Kashika Foundation, Uttarkashi**  
5-day camps were conducted at the Delhi Ashram  
Total no. of participants: 25

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING



Vocational Training started in the Ashram in 1989 to empower underprivileged and unemployed youth of the country. Two batches get trained under this scheme every year. Their respective sessions start on April 1 and October 1. Trainees are provided with free board and lodging along with a stipend during the training. It is more a unified community life experience than vocational training. Some of the characteristics of the training are:

- A daily schedule that maximizes synthesis of learning and living
- An opportunity to live and interact with people of different age groups and from various parts of the country as well as from other countries, many of them experienced devotees of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother
- Inculcating the values of punctuality, discipline, hard work, discipline, endurance, order, harmony, dignity of labour and self-reliance
- A life experience to better understand the interactions of body, emotions, the intellect and the deepest Self, and their implications for understanding the meaning of work and purpose of life with the aim of becoming a good and socially useful human being
- Attention to personal and social hygiene, aim of human life, contemplation and identification of Self, and re-programming the thought process for a meaningful life
- An understanding of what it takes to build a serene living environment like Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch, which can facilitate integral growth
- National Integration: Participants are selected from all corners of our nation. Every batch of trainees includes participation from at least nine states of India.



*Trainees along with Ashram residents rendering Shramdan in a typical day*

We have facilities for training in Computer Basics and Office Administration, Library Science, Para Medical, Tailoring, Hand Made Paper, Carpentry & Photo Lamination, Cooking, Bakery & Food processing and Basics in Electricals. Along with training in their main area of interest, the daily schedule includes Shramdaan (physical work), Sports, Collective Meditation, Hindi and English Language classes. There are also periodic Workshops on subjects such as Physical Well being, Self Defence, etc., educational tours and excursions. Those with special aptitude for music or art can also join those classes.

### **Shramdaan – Dignity of Labor**

Rendering selfless cooperative team work along with other Ashram residents and teacher trainees induces awareness of the dignity of labor in the minds of the trainees. A fixed hour of Shramdaan promotes regularity and discipline. Most of the activities include services in maintaining the divinity of the Ashram as well as understanding of natural vegetation.

Participants along with Ashram gardeners work together to grow the vegetables needed for Ashram Kitchen. Trainees learn not to waste food while dining as they themselves grow the vegetables served in their meals.

## Meditation and Character Building

Participants of the training program partake in the evening group meditation all days of a week except Sunday to introspect about their strengths, weaknesses, fears, hopes and opportunities. Participants of this group meditation are guided to ponder on how to inculcate the qualities of sincerity, punctuality, discipline, courage, teamwork and hard work through readings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Reflective practices do develop among the trainees as seen from their adoption of habits like maintaining a daily journal, reading, and an increase in the level of their curiosity as well as career goals.



Group meditation with Ashramites, Aspirants and Guests

## Basic Computer Training

Coaching on “Basics in Computer Science” is conducted almost every day of the week except Sunday for all the trainees irrespective of the trades they have selected. That is necessary to fit into the society which is becoming more and more dependent on information technology. Trainees take part in practical workshops to achieve basic understanding on how computers work, trouble shooting basic computer problems, improve typing skills, and acquire skills to use office applications to handle documentation, data processing and presentation.



Dr. Bhaweja lecturing on Health, Hygiene and Nutrition

## First Aid, Health, Hygiene & Nutrition

Trainees are taught the Importance of physical well being. Workshops are conducted by our Ashram doctors on Health, Hygiene and nutrition. First aid courses, on bandaging techniques, first aid injured patients etc.



Trainees partaking in Self Defence workshop

A Course on Self Defence was conducted by DCP Ms. Anita Roy from the Delhi Police.

A workshop was organized on the Basics of Ayurveda by Dr. Katoch covering Infectious diseases, effect of food, sleep, technology on health, mind-body relaxation and importance of consuming seasonal foods summarized as *dincharya*.



Menstrual Hygiene to female trainees

A workshop was organized on Menstrual Hygiene conducted for the female trainees by Ms. Priti Bhardwaj (Yoga Teacher).

A workshop on **Personal Growth** through Music, Art and each individual's psychology was conducted by Ms. Manju from the United States.



Participants expressing their Ideas during Workshop



*Trainees participating in a Music class*



*Natural resource management scientists detailing the accomplishments and current situation of the Yamuna Biodiversity Park*



*Sangeet-Sahitya-Sankriti Samman Award Ceremony*

*Right: Narasimha Avatar  
- One of the Dashavatar*

*Below: A dance  
performance on  
New Year Eve*



### **To improve Communication Skills**

Music classes are conducted once a week to develop finer emotional qualities. Devotional and patriotic songs are taught to inculcate in them a spirit of patriotism and appreciation of the rich national heritage.

### **Excursions and Educational Tours**

Trainees are taken for picnics and educational sightseeing tours. An educational picnic to visit Yamuna Biodiversity Park was arranged and was an extremely informative visit which could inculcate the importance and the need to conserve our natural resources. A picnic visit cooked itself into an educational tour to witness research going on to conserve land, water and forest ecosystem to suit naturally balanced life ecosystem on earth. This visit has clarified cause and effect of vital habitat destruction happening because of urban and industrial expansion over time.

Visits were also organized to Akshardham temple, Agra, Madhura and Vrindavan to give first hand experience of the cultural expressions of our nation.

Trainees are taken to Music, Dance and Cultural programs like Ramlila, Krishnlila etc performed at Places such as India Habitat Centre and Sri Ram Kala Kendra.

Numerous artistes come and perform at the Ashram as an offering from time to time, specially on the 'special days'. Trainees thus get an opportunity to enjoy and get inspired by talented musicians, speakers and dancers.

### **Festivals and Important occasions**

The trainees not only get to see a variety of programs, they themselves also perform on many occasions.

- On 15 August 2017, our Independence Day and the birthday of Sri Aurobindo, a play was performed by the trainees on **The Dashavatar**.
- On 31 December 2017 the trainees put up a Music and Dance program to bid adieu to the year which was coming to an end.
- On 21 February 2018, The Mother's birthday, a physical-cultural program showcasing physical strength, flexibility, concentration and coordination was put up by the trainees.

The program included demonstrations of Kalaripayattu

(a martial arts technique from Kerala), pyramids and the hoola hoops.

### Aspirant Trainees

At the end of the vocational training course, trainees who are interested generally want to stay longer in the serene, nurturing and uplifting ashram environment. If found suitable, they are allowed to stay, and are then called 'Aspirants.' Aspirants also serve as role models for new vocational trainees.

As Aspirants, they not only continue to learn more from the Ashram, they also generally enroll for correspondence courses to upgrade their qualifications, for which the Ashram supports them financially as well as by finding suitable volunteers to coach them. After they decide to be no longer formal students or trainees, the Ashram also helps them find jobs.

During the year 2017-2018, two aspirants were absorbed by Google in their catering department, two were placed as teachers, one joined a bakery, and two joined a school in Jodhpur as Librarians.

The reputation of our aspirants for their personal qualities such as punctuality, discipline, sense of responsibility, and good moral values makes it easier for them to find jobs.

### Social awareness

Aspirants, upon noticing that trees along Sri Aurobindo Marg were getting cut on Sep 16, 2017 night, stood together along with other local residents to stop that, and succeeded in preventing the felling of many trees. On some weekends, aspirants set out to clean the pavements outside the Ashram, or to distribute clothes or blankets to the poor to express their care and compassion.

### Biotechnology proect: Hydroponics

To understand the science of plant growth as well as to promote organic vegetation, aspirants took the initiative to grow vegetables using the technique of Hydroponics.

Within a month, vegetables like Chilies, Bitter gourd (Karela) and tomatoes started to grow in the 'garden' where temperature as well as water and needed mineral supply to the growing plants were monitored automatically 24x7.



*Pyramids and Hoola hoops (Flexibility Skills)*



*A former aspirant at work (Catering) after getting a job*



*Seed germination using coco fiber and coco chips*



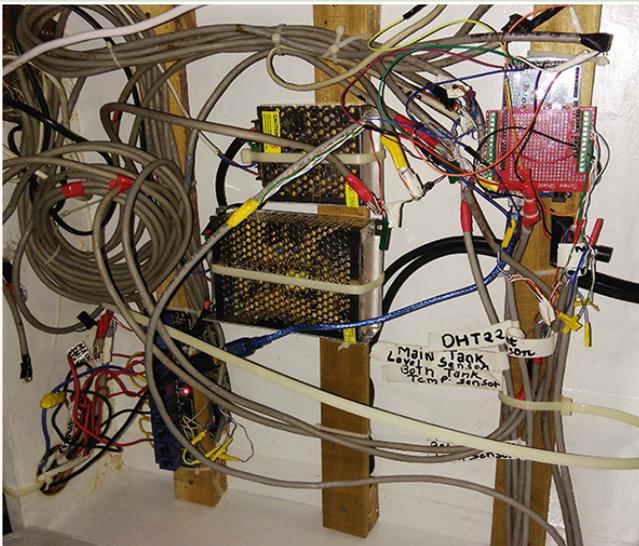
*Preparing platforms for soil less garden*



*Transplanting seedlings to growing platforms*



*Building the green house structure*



*Setting up 24x7 Monitoring facility*

## Physical Welfare and Sports

Every year, aspirants conduct sports celebrations for about a month. Tournaments on various games are conducted. Best performers of the event are recognized with a pat on the back.

Tara Didi has a special interest in sports activities in the Ashram and offers her utmost support not only to facilitate the activity with sports equipment, but has also got the interested aspirants professionally trained to participate in state or national level tournaments.

## Physical Education and Yogic Practices

Daily physical activity in the form of sports or yogic practices is a mandatory part of the routine for both vocational trainees and aspirants. We make available to the trainees and aspirants a 400 meter jogging track, a basketball court, a volley ball court, a badminton court, and a football court.

All these facilities are maintained in good condition. Along with sports activities, classes to practice Yogasanas are also conducted in 'Chetna', the Yoga Hall of the Ashram, which can accommodate up to 50 persons doing yogasanas. Every year, participants demonstrate their Yoga Skills on the International Yoga Day, the – 21st of June.

Vocational Trainees and Aspirants doing Yogic Practices on International Yoga Day (21 June 2017) in the Ashram at an event open to the general public.



*Girls team playing football during sports tournament*



*Vocational Trainees and Aspirants demonstrating Yoga Practices on International Yoga Day (June 21st, 2017)*

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING (2017 -2018): FACTS AND FIGURES

The first batch of the year 2017-2018, **Batch 56** (1 April 2017 – 30 September 2017) included 17 participants.  
Department-wise details are as given below:

Area of Training	No.
Computer Basics and Office Administration	2
Library Science	2
Para Medical Training	1
Tailoring and weaving	4
Hand Made Paper making, paper craft, book binding and screen printing	3
Electrical Repair & Maintenance	1
Plumbing Essentials	1
Cooking, Bakery & Food processing	3

The second batch of the year 2017-2018, **Batch 57** (1 October 2017 – 31 March 2018) included 15 participants.  
Department-wise details are as given below:

Area of Training	No.
Computer Basics and Office Administration	1
Library Science	1
Para Medical Training	1
Tailoring and weaving	4
Hand Made Paper making, paper craft, book binding and screen printing	5
Carpentry & Photo Lamination	2
Cooking, Bakery & Food processing	3

## SUPPORTING EDUCATION



We all know good education makes us better citizens while making us responsible too. With the contribution that education makes to our lives it opens up our horizon and enables us to understand our duties as citizens better. To take good education to the children from not so privileged backgrounds, a Sponsorship Scheme is run by Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch.

Over the last few decades many children have benefitted from this scheme which primarily focuses on the education of children in remote areas, tribal populations, and villages in the hilly areas of India. We realized that finishing basic schooling itself was difficult and challenging for children living in these areas.

The academic year 2017-18 made us proud as 25 of our students in this program finished their Standard X. Most of them are from Auro Mira Vidya Mandir, our school in Kechla, a village in the tribal belt of Odisha (Chapter 5). All of them are now taking up further studies in the Science and Humanities streams. We also have 15 students finishing Standard XII who are likely to join college.

Many of our Ashram Youth who finished Standard XII earlier are pursuing their graduation in different streams. We sponsor them during undergraduate studies and then for career oriented courses. We also help them find jobs. This is where the cycle gets completed. We are extremely grateful to all the corporate and individual sponsors who have been generous in contributing to this program year after year, enabling us to give good quality education to these children. The entire expenses on their tuition, board and lodging, training, books, clothes, travel expenses, etc. are borne by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch.





