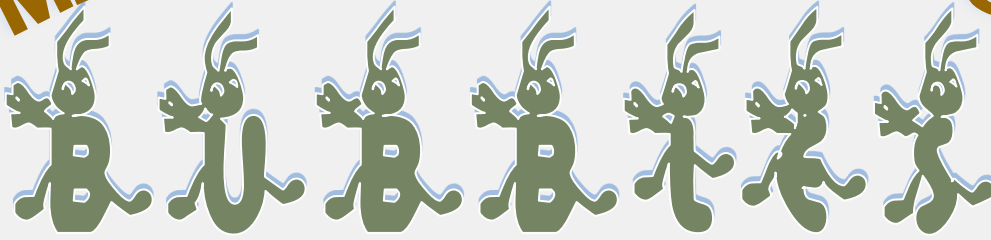


# AURO MIRRA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



## *Bright mind, light soul - Go Pondy!*

(Integral Education Workshop)



Like the wise saying goes “It’s the journey that matters not the destination” and that’s what Pondicherry meant for the teachers that were destined to be at this special place. This picturesque land is a sight of marvels from the calming sunrise to the roaring ocean waves at night and teachers of AMIS were all geared up for their first day workshop on Integral Education at the divine camp hall near the pristine rocky beach.

The Integral Education workshop for teachers was organized in Pondicherry from 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The objective of the workshop was to introduce the principles and practice of Integral Education as envisioned by Sri

Aurobindo and the Mother to the participants, laying emphasis on creating a greater awareness and practical implementation. Integral Education focuses on developing faculties in children like concentration, imagination, critical thinking and deeper values like truthfulness, courage and compassion among many.

The eight days workshop started with Yogic Exercises every morning demonstrated by Shivakumar and Riddhi. We learnt about different breathing techniques, concentration exercises and how well one can implement simple yoga in daily routines.

On the very first day, the history of the origin of the name “Pondicherry” and how this land surrounded by oceans came to be called so was explained by way of a humorous story by Shiv bhaiya. The next on the card was a session called “connecting with spaces” which showed how a loving relationship can be developed by connecting with the one beautiful thing that attracts us. This was followed by Shiv bhaiya spelling out and explaining the three core principles of Sri Aurobindo’s vision on Education which is “Nothing can be taught”, “The mind has to be consulted in its own growth” and the “near to far approach”. These principles helped us understand that the facilitator and students need to be on the same mental level to learn from each other and maximize learning.

What followed next was a session on Integral project facilitated by Harvinder didi. This enriched our minds on how any simple topic can yield to such a deeper understanding by being linked to other subjects associated with the topic.

The second day i.e. the 11<sup>th</sup> of May was scheduled a craft activity which truly enhanced our creative potential to the fullest by allowing us to craft ideas, figures and objects embedded in our imagination into physical existence in absolute silence. This resulted in an array of artful masterpieces created by the participants. The best part of this session was that the materials used to create something new came from recycled and used products.

The third day on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May we were part of an activity presented by Shankar bhaiya aimed at bringing out the inner child in adults. We were taught poems and rhymes that the children in our class would love to have us sing for them. Next on schedule was a session on how sensory perception plays an important role in a child’s learning process. This idea was demonstrated through a playful activity. The activity heightened our senses to become more aware of our faculties such as concentration, memory and to understand powers within us while our eyes were completely shut.

On the same day, for the afternoon session we were very fortunate to have Uttama didi who gave us a presentation on how language development can be taught to children by taking simple topic and relating it to the parts of speech. The activity sheets will definitely come handy to assist in the class room teaching.

Lined up for the fourth day on 13<sup>th</sup> May was another interesting activity. It was a walk to the Bharathi Park which was situated at the heart of the city. This early morning walk was amazingly refreshing to the mind and eyes. We were able to connect to nature with absolutely no verbal communication with each other; the intense calm and solitude alerted our minds to the voices and sounds in nature.

Next was a presentation on the power of music by Riddhi. The session showed music as being the most powerful of voices to make us sensitive to nature. Through music we could assess our feelings towards each subject.