*You are richer with the wealth you give than with the wealth you keep in your possession. It must be used to enrich the earth: to make the earth richer, more active, generous and productive; and to make all life grow towards its maximum efficiency. This is the true use of money. Instead of making it an end, they should make it the means.*

*- The Mother*

In the current year, i.e. **2017-18**; we had **246** children (198 school students and 46 pursuing higher education) under our Sponsorship and Scholarship Scheme and a total of **Rs 54,28,603/- (Rupees Fifty Four Lakhs Twenty Eight Thousand Six Hundred and Three only)** was disbursed.

### **Supporting higher education**

Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch has a Vocational Training Programme for the youth of weaker strata of the society where they learn various trades of their choice so that they can earn a decent livelihood. After the Vocational Training many of them desire to stay back not only to imbibe the spirit of the Ashram but also grow into more integrated individuals by pursuing higher education. We accommodate as many of these “Aspirants” as we can and the Delhi Ashram supports them by funding the courses of their choice. During 2017-18 a few such aspirants were helped to get corporate jobs.

A sum of **Rs. 2,56,500/-** was incurred on stipend paid to 30 students of the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Vocational Training who are undergoing basic training in various trades in 6-month courses in the current year.

### **Supporting school education**

There are more than 500 Sri Aurobindo Schools all over the country which are run by devotees independently. 80% of these schools are in tribal or backward areas. Many children in these schools are sponsored by Sri

Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch. In addition to this, we also grant scholarships to a few day scholars in The Mother’s International School and a few students in the Talla Ramgarh, Uttarakhand.

We also run a free school, Auro Mira Vidya Mandir, for over 130 tribal children at Kechla, a remote tribal area in Odisha besides adopting approximately 15 other schools in village, adivasi and backward areas of Odisha and Madhya Pradesh. Along with the financial aid, all these schools are provided with books, clothing, games, sports equipment from time to time.

In all there were **215** students and the total disbursement amounted to **Rs 50,75,000/- (Rupees Fifty Lakh Seventy Five Thousand only)**.

In all there were **37** children from Delhi. **6** children were given music scholarships; **15** were given scholarships for National Institute for Open Schooling, New Delhi; **2** scholarships were granted for learning Art; **10** scholarships were given for pursuance of graduate and post graduate courses and **1** scholarship each for Yoga and Certified Accounts courses were granted. The total amounted to a sum **Rs 1,68,203/- (Rupees One Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand, Two Hundred and Three only)**.

Other than this there were 9 sponsored children in schools in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, to whom was disbursed a total amount of **Rs 1,85,400/- (Rupees One Lakh Eighty Five Thousand Four Hundred only)**.

**SCHOLARSHIPS & SPONSORSHIPS, 2017-18**

**SCHOLARSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

STATE	SCHOLARSHIPS		REMARKS
	Number	Amt Spent (Rs.)	
<b>Delhi</b>	37	1,68,203/-	To doing miscellaneous academic and other courses as follows:  a. Graduate & P.G. Courses .....10 b. Music .....6 c. Art Course .....2 d. NIOS .....15 e. Certificate Course in Accounts .....1 f. B.Ed .....3  <b>Total .....37</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1,68,203/-</b>	
<b>Odisha</b>	4	92,400/-	For different academic courses
<b>West Bengal</b>	1	45,000/-	For different academic courses
<b>Nainital</b>	1	12,000/-	For different academic courses
<b>Jodhpur</b>	3	36,000/-	For different academic courses
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,85,400/-</b>	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>3,53,603/-</b>	

## SCHOLARSHIPS & SPONSORSHIPS, 2017-18

### SPONSORSHIP FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION

STATE	SPONSORSHIPS		REMARKS
	Number	Amt Spent (Rs.)	
Odisha & MP	198	50,75,000	In AMVM and other schools
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>50,75,000</b>	

Total for Sponsorships:	Rs. 50,75,000 /-
Total for Scholarships:	Rs. 3,53,603 /-
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>Rs.54,28,603 /-</b>

### STIPENDS TO VOCATIONAL TRAINEES

A sum of **Rs. 2,56,500/-** was the amount incurred on stipend paid to 30 students of the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Vocational Training who are undergoing basic training in various trades in 6-month courses.

### ABSTRACT

STATE	NUMBER	AMOUNT SPENT (Rs.)	REMARKS
Delhi	30 V.T.	2,56,500/-	Stipends to vocational trainees learning one of 6 different trades in SAIVT plus free boarding and lodging.

## VISITORS TO THE ASHRAM



The increasing receptivity to ancient Indian wisdom all over the world attracts a large number of Indian and overseas visitors to the Ashram. We are always happy to introduce them to the life-affirming spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and its relevance to living a happy, healthy and meaningful life full of love, peace, joy and fulfilment. We see in this exercise an opportunity to create in more and more people that opening which would eventually lead to a perceptible shift in human consciousness, which in turn is the only radical solution to the problems of human existence.

### Visitors from France, 8 April 2017

A group of 7 visitors from France had a session on 8 April 2017 in which one of them (Sylvia) acted as the interpreter. In the session they learnt how all life can be yoga, and the role of the psychic being in helping us use the opportunities that life provides for the practice of yoga. They also asked questions about the Delhi Ashram, the Puducherry Ashram and Auroville.

### Students of Shiv Nadar School visit the Ashram, 11 May 2017

Shiv Nadar School, NOIDA, sent 28 students of Class 8 with two teachers, Ms Neha Pradhan and Ms Sangeeta Menon, to the Ashram for a forenoon visit on 11 May 2017. The children were pleasantly surprised to find that the Ashram were quite different from the mental image of an Ashram that they had. They were told why this Ashram is different, and how their mental image derives from what Ashrams came to be when life-negating spirituality struck deep roots in our psyche. In that sense, the Ashram established by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother at Pondicherry was a laboratory to see how far spirituality could be brought into worldly life. Through a simple story, they were introduced to the idea of the psychic being, and how it guides us towards



*Students of Shiv Nadar School in the Hall of Joy*

the choices that give us joy and lasting mental peace, in contrast with other choices which may come from the vital or mental and lead to a sense of guilt and recurrent uneasiness. They also visited the carpentry section, tailoring section and hand-made paper sections, and interacted with the Class 12 girls from underprivileged backgrounds undergoing training in the Ashram in collaboration with Ratan Lal Foundation and Etasha Training. Their visit ended with lunch in the Ashram Dining Hall.

### Visitors from Japan, 16 July 2017

A group of 35 yoga enthusiasts from Japan, led by their 90-year old yoga master Mr. Tahara Hodo, visited the Ashram on the morning of 16 July 2017. After a brief introduction to the Ashram, they were given an introduction to the lives, works and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. A person of Indian origin, Mr. Markus, who had organized their tour, acted as the interpreter.

### Visitors from Amity Institute of Education, Saket, 8 September 2017

A group of 50 D.El.Ed. students and two of their teachers from Amity Institute of Education, Saket, attended a one-day program on integral education on 8 Sept 2017. The program focused on the totality of the being and the central position occupied by the psychic being as the basis of integral education. Further, the program brought out how the teaching profession is an excellent vehicle for spiritual growth, which is the purpose of life. Here are some of the responses received as feedback at the end of the program: “the students were beaming with joy after the session” (a teacher’s response), “a fabulous guide”, “came to know myself from a new angle”, “got peace of mind”, “got answers to all my questions”, “the aim of my life is fixed now”, “the environment here is very peaceful”.



*Japanese yoga enthusiasts visit the Ashram*

### **Orientation Program for new teachers of The Mother's International School, 8-9 September 2017**

Five teachers of The Mother's International School, who have joined the school within the last one year, did an orientation program on integral education on 8 & 9 September 2017. Much of the program was in common with the program organized for the visitors from Amity Institute of Education, Saket. Here are some of the comments received as feedback: "an enriching and eye opening session", "extremely fulfilling", "felt so relaxed and sorted", "gave me a different view point".

### **Vedic scholar and yoga teacher visits the Ashram, 25 September-2 October 2017**

A Vedic scholar and yoga teacher, Ms Vratika Arya stayed in the Ashram from 25 Sep-2 Oct 2017, and gave a class everyday to the students of the course on Teaching Yoga. In addition, she gave a class also to



*Vedic scholar and yoga teacher, Ms Vratika Arya, conducting yoga classes at the Ashram*

students from Uttarkashi, conducted a havan in the Clean Mind Program, an enchanted the youngsters of the Ashram with her soulful chanting of mantras.

### **Visitors from Netherlands, 20-25 October 2017**

Eight educationists from Netherlands, led by Ms Doris Visscher visited the Ashram on from 21-25 October 2017. They had a session on an introduction to Integral Education, saw a film on the life of Sri Aurobindo made by Ms Lopa Mukherjee, and observed classes and other activities in The Mother's International School and Mirambika Free Progress School.

### **Visitors from the US, 29 October 2017**

Two visitors from the US, Benjamin Wertheimer and Heather, disciples of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan (Esraj) and Ustad Zakir Husain (Tabla), sang in the Meditation Hall



*Educationists from the Netherlands at the Ashram*

during the Sunday Satsang on 30 October 2017. They created a very strong impact with their transparent dedication, intensity, and mastery of hymns in Hindi and Sanskrit.

### **B.El.Ed. Students from Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi**

Forty students in the third year of their B.El.Ed. course at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, and two of their teachers, spent a day in the Ashram on 21 November 2017. During the day, they were given an introduction to the totality of the being, and explained how it forms the basis of integral education as well as that of a happy and meaningful life. The session was interspersed with a musical break and a meditative break. Some of the comments received by way of feedback were: "very reflective and useful", "extremely fruitful and thought provoking", "helped me be proud of my chosen profession", "will ground me, center me, to the things that really matter", "feel empowered and motivated to do my best", "was able to relate the session to my past experiences", "the environment was very peaceful", "the Ashram is really beautiful and lush green".



*US visitors, Benjamin Wertheimer & Heather performing*



*Students from Lady Shri Ram college at the Ashram*

### **Visit by students of SPM College, 19-26 December 2017**

Thirty nine B.El.Ed. students of Delhi University's Shyama Prasad Mukherji College for Women, Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi, visited the Ashram and sister institutions for one week to learn more about Integral Education and the Free-Progress System. After an introduction to the principles of Integral Education on 19 December, the group divided into several batches and observed practical working of the Free Progress System in Mirambika Free Progress School over the next several days.

### **Visit by students of Gargi College 27-28 December 2017**

A group of B.El.Ed. Students of Gargi College and teacher/escorts including Shri Prakash Sahoo (former teacher of Mirambika School) stayed in the Ashram overnight. They were introduced to the Integral Education as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and observed its practical application in the Free-Progress System of the Mirambika School including games and exercises that can be done with very young children to stimulate integral development.

### **Visit by teachers from Shikshantar School 28 December 2017**

A group of 40 teachers from Shikshanter School, Gurugram, spent several hours in the Ashram to learn about Integral Education. Some of the comments made by the visitors at the end of their visit are: "unlearn the learnings is my take away from the session", "enriching and enlightening", "helped define my inner being", "helped me reflect on my teaching practices", "will help me in facilitating the subject that I teach".

### **Visitors from Brazil**

A group of 20 visitors from Brazil spent a few days in the Ashram. On 11 January 2018 they were introduced

to the Ashram and its activities by Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch Trust chairperson, Km. Tara Jauhar, and to the life-affirming spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani.

### **Visitors from Bulgaria**

A group of 23 yoga enthusiasts from Bulgaria led by Mr Shivko Stailov while staying in Ashram, were introduced to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani on 17 January 2018. They also participated in a 'Lifestyle and Health' workshop and had a one hour session of asanas and pranayamas.

### **Visitors from Argentina**

Seven visitors from Argentina spent several hours on 22 January 2018 in the Ashram. In an interactive session, Dr. Ramesh Bijlani gave them an introduction to the life-affirming Integral Yoga philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and its implications for a peaceful and meaningful life. The group toured the Ashram campus and visited its manifold departments, witnessed a demonstration of the physical practices of yoga, received Ashram literature including an audio CD, and partook of lunch in the dining room as Prasad, before their departure.

### **Visit by U.K. Students**

A group of 13 students from The French Lycee School (British Section), London, led by Dr. Robert Carr and Ms. Ernestina Meloni immersed themselves in the Ashram atmosphere and activities on 19 & 20 February 2018. They volunteered in the kitchen and the garden, practiced yogasanas, and also had sessions with Dr. Ramesh Bijlani on the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and its relevance for everyday living. At the end, Dr. Carr remarked that the stay at the Ashram, "gave these teenagers another, more reflective, perspective but also possibly got them to reflect on life's purpose in a new and philosophical way." Feedback by students included: "a very calm and peaceful place", "really liked learning the way of spirituality", "talks were extremely thought provoking".

### **Visitors from abroad**

A group of 26 yoga enthusiasts from USA, Canada, Australia and Germany on a 'Himalayan Yatra', during their stay at the Ashram on 22 March 2018, were introduced to the life and work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother by Dr. Ramesh Bijlani, which thereafter led to a session of interactive discussion on topics related to the spiritual odyssey.

## VOLUNTEERS

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As a part of our objective of stimulating spiritual awakening and inner growth, we have provision for volunteering. We currently have about 80 volunteers (The Mother's Integral Health Centre: 43; Ashram Office/Reception: 36); In addition, many volunteers are sent to sister institutions such as Mirambika Free Progress School (24) and The Mother's International School (21). This programme is open round the year. The department in which the volunteers work depends on their background, skills and temperament. Orientation programs on integral yoga are held from time to time for new volunteers. The magnetic aura and ambience of the beautiful Delhi Ashram not only attracts people but makes them stay for years on end. It

is a two way process: the Ashram gets some helping hands, and the volunteer gets an opportunity for spiritual growth in a peaceful and picturesque place. But a word of caution is necessary before getting started with volunteer work; it is important to be clear about what you expect from the experience. With the right fit between the inclinations and the work that the volunteers do, apart from spiritual growth, they experience reduction in stress levels, make new like-minded friends, reach out to the community, learn new skills, and find a sense of identity. The volunteers generally find working in the Ashram a life-changing experience.

## COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

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### An activity for empowerment of women

Ratan Lal Foundation, an NGO, which organizes extra-curricular enrichment for academically bright girl students of Government Schools from economically weaker sections of the society has been bringing groups of 30-50 such girls to the Ashram since 2014. These groups have been given collectively the beautiful name, 'Shalinis'. The purpose of the training organized for them is to polish their personalities, improve their academic performance, and enhance their chances of employment. Their training is conducted jointly by the Ratan Lal Foundation, the Ashram, and an NGO, Etasha Training. The girls are introduced to the life-affirming spiritual philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and its role in living a happy, healthy and meaningful life; given yoga classes; given classes on ayurveda, health and hygiene; and given classes on some topics specially relevant to them such as emotional intelligence, dealing with the stress of upward social mobility in a convention-ridden society, communication skills, etc.

The different batches and phases of training during the period 2017-18 were:

Employability-linked skill development

Phase 1: May 2017 - August 2017

Phase 2: September 2017- January 2018

Phase 3: January 2018 - April 2018

- Clean Mind Program was attended by 49 shalinis, which was organized by Dr Baweja and Mrs. Meenakshi on 2.04.17 & 9.04.17 respectively. The program was facilitated by Dr Urvashi Anand and Dr Surinder Katoch. The topics discussed were Happiness, Ayurveda & Yogic style of living.
- Classes were given by Dr Bijlani and several volunteers of the Ashram.
- An Adventure Youth Camp for 75 shalinis was held at Van Niwas, the Himalayan Centre of Sri Aurobindo Ashram (Delhi Branch) from 13.05.2017 to 18.05.2017, where the girls were imparted skills of confidence building through rock climbing, trekking, and self defense. During these six days, the uplifting ashram ambience provided the girls with an opportunity for integral personal growth.
- International Yoga Day was celebrated on 21 June 2017, by enacting a play on yoga, titled The Journey of Life. Each student was given a role in the play.
- On 27.06.2017, the girls received from the Ashram clothes and shoes.

### Kriya Yoga workshops

Workshop on meditation as practiced in kriya yoga was conducted by Mr. Per Wibe, from Norway, from 6-8 October 2017 and 2-4 March 2018 with the help of Ms. Vanisha Krishna and his other followers in India.



# 3

## NAINITAL CAMPUS VAN NIWAS



The Nainital campus of the Ashram, Van Niwas, comes alive during the camps organized there, more in the summers, but also in autumn and winter.





## STUDY CAMPS

Study camps are full-time residential spiritual retreats. The camps are conducted in various languages on a variety of topics, but they are all based on the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The following reports indicate the various activities and the range of topics addressed in Study Camps.

### Marathi Study Camps

#### *Camp 312 To 316 (April 1, 2017–May 5, 2017) and Camp 326 (October 2, 2017–October 8, 2017)*

The Marathi Study Camps (Summer and Autumn, 2017) led by Mr. Srikrishna Dixit were very successful and the themes were very vast and varied. The themes were as follows: Camp 312 and Camp 313 – Bhartiya Sankruticha Paya (Foundation of Indian Culture) and the resource person was Mrs Uttara Shastri. There were a total of 90 participants in these two camps. For Camp 314, the theme was Sri Arvind Darshan and the resource person was Mr Vivek Ghalasasi; 60 participants attended the camp. Mrs. Madhvi Joshi conducted Camp 315 and the theme was Prashnopnishad (55 participants). The last summer study camp was conducted by Dr. Uday Kumathekar with the theme: Vedancha Anvayarth (55 participants). The Autumn Study Camp was on Sri Aurobindo Ani Tyancha Purnayog (Sri Aurobindo and his Purnyog) and the resource person was once again Mr Vivek Ghalasasi (68 participants).

All the resource persons were did full justice to the topics, satisfying all the participants. They were very happy to learn in detail about the life and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The camp made the participants realise that the spiritual path is the one to take if one is to move towards self realisation and liberation. The talks were supported by video shows. The video shows on Meditation and Auroville were highly appreciated. All the participants returned with happy memories to cherish, and wanted to come again whenever they got an opportunity. The intense spiritual atmosphere of Van Niwas was just the right backdrop for the themes set for the camps.

### Gujarati Study Camps

#### *Study Camp No 317 (May 6, 2017 – May 12, 2017)*

The Study Camp No 317 was attended by 55 participants.

The theme was on “Sri Arvind Aur Poorna Yog” and the resource person was Dr Bharatsinh Jhala. The language of the camp was Gujarati. The participants found it a very enlightening experience and were very impressed by the lucid lectures. They felt that Dr Jhala described the essence of the theme and the teachings of Sri Ma and Sri Aurobindo beautifully. He explained the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo in simple language by giving examples. In this way he created an avid interest in the participants. Moreover, they said that they were pleasantly surprised by their introduction to the philosophy of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo when they learnt that their earlier impression that one has to give up active life to do Yoga was not true. Contrary to it they learnt that they have to do their assigned duties in the worldly life with greater vigour, insight, dedication and devotion.

Shankaran taught yoga with finesse and was a perfect bridge between spiritual and organizational inputs. All the activities at the camp: discourses, collective meditation, trekking were systematically managed. The participants found the ambience of the ashram perfect for the theme of the camp. ‘The Spiritual Shibir’, as they called it, was a huge success.

#### *Study Camp 318 (May 13 –May 19, 2017) and Study Camp 327 (October 9–October 15, 2017)*

These two Gujarati Study Camps were also held in Van Niwas, Nainital; one in summer (55 participants) and the other in autumn (50 participants). The theme of both these camps was “Savitri” and the resource person for both camps was Dr Bharatsinh Jhala. These study camps by Dr. Bharat Sinh Jhala have been going on for about a decade now and have been extremely popular. The first two days were devoted to introducing the participants to the life story of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Jhalaji then took the campers through Savitri explaining how it contains the real experiences of both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the path of the Poorna Yoga. The campers began their day with yogasans and besides the two study sessions in the morning, ended

the day with a question and answer session after dinner. They visited the ashram orchards at Madhuban, Ramgarh on their way back on the last day.

#### ***Study Camp 319 (May 20, 2017 – May 26, 2017)***

Study Camp 319 had 58 participants; the language was Hindi Camp, and the resource person was Mr. Arun Naik. He discussed in the camp Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*. The main objective of the camp was to make the participants understand and learn the principles of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and its application in daily life so that one can lead a peaceful life. This theme was interspersed with teachings from Bhagavadgita. The participants felt that the week spent in the ashram gave them "mental peace and spiritual satisfaction". They also enjoyed the Yogasana sessions conducted by Shankaran.

#### ***Study Camp 320 (May 27, 2017 – June 2, 2017)***

This Oriya Camp had 47 participants. It was a spiritual retreat, and the resource persons were Debasmita Samal and Shanti. According to the participants, "Togetherness is the mantra of the camp" and each one of them lived these 7 days with this code. The punctuality, precision and organisation of the camp were appreciated. The morning sessions were generally devoted to group discussions on the book, "The Mother" and in the evenings; the discussions were on Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and on Integral Education. There were also discourses on the Sri Aurobindo's epic, Savitri. They all felt that the unseen hands of the Master and the Mother were guiding them and it was a great opportunity for introspection and self-growth. The yoga sessions held in the early morning hours were a great hit with the participants, and so was the cultural programme at the end of the Camp.

#### ***Study Camp 321 (June 3, 2017 – June 9, 2017)***

This Ayurveda Camp was taken by Dr Katoch and Acharya Navneet and its theme was: Ayurveda/ Vision of our Seers – How to Live Happily. There were 52 participants. The camp was full of knowledge and activity. The participants found the speakers very knowledgeable and the camp very well managed. Dr Katoch was her usual self; full of vigour and vitality. She explained the principles of ayurveda and its practical application in daily life. Some participants are so impressed by the theme that they wanted to come year after year and not only learn more but have also to benefit from Ayurveda. Acharya Navneet is a storehouse of knowledge on Upanishads and Vedas. The participants

were surprised to find that some of the rituals that they had been following in everyday life are a part of these scriptures. He also gave additional sessions for the participants who were interested to go into greater depth. Other than lectures, participation in excursions and the prabhat pheri and traditional games were really popular.

#### ***Study Camp 322 (June 10, 2017 – June 16, 2017)***

In this study camp, Dr Bharat Gupt, the resource person spoke on the theme: *Paramapura, Adhunikta aur Sri Arvind Yog*. The camp had a total of 62 participants and the medium was Hindi. Dr Bharat Gupt gave very meaningful and satisfying lectures and all participants were really happy as was evident from the feedback. He essentially spoke about the need and practice of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga in today's context. He emphasised that the sense of beauty in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy was that he covered the importance of the idea of "the beautiful" in his integrated yogic philosophy. And this, according to him, can be seen in the creation of Auroville. Actually the whole Indian tradition rests upon the fact that the sense of 'rasa', beauty, harmony and art is essential for a healthy and a satisfying life and spiritual progress. The morning yogic exercises were enjoyed and the participants felt that it was a fitting start to the day. The nature walks were also very restful and enjoyable. For some participants, it was the second or third time and they all came back happy and said that they were going to repeat this visit the next year too.

#### ***Study Camp 325, (24-29 September 2017)***

This camp, titled SOURCING OUR ONENESS was a retreat for devotees and followers from various organisations working for the realisation of the vision of Sri Aurobindo. The retreat, one of a kind, was held for the second time, having had its beginning last year in Van Niwas around the same time. The aim of this retreat was to bring together devotees and followers of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo from various centres and institutions practicing the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo within the country and abroad. The participants came from Auroville, Pondicherry, Gujarat, Bihar and Bengal, and from the USA, the UK and Hungary, to celebrate the one source we align with while seeking to manifest oneness in working for The Divine.

In this year's retreat, the twelve qualities of The Mother and the five psychological perfections were used as tools of transformation of the individual as well as the



from 24<sup>th</sup> Sep till 29<sup>th</sup>

5:00 AM	Morning Tea 26.00 6 - Tiffin with B. Akhla 2300 - 2700 AM - 2800 AM	3:30 PM	Kaba talk for Meditation Hall
7:00 AM	Breakfast & Shirandean	4:30 PM	Tiffin/ Tea
9:00 AM	Tea & Lunch at Vaidya Hall for the Meditation Hall at Vaidya Hall	5:00 PM	Prayer at Meditation Hall with Dr. Akhla Prakash at Vaidya Hall
10:30 AM	Tea & Snack	7:00 PM	Prayer at Meditation Hall with Dr. Akhla Prakash at Vaidya Hall
11:00 AM		7:30 PM	Dinner
1:00 PM	Lunch & Shirandean	8:30 PM	Meditation with Dr. Akhla Prakash at Vaidya Hall



collective life that the individual is inevitably an integral part of. In this respect, economy featured as the main aspect of life to be examined, understood and placed in perspective, in light of the highest ideal before us. Pertinent issues currently existing in the systems were raised and solutions discussed after the groups were psychologically prepared during sessions with the flower cards. The flower cards brought into our midst a certain ambience as we settled into a quiet, reflective spirit, living the subtle suggestions from the qualities and psychological perfection through the cards we picked in deep aspiration. These sessions prepared us to plunge deeper into the discussions we had during the evening sessions we had on Financial Institutions, Economy and Business.