Nature and art activity conducted by Sushanto bhaiya and his group made us relive our childhood memories on how we loved coloring and painting as kids. So on this day to do the same was extremely nostalgic. Anytime anywhere coloring always brings joy to our hearts.

A session on 'Migration' was taken by Riddhi for Pre-primary teachers. She spoke primarily about the migration of Blue Whales, Sea turtles and Monarch Butterfly. She showed some educational videos on the migration patterns of the aforementioned species. Kindergarten teachers got an insight into what methods and aids of teaching could be used to create love for nature in the classroom. The session taught us how the knowledge of an adult needs to awaken the imagination and curiosity of a child.

On 14<sup>th</sup> May, a session on mathematics was conducted by Dilip bhaiya. It was an interesting and a highly informative class where the facilitator introduced us to new tricks to learning the tables quickly and easily. He taught us easy methods to solve mathematical problems in a jiffy. His tips, tricks and methods had the class in rapt attention and completely amazed, even those terrified of Math took a keen interest in his class and enjoyed themselves.

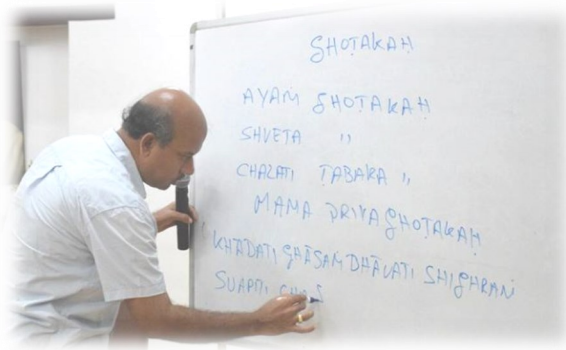
This was followed by a session on Cahier Pointelle conducted by Jasmine didi on how calming the mind really helps to focus on the task at hand. Here we were asked to smell and feel the objects with our eyes closed so that our mind awakens the other senses like touch and smell. We were, then, asked to sit in an erect position and warned not to lean or slouch before starting to do cahier pointelle. This activity had dots across the sheet which uses slant and sleeping lines. So the main focus was to join these slant and sleeping lines across the sheet without getting away from the points. It looked very easy in the beginning but this task requires immense patience, concentration and flexibility. This activity used in class would definitely benefit children who find concentrating on anything for long difficult. Moreover it was a great fun activity. In the end we were asked to assess our own mistakes.

On 15<sup>th</sup> May our day began with a class on concentration facilitated by Shiv bhaiya. The class evoked deep emotions in everyone present there. During this session, we were asked to close our eyes and take three deep breaths. He instructed us to listen to the sounds around us, also to focus on the rhythm of our heart beats and the midpoint between our eyes.

Meanwhile the instructors had placed a burning candle in front of the participants engaged in deep concentration. We were then asked to open our eyes and without a word to anyone get connected with the flame and make friends with it. After making that connection, we had to lift the candle and familiarize it with our body (like changing it from one hand to the other, keeping it on our knee, feet, stomach, forehead and also dancing) without disturbing the flame.

Then we were asked to exchange our candle with another person, which was the most difficult thing to do since it brought about the same grief that only parting with a dear friend would cause. After exchanging, it took us time to reconnect with a new candle. A little later on we were asked to connect with the flame of a candle from a distance without holding or touching it. This activity was wonderful. Getting connected to the flame, by talking to it, playing, dancing, exchanging, getting it back and letting it go, every stage of the activity was a beautiful experience. The activity develops concentration and the power to always stay focused no matter what happens.





The afternoon session on May 15 was an informative Sanskrit class conducted by Sampad bhaiya. As Sanskrit is known to be the mother of all Indian languages it was quite an experience to learn it. He explained that learning Sanskrit improves pronunciation and that it was a very logical language and could be learnt easily. He taught us a few Sanskrit shlokas from our scriptures. We were also taught a poem in Sanskrit. Singing the poem named Ghotkam meaning ‘a horse’ was a very enjoyable experience. Learning songs and poems develops love for the language for those new to it.