The participants were divided into the three main groups according to the individual participant's own affinity and choice. The teams were accordingly looking at future business, future economy and future financial institutions. The focus was on challenges posed to the existence of organisations practicing integral yoga, and the place money played in a life dedicated to Integral Yoga. The idea of an economy without cash or cash flow, as The Mother advocated for Auroville, was a key point of debate and discussion throughout the 7-day programme. Weaved into this main thrust was the guiding light from The Mother through the qualities from the 12 petals that constituted The Mother's symbol. The Psychological Perfections of Faith, Aspiration, Devotion, Sincerity and Surrender with Rejection were used to reflect on the different stages involved in Business such as the environment, systems, resources and contributions and the interaction of multiple forces in these stages.

The three groups worked on attitudes, habits and practices to aspire for, to reject tendencies within that hindered one's progress towards Light and total surrender to the Highest. The final synthesis of the interactions were consolidated on charts and displayed together with visual presentations involving all members of the various teams, with movements, dialogues and some theatre elements as well. It was gratifying to note that each and every participant in this retreat was provided the opportunity to express himself or herself. Each participant, irrespective of his domicile, took away from the involvement deep insights to be actualised in the life of the individual and the collective. While these discussions progressed steadily over the days, other fringe activities nourished our souls further.

There were the initial ice-breakers that broke our guards and brought us together and a few related talks aligned us to the theme. Central to these activities was a movie, "Evolution Fast-Forward" by Manoj Pavitran, Sopanam Productions, an Auroville-based production on the Parts and Planes of the Being which was shown in small digestible parts over the seven days. Watching this movie together was a beautiful experience. There was a remarkable silence in the Video Room as each screening for the day ended. Each individual took for himself the precious nectar for growth to equip him for his own journey. Each day, we looked forward to the screening of the various parts of the movie.

The musical sessions by Gaurav, Siddharth, and Kabir dohas sung and narrated by Ms. Sukriti Sen and Mr. Sehdev Kumar, bathed us in waves of devotion. The vitality of youth came to the fore as Surabhi-di lashed out a few folk dance numbers and put everyone into fast rhythmic movements which left everyone asking for more. Early morning Yoga and Pranamaya sessions by Shekhar and Anushka prepared us for the day's activities. There were memorable trekking expeditions to Naina Peak, Tiffin Top and Land's End. These were awe-inspiring trek destinations. Rappelling and related rock climbing activities were a welcome change. A night forest trek too was not forgotten.

Whatever activities we engaged in, The Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's words were constantly brought before our attention and into our consciousness. On two occasions, we had an interaction with Tara didi who gave us a first-hand account of her experiences with The Mother and instances of what The Mother had expressed on numerous occasions regarding themes that appealed to us. Questions were also asked on The Mother's view of Money. Tara didi's answers were candid and full of an experiential wisdom and many a time topped with good humour. These were all received with gratitude.

This Camp was further made special when Tara didi was felicitated with the Auro-Ratna Award conferred on her by the Overman Foundation's founder, Mr. Anurag Banerjee for the amazing breadth and depth of the work she has carried out in the past several decades for the realisation of Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's vision. It was inspiring to listen to the heart-felt testimonials from Tara didi's close associates such as Dr. Prema Nandakumar, Dr. Alok Pandey, Shraddavan, and Prithwindra Mukherjee. They talked about her exemplary attitude towards work, her dauntless spirit and her deep love for The Mother and Sri Aurobindo.



Following the felicitation ceremony, Tara didi generously handed to all present a piece of carpet from the Mother's room. It was indeed a token of Grace for all of us as we reverently received something precious which had the rarest privilege of having been at the feet of the Divine.

So we spent our seven days celebrating Oneness as well as new ways of expressing this same Oneness. We all returned home all the better for it. The seeds planted during those intense days packed with experiences will go a long way in helping us move towards the Oneness that unites us all.

***Marathi Camps-II: Summer Study Camp 323 (June 17, 2017 – June 23, 2017) and Autumn Study Camps 329 & 330 (November 4, 2017 – November 17, 2017)***

The second series of the Marathi Camps was arranged by Mr Rajendra Sarodiya and Mrs Smita Sarodiya. There was one study camp in summer (Theme: Das

Bodh based on Sri Aurobindo; Resource Person was Mr. Sunil Chincolkar) and two camps in autumn (Theme: Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobind; Resource Person was Mr Ulhas Ratnaparkhi)

The participants were really impressed by the in depth knowledge of Mr. Chincolkar and really enjoyed not only his lucid talks but also the interactive sessions he initiated after that. The typical day started with yogasanas tailor made for the elderly and beginners led by Shankaran. The participants were also taken on nature walks. The cultural evening was a musical treat.

The theme of the autumn camps was indeed both very challenging and interesting. The subject was treated delicately and the participants got to know minute details of the life of both Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. They all agreed that not only the individual but the society also has to suffer or enjoy the effects of its 'Karma'. Moreover the peace and calm of the Ashram and the hills was an added bonus.

**Study Camps at Van Niwas, Nainital, from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018**

No	CAMP NO	DATE	SUBJECT	FACILITATOR(S)	LANGUAGE	BOOKING POSITION
1	312	01.04.2017 07.04.2017	.Bharatiya Sanskruticha Paya(Foundation of Indian Culture)	Mrs . Uttara Shastri	Marathi	45
2	313	08.04.2017 14.04.2017	Bharatiya Sanskruticha Paya(Foundation of Indian Culture)	Mrs . Uttara Shastri	Marathi	45
3	314	15.04.2017 21.04.2017	Sri Arvind Darshan	Shri. Vivekji Ghalasasi	Marathi	60
4	315	22.04.2017 28.04.2017	Prashnopnishad.	Mrs. Madhavi Joshi	Marathi	55
5	316	29.05.2017 05.05.2017	“Vedancha Anvayarth”	Dr.Uday Kumathekar	Marathi	55

No	CAMP NO	DATE	SUBJECT	FACILITATOR(S)	LANGUAGE	BOOKING POSITION
6	317	06.05.2017 12.05.2017	Sri Arvind aur poorna yog	Dr. BharatsinhJhala, 09426695198, bdjhala21@yahoo.in	Gujarati	55
7	318	13.05.2017 19.05.2017	Savitri	Dr. BharatsinhJhala, 09426695198, bdjhala21@yahoo.in	Gujarati	55
8	319	20.05.2017 26.05.2017	Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of Yoga	Mr. ArunNaik, 91 9891422794, arun@ aurosociety.org	Hindi	58
9	320	27.05.2017 02.06.2017	Spiritual Retreat	Shanti, 09938975922 pksamal47@yahoo.in	Oriya	47
10	321	03.06.2017 09.06.2017	Ayurveda/ Vision of our seers-how to live happily	Dr. Katoch, Acharya Navneet	Hindi	52
11	322	10.06.2017 16.06.2017	Parampara, adhunikta aur arvind yog	Dr. Bharat Gupt, 98100077914	Hindi	62
12	323	17.06.2017 23.06.2017	Das bodh based on Sri Aurobindo	Shri Sunil chincolkar	Marathi	65
13	324	24.06.17 27.06.17	The Agenda of Life	Dr.Ramesh Bijlani, rambij@gmail.com	English	64
14	xxx	28.06.2017 02.07.2017	Spiritual Retreat	Art of Living	Eng/Hindi	60
15	325	24.09.2017 30.09.2017	Sourcing our Oneness	Auroville	English	110
16	326	02.10.17. 08.10.17	SriAurobindo ani Tyancha Purnyog(Sr- iAurobindo and his Purnyog)	Shri Vivek Ghalasasi	Marathi	68
17	327	09.10.17 15.10.17	Savitri	Dr. BharatsinhJhala, 09426695198, bdjhala21@yahoo.in	Gujrati	50
18	328	17.10.17 25.10.17	Jeevan Vidya	Vinodbhai Mandaviya	Gujrati	17
19	329	04.11.17 10.11.17	Swami Vivekanand and Sri aurobindo	Shri Ulhas Ratnaparakhi	Marathi	64
20	330	11.11.17 17.11.17	Swami Vivekanand and Sri aurobindo	Shri Ulhas Ratnaparakhi	Marathi	60

## YOUTH CAMPS



Youth camps are for participants aged 12 and above but generally below 25. Most of the participants come in a group from the same school, college or NGO. Unlike in the study camps, in which trekking is optional, in youth camps the focus is on physical activity and adventure. Apart from treks, the participants learn rock climbing, river crossing and rappelling. Besides the thrill and adventure, they get through these camps practical lessons in courage, endurance, alertness, discipline and co-operation, and an exposure to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Following are the reports of some of the youth camps:

### *Youth Camp 594 (March 18, 2017-March 24, 2017)*

100 seventh graders of The Mother's International School, New Delhi went for a school trip to Van Niwas, Nainital with Mrs Meenakshi Thakkar. The excited chatter of the students as they boarded the buses in Delhi could be heard a mile away. Chatting with friends, singing songs and munching snacks made the 9 hour journey fly by. On reaching Nainital, they were overwhelmed by the beauty of the place. The next 7 days were packed with activity, starting with ogasanas in the morning and ending with meditation in the evening. The activities included rock scrambling followed by bouldering. The trek into the hills was rejuvenating; but the children enjoyed rappelling the most. Rock climbing was tough but the children enjoyed learning how to tie various knots. The experience of river crossing was exciting. The hike to Tiffin Top, from where they got a panoramic view of Nainital was really good. The last night was the Bonfire night and they all sang and danced till late night, trying to make the most of the last day. They left Van Niwas with lots of good memories, heavy hearts, and contentment.

### *Youth Camp 595 (April 4, 2017 - April 10, 2015)*

The camp was attended by 72 students of Birla Public School, Pilani, Rajasthan. The next few days the participants engaged in a series of activities. The participants found it an unforgettable experience in which they were all forced to stretch their limits. This was mainly due to the constant encouragement from the camp instructors and their own 'never say die' spirit. The day always started with yogasanas and ended with relaxing evening meditation. The children were engaged in rock scrambling, cave exploration, bouldering and rock climbing. The nature trek was really enjoyable and left the children wanting more action which they got in rappelling. River crossing and rapelling were new and exciting experiences. The children felt that they had learnt the real meaning of the word 'adventure'. The

children really enjoyed the camp bonfire on the last night, singing and dancing to their heart's delight.

### *Youth Camp 596 (April 22, 2017-April 28, 2017)*

The camp had 24 participants from Aikiyam School, New Creation, Auroville and 23 participants from Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi. The activities undertaken were rock climbing, river crossing, rappelling, bouldering and trekking. The highlight of the camp was trekking. The participants really appreciated the way the ashram guides and instructors encouraged them at every step and helped them overcome their fears. The peaceful ambience of the Ashram was inspiring and forced them to introspect and find inner being and inner strength. The silence taught them how to be peaceful and made them realize that there is a sound in the silence if only one has the capacity to hear it. The meditation and the interactive sessions gave the participants the spirit to manage their problems and not be managed by them. They also appreciated the scenic beauty of the ashram. In the end, all of them thanked the Ashram for giving them lessons on "How to live" instead of just making a living. They were impressed by punctuality, which is a hallmark of the Ashram.

### *Youth Camp 597 (April 29, 2017 - May 5, 2017)*

52 students of Sri Aurobindo International School, Hyderabad and 34 students from KVO Seva Samaj



*MIS students in youth camp 594*

attended this camp. The students really enjoyed all the adventurous and mountaineering activities like rappelling, rock climbing, trekking, bouldering, etc. Special mention was made by the participants about River Crossing which was a new experience for them and which they “enjoyed hugely”. The start of the day with the ‘Keep Fit Yogasanas’ and Daily Meditation was really appreciated since the exposure to the meditation was really “comforting and calming”. The camp participants felt that the ambience of the Ashram exuded a positive energy.

#### ***Youth Camp 599 (May 13, 2017 – May 1, 2017)***

This was a Self-Defense Camp for 79 girls from Shri Ratan Lal Foundation and 20 girls from Rani Saheb Kelayi Mandal, Lemdi, Gujarat. Although the main activity was to teach the girls self-defense, the usual activities of youth camps such as rock scrambling, rock bouldering, rock climbing, river crossing, etc. were also included. The biggest lesson they learnt was that they can do anything in life provided they believe in themselves. Moreover they felt that this camp had inculcated the values of discipline, punctuality and independence in them. The cultural programme at the end of the camp was enjoyed by all. They arrived at the Ashram full of enthusiasm and left it with lots of good memories and heavy but contented hearts.

#### ***Youth Camp 600 (May 20, 2017 – May 26, 2017)***

This camp had 24 participants from Ma Mandir, Rewa, Madhya Pradesh and 46 participants from Amarnath Vidya Mandir, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. The natural beauty of Van Niwas and its surroundings was appreciated by one and all. Rappelling, river crossing, scrambling, trekking and all the adventurous activities were thrilling. Evening meditation was very relaxing and morning exercises were a great warm up for the adventurous activities to follow. The hospitality and the care shown by the instructors was appreciated by the participants.

#### ***Youth Camp 601 (May 27, 2017 – June 2, 2017)***

This camp had 54 boys from Ramanlal Shorawala Public School, Mathura, and 14 participants from the Odisha. The activities undertaken were rock climbing, river crossing, rambling, rappelling, bouldering, and trekking of up to 16 km. The highlight of the camp was definitely a night trek. The children found the camp a welcome change from the sedentary life that they had got used to. Meditation and interactive sessions gave the participants opportunities to introspect on a lot of matters.

#### ***Youth Camp 602 (June 1, 2017 – June 4, 2017)***

This 4-day camp was attended by 54 girls from Arsh Kanya Gurukul, Najibabad. They felt quite at home because they were accustomed to living in a Gurukul. Despite this, they were impressed by the punctuality of the Ashram. They participated in adventurous activities such as rappelling, bouldering, climbing and river crossing but the most popular was river crossing.

#### ***Youth Camp 603 (June 22, 2017 – June 28, 2017)***

In this camp there were 63 participants from Arya Vidya Mandir, a school run by the Arya Samaj, Haryana. The children really had “fun time” as they put it, and wanted to visit the place again in the near future. The adventurous activities (Rock Climbing, bouldering, trekking, scrambling, etc) as usual were the highpoints because the first exposure to them is always a thrilling adventure. The children were astonished by their own capacity to do these seemingly impossible tasks. The evening meditation time was a “different and inspirational experience”. They resolved to inculcate the habit of introspection for working towards self-improvement.

#### ***Youth Camp 605 (27 September-1 October 2017)***

The camp was attended by 46 students of Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi, and was conducted by Mr. Prakash Sahoo, who was assisted by Jayanto, Hira Das Omkar Nath. The typical day started with exercise, dance and games. Later in the day were scrambling, bouldering, rappelling and ‘flying fox’. There were talks by Mr Prakash Sahoo and Mr Sukhendu Roy. Trekking was also not forgotten. A unique experience included in the camp was viewing the splendour of the moon through a telescope.

#### ***Youth Camp 606 (October 1, 2017 – October 4, 2017)***

50 students of Alwar Public School, Alwar, Rajasthan attended this camp. The camp participants enjoyed the adventurous activities to the fullest. The adventurous activities undertaken as in all youth camps were trekking, night trekking, boating, flying fox, river crossing, bouldering, mountain climbing, scrambling, rock climbing and rappelling. They liked exploring Anaconda caves and especially liked learning the Flying Fox. According to a student, “We did too much of fun activities with too much of fun”. The storytelling sessions were very popular, as we all have a child in us irrespective of age.

**Youth Camp 608 (October 11, 2017 – October 16, 2017)**

This camp had 52 participants from Auro University, Surat. These young participants felt that the camp helped to develop and inculcate in them the qualities of leadership and team work. Besides, they developed a healthy respect for environment and a regular routine. They also realized the necessity of punctuality in their life. The instructors were rated A-class since “they pepped us along tiresome paths” and also took care of all the safety steps that are necessary. The evening meditation and Bhajans were very soothing.

**Youth Camp 610 (Nov 11, 2017 – December 2, 2017)**

This camp had 20 participants from IIT-Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. They enjoyed all the adventure activities but the favourite was the night trek. These young engineers felt invigorated by these activities and felt that it was a “welcome change from their sedentary life”. The evening meditation and talks inspired them to introspect and they felt they emerged better human beings from the experience.

**Youth Camp 611 (March 18, 2018 – March 24, 2018)**

This camp had 100 students of Class VII of The Mother’s International School, New Delhi. The students had an adventurous but enjoyable time. They found that the camp was filled with “new and different experiences” and it helped them to bond with each other and their elders and make new friends. The activities in the camp ranged from daily yogasanas in the early hours of the morning to meditation in the evening with river crossing, scrambling, bouldering, rappelling, trekking and rock climbing during the day. The students found the treks and other activities refreshing and felt that the camp enriched them physically, mentally and spiritually. The children expressed their gratitude towards the instructors, other workers and their teachers. They were also happy with the “homely food”. They specially enjoyed the bonfire at the end. All in all it was an “Awesome, Stupendous, Best Ever, Amazing” experience for them.

**Youth Camps at Van Niwas, Nainital, from 1st March 2017 to 31st March 2018**

No	CAMP NO	DATE	NAME OF SCHOOLS	NAME OF LEADER MOBILE NO & EMAIL	BOOKING POSITION
1	YC 594	18.03.2017 24.03.2017	The Mother’s International School, New Delhi	Meenakshi, 9810043528 meenakshi.thakkar@themis.in	100
2	YC595	04.04.2017 10.04.2017	Birla Public School, Pilani, Rajasthan	Capt. Alokesh Sen principalbps@yahoo.com Anirudh Singh 09462572603	72
3	YC596	22.04.2017 28.04.2017	Aikiyam School, New Creation, Auroville	Shankar 8903152339, 0413-2622358 shankar@auroville.org.in assg@auroville.org.in	24
		27.04.2017 28.04.2017	Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi	Rakesh Rai, rai.rakesh1977@yahoo.com, 09818350698	23
4	YC 597	29.04.2017 05.05.2017	Sri Aurobindo International School Hyderabad	Seethadidi, 9396696186, saishyd@gmail.com, challa@gmail.com	52
			Kvo Seva Samaj	Seva Samaj, ksevasamaj@gmail.com HitendraVira-9819041005, virahiten07@gmail.com Suresh Gala-9892297221, sgala305@gmail.com	34

No	CAMP NO	DATE	NAME OF SCHOOLS	NAME OF LEADER MOBILE NO & EMAIL	BOOKING POSITION
5	YC 599	13.05.2017 19.05.2017 (Self -defence Camp/ Girls)	Rani Saheb Kelavi Mandal Lemdi, Gujarat*	Dr. BharatsinhJhala, 09426695198 bdjhala21@yahoo.in	20 girls
			Shri Ratan Lal Foundation	Sanjeev Gupta, 9811085667 sanjeevsda@gmail.com Neha, 9599377677 nehachaudhary.159@gmail.com	79 girls
6	YC 600	20.05.2017 26.05.2017	Ma Mandir Rewa, Madhya Pradesh	Indu didi, mamandir@gmail.com	24
			Amarnath Mandir, Mathura	Dr. Anil Vajpeyii, anilvajpeyi58@gmail.com	46
7	YC 601	27.05.2017 30.05.2017	Ramanlal Shorawala Public School, Mathura	Mr. Prabhat Singh, 9897410744 kunwar_prabhat@yahoo.com	54 boys
		27.05.2017 02.06.2017	Oriya Youth Camp	pksamal47@yahoo.in, ManojSahoo, 9999019565, manojshoo2007@gmail.com	14
8	YC 602	01.06.2017 04.06.2017	Arsh Kanyagurukul, Najibabad	Manish Arya, 9810118709, manisharyaadvocate@hotmail.com	54 girls
9	YC 603	22.06.2017 28.06.2017	Arya Vidya Mandir	Swami Aryavesh, 9466308110 aryavesh@gmail.com,	60
10	YC 604	24.09.2017 30.09.2017	Sourcing Our Oneness	AUROVILLE, Jaya JorelBerrgreen, 0091-413-2623576, jaya@auroville.org.in	100
11	YC 605	27.09.2017 01.10.2017	Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi	Prakash Sahoo, 9910573303 swadharmm@gmail.com	44
12	YC 606	01.10.2017 04.10.2017	Alwar Public school	Pradeep Naruka, naruka_pradeep@rediffmail.com	50
13	YC 607	05.10.2017 10.10.2017	Matri Kiran Vidyalaya, W-Block, Sector-49, Sohna Road, Gurgaon, Haryana -122018	Kanika Mathur, kanikamathur@matrikiran.in	31
14	YC 608	11.10.2017 16.10.2017	Auro University, Surat	Jahanvee Ichchhaporia, 09925048527 jahanvee.ichchhapo- ria@aurouniversity.edu.in,	52
15	YC 609	19.10.2017 21.10.2017	Udayan Ghar	Shafi , 9911264762, ugdocs@udayancare.org	50
16	YC 610	28.11.2017 02.12.2017	I.IT Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh	Sanjiv Kumar, 05126796204 sanjivk@iitk.ac.in,	20
17	YC 611	18.03.2018 24.03.2018	The Mother's International School, New Delhi	Meenakshi Thakkar, 9810043528, meenakshi.thakkar@themis.in	90



# 4

## MADHUBAN TALLA RAMGARH



*“... We are not here to repeat what others have done, but to prepare ourselves for the blossoming of a new consciousness and a new life.”*

*– The Mother*

Madhuban is in the heart of a picturesque valley, which is packed with a thick forest and fruit orchards that produce, peaches, plums, apricots, herbs and thick natural foliage. The main occupation of people is farming.





The beautiful valley that we see from the Madhuban Dining hall was once intersected by a gushing rivulet, which now needs attention. In light of that, Madhuban



has focused on slowly looking at each area, and made a five year plan involving the village community so that they understand, share, and involve themselves in the transformation of the village.

Our overall aim is to slowly develop an area of about 10 km around the Madhuban center as a model village. In sync with this the Delhi Branch has completely supported the leadership team at Madhuban in its needs of material, resource people and ideation platforms. Based on this unconditional facilitation, Madhuban has gradually worked to host various projects that work towards:

1. Human progress for the discerning seekers through integral yoga, taught at our study camps
2. Community building through work in the village outreach programs in areas of education, health, livelihood, environment and sustainable living practices along with skill building for local youth and women

### VILLAGE OUTREACH PROJECTS



#### Education

Madhuban has continually worked for interventions in reading, writing and spoken language skills for children from village schools, specially children from Nursery level up to Class Five

- Dr Kamla Menon and her team from Mirambika Free Progress School and The Mother's International

School continue working with local teachers in areas of social science, project work, art and craft, and mathematics. Sonu, a local teacher from the village, has started upgrading on a regular basis children who need individual and small group intervention.

- Baren Roul from Mirambika Free Progress School, with his science kits, is popular with both children and teachers. This has helped in inculcating a scientific temper in students of classes 6 through 8, students of Government Inter College For Girls, Vidya Mandir students, and Sunrise Public School students. Kits were also given to each school for using them as a resource while teaching science.
- Neeta, a volunteer, worked with art and craft with the children of Sunrise Public School, and also regaled them with stories, thus making English speaking a joyous experience for them.
- Christophe Jorg, a musician from Germany, spent time with the children teaching them music, songs in German, and learnt English himself. He taught with simplicity and the children loved his company.
- Anuska, a volunteer trained by Wasteless Auroville, worked with Garbology and waste management in Sunrise Public School. Today the children of this school have brought down their school garbage to the minimum and also the area around their school is now plastic free.
- Nikita, a volunteer from Delhi University spent time on project Eco Femme led by Cathy and Nikki from Auroville. Their work on menstrual health and distribution of sanitary pads that are washable and reusable has been started in a small way through Government Inter College For Girls.
- Alexey from Russia taught children of Sunrise Public School to make musical instruments and create their own symphony of music.
- Matthew from the U.S.A. and his group of musicians led by David Newman, Benji and Heather came to Madhuban from 4-13 October 2017, and from 19-28 October 2017. Krishna Das, K.K. Shah and many other devotees of Neem Karoli Baba thronged the Madhuban space; it was enchanting and the place just resonated with sonorous music.
- The group also had a few mornings of rendering of hanuman chalisa in the local schools, specially as it was near Ram Naumi, and the children could

connect this with their local experiences of the ongoing Ram Leela.