On the same day, we got a chance to visit **Matrikunj**. Matrikunj is also known as “The Mother’s Garden”. It is an organic farm located near Pondicherry. This 43-acre land is a research project on conscious and natural farming. The Society cultivates 10 acres of the land with fruits, vegetables and medicinal plants. The rest of the land is allowed to flourish naturally in the company of the forest’s natural inhabitants. The farm is looked after by Baburam bhaiya. The farm was surrounded by different types of flora and fauna. It had a large variety of medicinal plants and were introduced to us by Babu bhaiya. As a medicine man, he had so much knowledge about his world around him. We could point to any plant, any “weed”, and he would be able to explain to us what each plant or weed actually was, what types of medicinal purposes it would serve, where it grows, etc. This knowledge was passed down to him from family members of the older generations, and now Baburam bhaiya uses that knowledge to propel him forward with the success of his conscious farming in Matrikunj. It was incredible to see someone on a farm being so engaged with the life and environment around. This allowed us to enjoy the true beauty of farming.

## *Reigning of the titans*

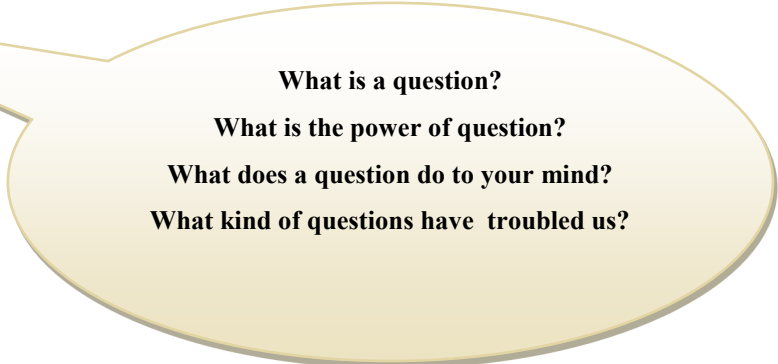
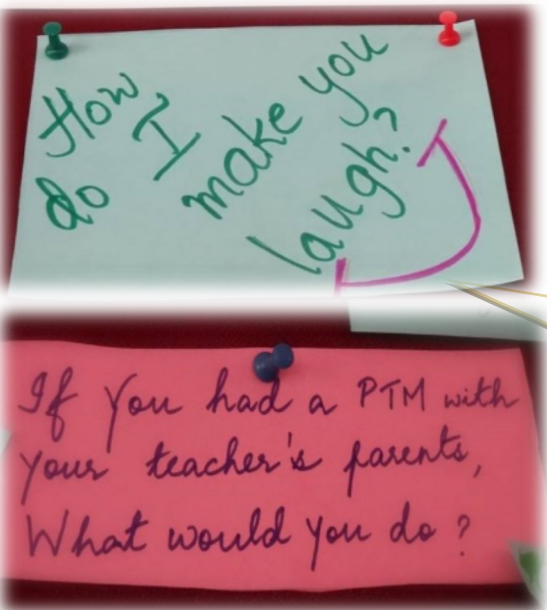
(Teacher’s workshop)

Teacher’s workshop in AMIS began with a bang from 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017. It was an interactive and an experiential workshop for all the teachers. We went through a series of simple and effective exercises aimed at keeping the creative juices flowing both in the classrooms and otherwise.

The first day began with an introduction on the working of the school and the unique approach AMIS adopts towards understanding a child and facilitating learning. Teachers were motivated to bridge the gap between the text and the world.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, the workshop began with our eminent Harvinder didi asking us to ponder on “**The Power of Questioning**”.

We were asked to write down different questions about the most basic elements of life. Through this session we realized how questioning laid the foundation for acquiring knowledge and when questions don’t get answered it creates restlessness and pushes us forward to seek answers. The session concluded with the understanding that a question is like a pill of magic, it hooks your mind and channelizes all your energy towards arriving at an answer.