- Hira, from the Delhi Ashram and The Mother's International School trained children from local schools in games and physical display for field performances.
- Anna, from Auroville, shared her artistic temperament and skills with children, teachers and adults.

- Dr Anju Khanna, from Madhuban, took sessions on whole school management of curriculum between teachers and parents for Sunrise Public School with an emphasis on building a learning community.
- Besides the above, using traditional indigenous wisdom, designing a curriculum for sustainable living through the school platforms, with a focus on plastic free schools, has begun in a small way.



*Kamal didi, Baren, Jorg, Anuska, Nekita, Alexey Nikki, Cathy, Matthews, Anju Khanna spreading the joy of learning*

## Dental Health

The preventive dental programme in the govt. and private schools of Talla Ramgrah coordinated by Dr. Anju Kanna, and with the collaboration of Auroville Dental Centre for Education Research and Rural Action (ADCERRA) stepped into its 5th year in 2017. It was carried out by a team of 3 members from 16 August - 16 September 2017. The team provided education on oral health and nutrition, check-ups, scaling, sealants and ART treatment.

The oral hygiene has improved. The prevalence of caries has reduced in three schools due to the care provided for the last 4 years. But oral health in the new schools added to the program is similar to what it was in the other schools at the beginning of the program.

Following a suggestion from Dr. Anju Kanna we did a survey with the children to learn about their villages. There are 17 villages situated around Madhuban (Talla Ramgarh, Malla Ramgarh, Pali, Juiytia, Nakana, Nathuwakhan, Hali, Tolla, Sakkina, Bhahrakot, Lehrik,

*The following Table shows the number of students examined and the treatment given during 2017-18.*

No	SCHOOL	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	Scaling		Sealant		ART filling		Redo		Temp		Sealant intact		Filling Intact	
					ss	hs	mt	pt	mt	pt	mt	pt	mt	pt	mt	pt	mt	pt
1	Sunrise	87	50	37	10	0	15	45	69	8	0	0	15	3	2	11	20	8
2	Sishu Mandir	76	41	35	10	2	55	19	41	7	3	1	44	3	3	10	56	17
3	Vidya Mandir	88	64	24	26	5	4	154	14	11	0	24	4	1	3	39	8	119
4	Pali Govt	5	1	4	0	0	2	10	0	0	1	2	5	0	1	1	2	2
5	Pitchal Tana GPS	9	3	6	1	0	17	12	1	0	0	1	11	0	10	9	2	1
6	Pitchal Tana UPS	7	7	0	5	1	0	18	0	2	0	2	0	0	1	4	2	6
7	Juita GPS	11	7	4	2	1	11	22	2	1	0	1	13	0	3	3	8	5
8	Tall Govt.	20	12	8	8	1	19	32	17	2	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0
9	Adults	20	7	13	0	0	0	28	0	20	0	5	0	5	0	6	0	8
10	G.Total	323	192	131	62	10	123	340	140	51	3	36	106	12	23	83	98	166

**KEY**

- ss** simple scaling
- hs** heavy scaling
- mt** milk tooth
- pt** permanent tooth
- temp** temporary filling

Loshgane, Galla Burkhol, Kema, Sian , Shalia). The students come from these villages at an altitude of about 1,500 to 2,500 metres, and generally walk 5-25 km to reach the school. Only a few students came by jeep, bus or van. There are 24 different communities in this region.

The coordinating member of ADCERRA approached the Government schools in order to extend the service as these children really needed care. The headmasters and teachers were very cooperative and appreciative.



*The preventive dental programme*

## **Livelihood**

An area aptly named by Tara didi as Khushali (literally, well being) was earmarked last year for empowerment of women by teaching them skills for income generation. Khushali now has three units that Madhuban supports in terms of mentoring; providing Infrastructure support as rooms, electricity and water; and teaching finance management and entrepreneurship skills.

### **1. *Stitching unit***

- We hold regular every day free classes on sewing with the help of two women from the village
- Three women from the village community, Sonu, Mamta and Neema come 6 days a week from 9 am to 12 noon. Their daily work is managing the center, teaching young women to stitch, stitching for their own sustainable monthly earnings that come from selling well crafted small pouches to big bags, yoga mat holders, women's garments, curtains, bed sheets, pillow and cushion covers. A lot of recycling of material and innovative aspects of design, utility and eco – friendly material is used
- Anuska, an Ashram volunteer, comes for 7 days a month to bring them raw material and to teach them designs, re-cycling and packaging.

The stitching unit gives meaningful employment to the women who have attended our training programs and is slowly but surely taking shape as a village community center

### **2. *Knitting unit***

- Wool is given to the women, and they take it home to knit. They meet every Tuesday for training and taking stock of the hand knitted shawls, mufflers, mittens, socks, caps and sweaters.
- A year's investment of wool being given to them for honing their skills is now visible in their craft. The women who have come regularly have both dexterity of skill and are developing an eye for detail, and their number is increasing

### **3. *Farming Unit that we support:***

- Last year we had experimented with creating a calendar for growing produce that is not perishable. So, each woman from our stitching and knitting units was given some herbs like oregano, thyme, rosemary, sage, lemon balm, lavender and local varieties of basil to grow. This support and experiment has borne dividends. The women have grown the plants successfully, and are making herbal tea with locally grown rhododendron

flowers that they picked in March. Organically grown Tumeric, along with drying of herbs and packaging them is another outcome of this support.

- Women from these groups are now also becoming enterprising and are making local hand pounded Bari. Himalayan salt with herbs is another experiment that they are doing.

Students of Singapore Management University have seeded the projects on knitting, stitching and livelihoods for entrepreneurship and branding under project Gazaab. This project is now in its fifth year, and it provides an international learning experience to the village women.

#### 4. Skill building

Mr Vikrant Abrol, through his venture Unifiers, supported two four-month residential courses for electricians in the Madhuban campus.

- 15 students in each course were given board and lodging.
- Routines for English speaking and computer classes with an emphasis on punctuality, shramdaan, meditation and evening games. The aim was to build the youth in keeping with their potential and expose them to the values of sharing, co-existence, thrift, integrity and work culture.



*Vocational trainees doing the electricians' course*

Dara who brought in a rigor, looked after the second batch along with trainers from electrical teaching background

### 5. *Supporting Local Schools*

- We have distributed furniture to the village schools, and to the ashram supported school in Haldwani called Woodstock



### 6. *Relief from cold*

- Distribution of warm clothes and blankets in winters to the village people, specially the migrant labour that comes to work in neighborhood construction sites and for making the road.



*Children with their new class furniture*

## STUDY CAMPS AND RETREATS



The spiritual retreats focused on supporting spiritual seekers on their journey, each group in its own way, through discourses, films, experiential work, together with treks through the forests, music and singing and bonfires when it was cold, really aimed at treating time spent here as a pause from the din of city noise and the hurry and worry of daily work life.

### April 2017

#### *Camp M-144, 9-15 April 2017*

A yoga retreat by Swami Vidyanand, in which each participant could reflect on the harmony within. Trekking through the forest area and concentrating on one's breath were the focus.

#### *Camp M-145, 16-21 April 2017*

An educational retreat by the 'Litchi group' for senior teachers of government schools and officials from the education department under the aegis of Sri Aurobindo Society, Puducherry.

#### *Camp M-146, 19-21 April 2017:*

In this camp, children from Indus World School, Gurugram, went on a river trek, had baking sessions, and visited a local village school. They also visited the homes of the children who studied there.

#### *Camp M-147, 29 April - 6 May 2017*

Tai chi retreat, conducted by Sensei Sandeep Desai. People discovered the flexibility of the human body when in harmony with a peaceful inner self.

### May 2017

#### *Camp M-148, 7-10 May 2017*

Children from Shiv Nadar School forged relations with the village schools, trekked to the river front and also had sessions on garbology and baking. Most of the children for the first time learnt to meditate, washed their utensils, and cleaned their own rooms; they also did some impersonal manual work (shramdan). It was all received well as new learning.

#### *Camp M-149, 11-13 May 2017*

Indus school mentoring program for teachers: mentoring leadership qualities by management games and building stamina was the focus of this group. They took a trek to Mountain Paradise, had their own circle sharing times, and were eager to participate in all ashram routines of yoga, shramdaan, meditation and early to bed, early to rise routines.

#### *Camp M-150, 13-19 May 2017*

Camp on Sri Aurobindo's Synthesis of yoga conducted by Mr. Arun Naik: Arun Ji from the Noida Center came to Madhuban in a small group and shared his understanding of The Synthesis of Yoga where Sri Aurobindo unfolds his vision of an integral yoga embracing all the powers and activities of man. First, he reviews the three great yogic paths of Knowledge, Works and Love, along with Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga and Tantra, and then integrates them all into a great symphony.

#### *Camp M-152, 23-29 May 2017*

Family retreat by parents and children of Mirambika free progress school: Children of Mirambika and their parents in their by now annual sojourn came to Madhuban with an open mind and formed a clear list of expectations from their stay here. The consensus was on going for treks, gardening, helping pick fruit, creating a mock shop to sell the fruit to their parents, doing art and craft with the village school children and also teaching them English.

A game of flowers and choosing from the flower cards was another highlight, a set of rules made by the children was emphatic on following meal timings, meditation time to be quiet time, no wasting of food and looking after waste management during the duration of their stay. The camp gave the children free space to explore themselves.

### *Camp M-153, 27 May-2 June 2017*

The camp on practical spirituality by Anurag Banerjee had a framework of following themes:

- Spiritual duties of a householder
- Preparing a path of psychic opening
- Training of the vital
- Fighting depression

### *Camp M-154, 4-9 June 2017*

'Morpheus', a group led by Sameer Guglani, regularly comes to Madhuban and uses the serene environment as a dialogue space for the exchange of ideas for setting up a community based on harmonious co-existence.

At the core of Morpheus is the spirit of sharing and giving. Laced with a belief that each of us are unique and have an insight to share through our experiences and learnings, the retreat truly worked to set an example of community, sharing, collective learning and collective growth.

### *Camp M-155, 7-13 June 2017*

This camp titled 'Clean Mind Programme – The Ayurveda Way' had 25 participants, and was conducted by Dr. Surinder Katoch, an Ayurvedic Physician and Yoga Expert. The program included an early morning Prabhat pheri; yogasanas; shramdaan; talks on Ayurveda, holistic, health, the Gita and Yoga; Indian traditional games such as pithoo, kabaddi, langritaang, kho-kho and antakshri; memory games and meditation. In one session, Tara Didi answered questions from the participants. One of the days a havan was conducted with chanting of Mahamritunjaya Mantra 108 times followed by Geeta chanting. There were treks to the river site and visits to village homes to learn about their style of living. On the last evening, there was a cultural program put together by the participants.

### *Camp M-156, 14-20 June 2017*

Kriya yoga retreat, conducted by Per H. Vibe: From the first day of his teaching he said: "Be deeply inside. What you experience is because of Life and the Masters, it is not my power." He teaches Kriya Yoga in a practical and simple way, taking his students to the essence. To take the mind to a level of non-duality, to an inner experience of Silence.

### *Camp M-157, 5-10 July 2017*

Delhi youth jam: Youth Jams, organized by YES! World-wide since 1990 and in India since 2012, are residential gatherings that connect, inspire, and collaborate with young change-makers to build a community that seeks to create thriving, just, and sustainable ways of life for all. In keeping with these values, the organizers of India's first city-based Jam chose to hold the workshop at Madhuban, because it fits seamlessly with their ethos. As shared by the 18 participants of this 5-day program, the beautiful landscape of the Ashram, and the serenity and sense of continuity with nature that they felt here, was an intrinsic part of the therapeutic effect of the Delhi Youth Jam.

### *Camp M-158, 17-21 July 2017*

Yoga retreat by Dr S.P. Sondhi and Supriya Sondhi: A group of doctors and other devotees from Meerut came for this yoga retreat. The feedback from 25 odd participants indicated that all of them uniformly felt that the place is amazing and befitting for such activities. Two treks were organized by to familiarize the participants with the Madhuban valley and its forest treks, and with Madhuban's village outreach programs.

### *Camp M-159, 20-30 Aug 2017*

This 10-day Himalayan Spiritual Retreat was conducted in Madhuban under the guidance of Vedantic scholar Swami Tattvarupnanada Saraswati from Kerala.

The focus of the Retreat was the study of 'Kaivalya Upanishad', one of the lesser known Upanishads. Seven participants attended the Retreat: two from Japan, three from Australia, one from Germany, one from the USA – a few of them coming to India for the first time. The retreat included lectures on the Kaivalya Upanishad by Swamiji, as well Q/A sessions, chanting, meditation, and karma yoga. There were also treks to nearby villages and hills, and visits to temples in Muketshwara. Anju Didi gave a short presentation to the participants on the principles and philosophy of Integral Yoga, and about the life and vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. She also introduced the participants to the working of Madhuban as a unit of Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Delhi, as also its beginnings in the early years, and the contributions made by so many devotees and friends to its design, structure and day-to-day working.

Prof. Sehdev Kumar gave a presentation of Songs and Yoga of St. Kabir to the participants of the Retreat. Based

on his book, *The Vision of Kabir*, Dr. Kumar rendered the original songs of Kabir, as also their translations in English. He elaborated some of the special ideas and insights of Kabir in the Indian Bhakti Yoga tradition, and how they are an integral part of Indian spiritual philosophy going back to the Upanishads.

### *Sourcing Our Oneness*

Some of the participants in the Sourcing Our Oneness Workshop at Van Niwas came to Madhuban on their way back in October 2017.

Sourcing our Oneness is a concept in which The Mother's children come together from Auroville, Pondicherry and other centers from all parts of India. A few devotees from U.S.A, Germany and other countries also gathered this year from 24-30 Sep 2017 in Van Niwas. Post that they came for a few days to Madhuban for further deliberations. A three day informal workshop on Economy in context to The Mother's work was also held.

### *Camp M-163, 4-13 October 2017*

Bhakti Yoga retreat by David Newman: Matthews, David Newman, Benji and Heather mesmerized the valley with their devotional songs, working in the local village schools and also traveling to Neem Karoli Baba's Shrine in Kainchi Dham and Kakri Ghat. To join them were K.K Shah and Krishna Das, who shared with them the relationship between Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch and Kainchi Dham.

### *Camp M-164, 8-14 October 2017*

Spiritual retreat conducted by Dr Ramesh Bijlani: This was a study camp, 'A Wide Angle View of Yoga', for a group of participants from Austin TX, USA, led by Mr. Jogi Bhagat. The group had a packed program with four interactive sessions a day besides asanas and pranayama's, trekking and evening meditation. Dr. Anju Khanna conducted a session with the group in the 'Tree House' on the history and evolution of Madhuban. There was also a cultural program on the last evening, in which Dr. Sehdev Kumar and Vocational Trainees also participated.

### *Camp 165, 15-18 October 2017*

Spiritual retreat by Sw. Tattvarupanand: Swami Tattvarupanand and his group of devotees have been coming to Madhuban every year for the last few years.

His mastery of Vedanta, his verve for laughter, and energy to lead treks all combine to make him loved, respected and popular with his group of participants.

### *Camp 166, 19-28 October 2017*

Spiritual retreat by David Newman: Matthews, David Newman, Benji and Heather came back again to be in Madhuban to continue their work of music, Bhakti, travel and working in the village schools. Together they explored the possibility of the West and East coming together, the village rendering of Ram Leela was joined by a group of Americans singing Hanuman chalisa with love, devotion and bhakti. It was indeed a precious offering to the valley and its simple village folk.

Krishna Das, the spiritual music maestro, and Sri K.K Shah were surprise visitors to the camp with a few other devotees from Kainchi Dham. All people as belonging to one world were the precious gift Madhuban resonated with. There was bhakti music in Prabhu sthal and in Pragati and in all other parts of Madhuban.

### *Camp 167, 29 October-4 November 2017*

Natya Shastra With Abhinava Bharati: The camp was conducted by Dr. Bharat Gupta.

### *Camp 168, 9-15 December 2017*

Project Gazaab: By Singapore Management University (S.M.U.)

In 2013 S.M.U. first year student Ruhani Khanna and her course mates seeded Project Gazaab as an experiment, to see if the valley of Talla Ramgarh could become a hub for entrepreneurship and small-scale businesses. Since then 14-15 students have been coming every year from Singapore to continue the work.

In 2017 December a collective call was taken to invest time and money, and to focus on three projects that were interconnected: the stitching unit; the knitting unit; and the herb and local produce market. Winds of change and financial sense for each of the 25 women attached to this program are the target. The Madhuban Ashram supports this project as we feel that change, however small, is beginning to be felt.

### *Camp 169, 28 February-3 March 2018*

Spiritual retreat by Dr Ramesh Bijlani on 'Integral Yoga': 14 yoga enthusiasts from Argentina led by Mr.

Marcelo de Aquino Vicente attended a Study Camp on Integral yoga at Madhuban. Besides introducing them to Integral Yoga, there were a few sessions based on Sri Aurobindo's The Synthesis of Yoga, especially on the four aids in sadhana. The participants went for treks in the afternoons, and presented a cultural program on the last evening.

*Camps 170, 10-13 March 2018; Camp 171, 13-16 March 2018; Camp 172, 16-19 March 2018*

These three camps were attended by three groups of children from The Mother's International School, New Delhi, and were conducted by Mr. Debi Prasad.

*Camp 173, 18-20 March 2018*

This was a camp for school teachers, and was conducted by Mr. Lavlesh Bhanot.

*Camp 174, 22-31 March 2018*

This was a spiritual retreat conducted by Raghu and Saraswati: Raghu from the U.S.A had come with Krishna Das and fell in love with Madhuba. A retreat by his partner Saraswati in the month of March 2018 was a natural outcome. Yogasanas, bhajans and travelling

to the various temple sites of the Kumaon valley were combined with shramdaan and daily practices of meditation.

These camps and retreats from April 2017 – March 2018 forged a much needed connect spiritually with the outside world and helped us meet many sadhaks who in their own ways continue to help with our village outreach work. These seekers in their own way associated themselves with all our social outreach work and helped in terms of adding their resources and expertise.

Madhuban has a long history of self-preparation. Rajindra Nath Muttoo built up his orchard devotedly and loved it deeply. He had a contact with The Mother and his life was a consecration. His successor Kurban Hussain was even more devoted in his own way; Tara didi who continues the work now is truly The Mother's own child. No wonder that Champaklal ji saw they're a burning lamp and he saw that, "the flame of the lamp began with many colours and as it rose it turned into completely a golden flame." This is indicative of the spiritual content of the place, its trend of movement and goal. The camps are an offering on this path.

## SPECIAL DAYS



All four Darshan Days were celebrated with devotion and sincerity with Savitri Reading, March Past, lights of Aspiration, followed by Prasad. All the workers, Ashramites, village guests and those attending a camp or spiritual retreat participated in the celebrations.



## CONSTRUCTION WORK



### Building of Pragati block and Six Water Harvesting Tanks



Madhuban, with its expanding focus on village outreach and spiritual retreats, is a growing community and its needs of housing and water resources are on the increase. Keeping in mind the perils of creating concrete structures, and us becoming a model community, we have used pre-fabricated material for our housing needs and steel water storage tanks that needed very little concreting or digging.

Pragati is a residential block with 9 studio apartments. Each of these has a small functional kitchen, a common utility area and a functional access to common sit-out areas, with solar water heating systems. This dwelling space is beckoning resource people who need to stay long term for our village outreach programs

There is a rivulet, Ramgada, in front of the ashram that once used to be gurgling with water but now is a mere trickle. It needs our focused attention but before we do that, it was imperative that we looked at the needs of Madhuban community for saving water for our daily needs and our gardens. So, a water harvesting project that would store water from roof tops for our gardens and two tanks for drinking water has been taken up.



## GARDENS



Madhuban gardens have a clear focus on spreading The Mother's belief that "gentle and lovely, flowers share their beauty with us and bring us a touch of eternal things."

According to the Mother, "each variety of flowers has its own special quality and meaning. By establishing an inner contact with the flower, this meaning can be known." "Flowers speak to us when we know how to listen to them," the Mother said. It is a subtle and fragrant language. As if to provide a key to this language, she identified the significances of almost nine hundred flowers.

Tara didi, who grew up with The Mother and was part of the group that collected and categorized flowers with Her, simply understood that these flowers and their messages are presented in the light of The Mother's vision and experience, and so she has focused her energy on turning Madhuban into a flower offering to the Mother.

Based on the principle of gift economy a small message from her office in Delhi has brought hundreds of flower bulbs, gardening tools. While on a trip to the AUM conference in Boston in August, and during her stopovers in London, visits to the nurseries there was part of her schedule.

Devotees from all over the world who come to the Delhi Ashram and Madhuban have carried thousands of flower bulbs, and the soil of Madhuban has accepted and sprouted Mother's bounty of flowers as an offering to the Divine.

A special miracle that is felt in Madhuban is on the path of silence in front of Prabhu Sthal where The Relics of Sri Aurobindo have been enshrined. Here a plethora of flowers in a riot of colours continues to bloom in every season, and beckons the discerning visitor to walk quietly, be one with nature's magnificence, and get absorbed in reflection.



Madhuban also has fruit orchards, which produce fruits (lemons, peaches, apricots, plums, pears, some walnuts, and pomegranate) and herbs (turmeric, ginger, oregano, lemon grass, sage, thyme, rosemary, chamomile and mint). Part of the produce is sent to the Delhi Ashram and to the Nainital Ashram (Van Niwas), and part con-

sumed at Madhuban. Some of the fruit is processed into jam, chutney and pickles, which can be stored and relished throughout the year. Our young vocational trainees get to see the process of growing fruit to processing it, and this learning goes a long way in building their experience of the farm to market process.



## SCHOLARSHIPS



Scholarships have been given to children belonging to families of villages around Madhuban as shown in the Table below.

No	Name of parent	Occupation	Number of Children / Family	Amount per year
1	Amar Singh	Mason	2	15000 each = 30000 INR
2	Dheeraj	Cook	2	15000 each = 30000 INR
3	Lalu	Gardener	2	15000 each = 30000 INR
4	Lachi	Daily wage labourer	2	12000 each = 24000 INR
5	Bhopal	Daily wage labourer	2	12000 each = 24000 INR
<b>TOTAL = 138,000 INR</b>				

## APPRECIATIONS



Here are some messages from visitors who came to Madhuban:

Thank you for the wonderful hospitality. We really felt the warmth and generosity of this space and its people.

- *Kathy and Nikki, from Auroville*

Wonderful, serene and tranquil surroundings. All so dedicated. Amazing work being done by the Ashram. Totally non-profit oriented. Feel blessed to have had the opportunity of being shown around by Tara Didi.

- *Anu Dixit, Niti Mubayi, Vijaya Anand, Kusum*

I feel here something, which makes me happy and joyful. Atmosphere is very beautiful and friendly. Here all members are cooperative.

- *Jayshree Parida*

Beautiful place filled with Her presence. Waiting to be here soon to work for Her.

- *Archana*

My stay in Madhuban is very comfortable. The scenery is very beautiful. The Bhaiyas and Didis are very cooperative and caring. I love to come again.

- *Kamlesh Batra (Mirambika)*

Each time Ramgarh reveals its new form. I have been here in summer, autumn and winter and have been coming since the late 1980's. The serene and peaceful environment, staring at scenic beauty of the mountain, valley and river continue to mesmerize me. I spent a lot of time sun bathing and enjoying its beauty. The calm atmosphere, and the chimes bring me closer to myself. The comfort and coziness of the rooms adds to the charm. The friendly smiling souls welcome me to this nest. Above all, I always feel the presence of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo in this abode.

Srila Basu

We thank you for showing us the beautiful, soothing ashram.

- *Dinesh Bahirwani*

The tranquility at Madhuban is mesmerizing.

- *Agarwal*

Awesome place. Beautiful flowers, mountains and sky. Just loved it. Would definitely like to come back.

- *Adwait*

There is heaven on Earth, and it is here. It's so beautiful here that I can live the rest of my life here in the lap of nature, near the Almighty

- *Arvind*

My visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Madhuban is like a lifetime journey to a heavenly place on earth. A peaceful abode of God.

- *Prabhat*

It's amazing to have a Darshan of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo at Madhuban. It is a great place in the midst of nature. We would like to spend some time and to stay as well.

- *Dr. Prakash*

It is an extremely serene and peaceful campus. Excellent maintenance and upkeep. It was indeed a privilege to be here.

- *Shriram Barve*

A beautiful place, the like of which I have not seen before. I experienced spiritual waves at the Relics. A beautiful garden. Enjoyed delicious tasty food.

- *J. L. Rana, Gujrat*

It is a divine spiritual place giving peace of mind. Very silent and sacred place.

- *Mahendra Jadeja*

This place is like the abode of the Almighty. Spending days here is like staying in heaven on earth, where we can realise the realm and essence of the sanctity and peace of life.

- *Vikram Singh Rawat*

Divine Mother's presence felt in Madhuban. An extraordinary experience. Everything well managed, neat and clean. Thanks and gratitude, for having Mothers blessings here.

- *Keshab Lal Das*

For me, Madhuban is home, my family and something, which i trust. In my last 25 years, I've held innumerable retreats all over India but Madhuban is the best Ashram I've ever visited. Everything about it is beautiful. A visit to this place will leave anyone's jaws dropped wide open. People entrusted with the task of looking after this place are trained to turn everything they do into art. I intend to hold my annual retreat here as long as i live.

During my recent visit here, i had an opportunity to hear Tara didi speak and it was truly a memorable experience. At 82, she showed no sign of slowing down. In fact, the way she spoke about the number of projects that are currently being undertaken and the ones they intend to take up, her bulldozer's determination and the

commitment to uplift the underprivileged shone through.

It was such an honour and a blessing to see Anju didi, another dynamic personality and a selfless worker who seemed to make tireless efforts to run such a huge ashram in a disciplined way.

I wish them all the success.

- *Sensei Sandeep Desai*

It has been a great experience, spending 4 days at Madhuban, in the midst of nature; the participants are so spiritually uplifted.

- *Dr Suraj Sondhi and Supriya Sondhi*

## MADHUBAN CAMPS



2017 April till 2018 march at Talla Ramgarh, dist. Nainital, Uttarakhand  
(DORM/ROOM ACCOMMODATION)

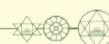
No	Camp no.	DATES	TOPIC/ Institution	FACILITATORS	NO. OF PERSONS IN ROOMS
1	M 144	09.04.17 15.04.17	SPIRITUAL RETREAT	Swami Vidyanand , 9810680711	12 in rooms
2	M 145	16.04.17 21.04.17	WORKSHOP	Litchi Knowledge Park	Rooms and dorms
3	M146	19.04.17 21.04.17	INDUS WORLD SCHOOL, GURGAON	Gunjan Sharma, 9873935465, gunjan.sharma@cleis.in	20 Dorms
4	M 147	29.04.17 06.05.17	TAI CHI RETREAT	Sensei Sandeep and Pallavi Desai	26 in rooms
5	M 148	07.05.17 10.05.17	SHIV NADAR SCHOOL , NOIDA	Aneeta Pathak, aneeta@ auroville.org.in	40 in DORMS +ROOMS
6	M 149	11.05.17 13.05.17	INDUS WORLD SCHOOL, GURGAON	MENTOR'S PROGRAM	30 in rooms
7	M 150	13.05.17 19.05.17	THE SYNTHESIS OF YOGA	ArunNaik , 9891422794	22 in rooms
8	M 152	23.05.17 29.05.17	FAMILY WORKSHOP	Rachna Bansal, rachna- bansal.unifiers@gmail. com	20 in rooms
9	M 153	27.05.17 02.06.17	Practical Spirituality	Anurag Banerjee , 9830344192	13 in rooms
10	M 154	04.06.17 09.06.17	MORPHEUS	Sameer Guglani	18 in dorms
11	M 155	07.06.17 13.06.17	CLEAN MIND PROGRAM	Dr.Tarun Baveja, Dr. Surinder Katoch	25 in dorms
12	M 156	14.06.17 20.06.17	KRIYA YOGA RETREAT	Per H. Vibe	23in rooms
13	M 157	05.07.17 10.07.17	DELHI YOUTH JAM	YES ORGANIZATION	25 in rooms
14	M 158	17.07.17 21.07.17	YOGA RETREAT	Dr. S.P. Sondhi,Supriya Sondhi	25 in rooms
15	M 159	20.08.17 30.08.17	SPIRITUAL RETREAT	Swami Tattvaraupananda, tattva1008@gmail.com	10 in rooms
16	M 160	17.09.17 23.09.17	KRIYA YOGA RETREAT	Per H. Vibe	4 in rooms

No	Camp no.	DATES	TOPIC/ Institution	FACILITATORS	NO. OF PERSONS IN ROOMS
17	M 161	23.09.17 27.09.17	NVC Mentoring and Assessment	Katherine Singer , sg@seedofpeace.org	12 in rooms
18	M 162	28.09.17 02.10.17	CLEAN MIND PROGRAM	Acharya Navneet,9467880114 aimseva@gmail.com	25 in rooms
19	M 163	04.10.17 13.10.17	BHAKTI YOGA RETREAT	David Newman	18 in rooms
20	M 164	08.10.17 14.10.17	SPIRITUAL RETREAT	Dr. Ramesh Bijlani, rambij@gmail.com	7 in rooms
21	M 165	15.10.17 18.10.17	SPIRITUAL RETREAT	Sw. Tattvarupanand	23 in rooms
22	M 166	19.10.17 28.10.17	SPIRITUAL RETREAT	David Newman	27 in rooms
23	M 167	29.10.17 04.11.17	NATYA SHASTRA WITH ABHINAVABHARATI	Dr. Bharat Gupt, 9810077914 bharatgupt@vsnl.com	26 in rooms
24	M 168	09.12.17 15.12.17	SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY	Dr. Anju Khanna	20 in rooms
25	M 169	28.02.18 03.03.18	SPIRITUAL RETREAT	Dr. Ramesh Bijlani, rambij@gmail.com ,	15 in rooms
26	M 170	10.03.18 13.03.18	M.I.S	Debi Prasad, debi.pramanik@themis.in	35 in dorms



# 5

## KECHLA CAMPUS



Kechla is a conglomeration of several hamlets of primarily tribal population spread over quite a wide region. It is located in the Koraput district of Odisha. Since the creation of a dam on the Kolab River, an extensive reservoir surrounds numerous pockets of rugged hilly terrain. The area was so backward that essential infrastructure for sustenance of basic life needs was non-existent. No proper roads, no electricity, no potable water, no school, nor any healthcare facility whatsoever existed in the region. Of course, the area abounds in natural scenic beauty and clean unpolluted air.



Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch has been involved in village outreach activities and also in supporting the education of children and the youth of the region.

Tree plantation is being done not only on our own field but also in the denuded forest areas that are on hills. The ashram has pledged to take this up as there is massive soil erosion and most of the hills have become barren and infertile. There was an initial resistance by the villagers as they thought that they could cultivate on the

slopes of the hills that they had cleared and also because they thought that these hills could be used for grazing of cattle, goats and sheep. However, as the condition of the soil on these hills is deteriorating fast, the villagers have started tree plantations.

Many youths of the village and surrounding areas come to Delhi to learn skills in Vocational Training. They come for Tailoring, cooking, carpentry and other



trades. After going back, they start their own practise or get some type of employment in Koraput.

The ashram has also been facilitating medical facilities. There is no doctor or nurse or any type of medical facility in the vicinity. The closest is the Koraput hospital and for that one has to hire a motor launch while going and again on the way back. After crossing the reservoir one has to hire an auto which would come from Koraput which is over 10 Km away. No transport of any type is available after crossing the reservoir, unless we have called the same from Koraput. The road is very bad; actually non-existent and most autos do not want to come on this terrible road in a secluded area. The Mother's Integral Health Centre of the Delhi Ashram provides medicines and also transportation to the hospital and all the expenses for check-ups and tests. At times the patient has to be taken to Delhi or Vishakhapatnam or Vizianagram. All this is financed and facilitated by the Ashram.



*Group photo with dentists*



*Doctor from Delhi*

## **Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir**

A school by the name of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir (AMVM) which is run by Auro-Mira Service Society would be completing ten years of its existence on 5 July 2018. The school is completely free and caters to the poorest of the poor. It has all the facilities including a large library, science lab, maths lab, language lab, football field, basketball court, table tennis and all other facilities that any good school should have. Most of the students stay in the hostel and have all meals there. The students play multiple instruments including flute, tabla, guitar, keyboard, sitar.



*School building*



*School building under construction*

Sri Aurobindo Ashram-Delhi Branch has been completely sponsoring the school and all the expenses incurred in Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir. This covers the hostel and the boarding as well.



*Going to school*

The senior students of the school who are preparing for board exams at class Xth and XIIth levels come to Delhi for studying science subjects. When in Delhi, they also get an exposure to the atmosphere of the ashram including classical music and dance, physical training and meditation.



*Kechla students in Delhi*

There are other students of Kechla and its surrounding villages who are studying in other Sri Aurobindo Schools at

1. Khatiguda, Indrawati, Dist-Nabrangpur
2. Maliguda, Dist- Nabrangpur
3. Kotpad, Dist Koraput
4. Barijhol, Dist Rayagada

All expenses of these students including School Fees, Hostel expenses and Books, Stationary and Uniform are paid for by the ashram under its sponsorship scheme.

The ones who have gone to higher levels and have joined junior colleges at +2 level also get sponsorship of their actual expenses. At graduation level they are usually partially sponsored, as they are able to get some part time work to help them in their studies. But in some cases full sponsorship is also provided.

Persons from the ashram, volunteers and devotees are regularly going from Delhi to Kechla. They go there and work in whatever field they are adept at.

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of AMVM, workshops were organized at the Delhi Ashram.

A fortnight-long music workshop was conducted for twenty five 11-14 year old children and four teachers of Auro-Mira Vidya Mandir, from March 16-30, 2018, at Sri Aurobindo Ashram – Delhi Branch campus. Pt. Barun Pal not only gave lessons but also supervised



the entire workshop and was ably assisted by Radhika and Sachin. Children were taught music by a number of adepts on several instruments: flute by Shri Sujeet, tabla by Shri Kowshik, keyboard by Shri Ramanan and violin by Shri Ravi. Smt. Nalini Ghanekar gave lessons on Hindustani Classical Vocal music which included practice of sargam, Raag Durga and a prayer to Lord Krishna, Madhurashtakam.

In the Sanskrit workshop conducted by Dr. Savitri, children learnt about time, number counting, opposite words, using conjunctions and several aspects of tenses. Children were encouraged to converse in Sanskrit all through simulation, activities and games. Children also read Durga Stotra in Sanskrit and chanted verses as well. During the time set aside for games, for an hour the children learned and practiced basic jumps, kicks, positions, tactics and defence mechanism of the martial art Taekwondo.

The children presented a glimpse of what they had learnt in these workshops partly in the Meditation Hall and partly outdoors on 30 March 2018. About 25 students presented an orchestra of flute and Tabla, and devotional songs under the guidance of Pt. Barun Kumar Pal and Ms Nalini Ghanekar. Then they presented shlokas taught by Dr. Savitri in Sanskrit with their meaning in English. One of the most striking presentations was a simple dramatic rendering of the story of sour grapes in

Sanskrit. The outdoor Taekwondo demonstration was the final item of the day.

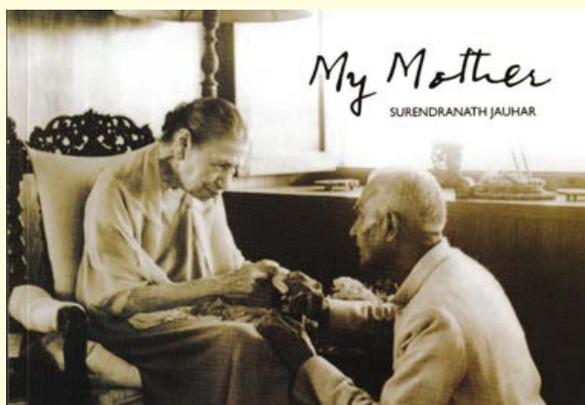
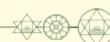






# 6

## PUBLICATIONS



**MY MOTHER**

*by*

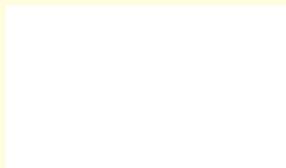
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The above report is a compilation of work made possible during the year by the Mother's Grace, and is offered at Her feet.



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**Chairperson**



**(PRANJAL JAUHAR)**  
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