A teacher shared “In my teaching, I celebrate on a daily basis the joy of learning”. Such are the efforts made to bring about new elements in teaching and to make learning joyful and creative. A workshop was facilitated and conducted by Yamini didi to orient the teachers with the concept of “The Project method”. The whole idea is based on the ability to integrate different aspects of the curriculum into one. It focuses on developing faculties like concentration, imagination, critical ability and instilling deeper values like truthfulness, courage and compassion. The project enables students to cooperate and work as a team and to synthesize their knowledge derived from the various subjects into a harmonious whole based on their topic. The project method goes beyond the prescribed curriculum and gives students a chance to pursue what they choose to learn.

***“The finest present one can give a child would be to teach him to know himself and to master himself”.***  
**- THE MOTHER**

Teachers at AMIS commenced their group presentations from 26<sup>th</sup> May. They went through a process of experiential learning by preparing and presenting an integral project on simple topics chosen by them. The projects were the wonderful results of the combined effort made by teachers who pooled in their talents, ideas and skills. The audience was all ears as the teachers got ready for their presentation. Teachers took to interesting and entertaining presentation styles. They performed skits, songs and engaged the audience with activities to demonstrate their topics. The topics ranged from the complex to the simple pertaining to the different age groups of children. To name a few, the sculptures at Belur, a Rabbit, the Khus plant were topics presented by teachers. The presentation was followed by valuable inputs from the audience for further improvement. This workshop was an eye opener to various innovative methods of learning. At the end of it we were enriched and enlightened. It left us yearning for more and made us realize that learning is a never ending process.



# *Understanding your child and learning*

(Parental workshop)

In Auro Mirra International school, proactive measures are taken to involve parents in the learning process of the child. Hence a workshop for parents was conducted from 29<sup>th</sup> May to 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2017 to familiarize them with the methods that the school adopts towards facilitating holistic development of a child.

Under the able guidance and mentorship of Harvinder didi and Yamini didi an elaborate orientation programme for all the parents was organised. A very well thought out idea indeed to introduce the parents to the rules, regulations and policies of their children's school. And here's why one can confidently say that it was truly 'a workshop with a difference'.

The first day started with Yamini didi welcoming all the parents and Harvinder didi launching into a discussion on the significance and reasons behind organizing a workshop for parents. A quick refreshing tea break was followed by a session on 'Relationship between powers within and value based assembly' by Harvinder didi. The session gave parents an understanding of how powers within were not mere games meant for fun but were aimed at developing and honing certain faculties in the child in an enjoyable way. To give parents a taste of these games, they were divided into groups and each group played a specific powers within game guided by the teachers.

Day two started with parents actively participating and enjoying themselves in 'Powers within Games' supervised by the teachers. It was followed by parents putting up a value based assembly that included a story and a song performed by parents. The second session began with a contemplative exercise and discussion on "where values come from" by Harvinder didi. She emphasized that values must become a guiding force in our lives. Then Yamini didi briefed the parents on what is expected out of them in terms of their involvement with children's education.

Days three, four, five and six followed the same schedule as day two whilst parents moved from one group to the next every day and got the opportunity to experience the different power games. Each game was arranged with the sole aim and objective of getting parents to experience the value of all the power games that we play with the students. The parents were also offered glimpses of how integral learning takes place at AMIS. The sessions were interspersed with interesting presentations by teachers on Values, Reading, Self Learning and Food and Nutrition. Enlightening sessions by our beloved Harvinder didi were as follows- '*Nothing can be taught*' on day three, '*Freedom and Boundaries*' on day four and '*Questions and Answer sessions*' on day five. The degree and intensity of the parents' involvement only increased with every passing day of the workshop. Many of them, first time speakers shed their inhibitions completely and became active participants sharing their valuable thoughts, ideas and experiences freely with the rest of the participants. They also posed some thought provoking and challenging questions and queries, to which they received convincing and effective responses and suggestions, and got their doubts clarified satisfactorily.

It was truly a hugely successful and inspirational workshop, that went a long way in transforming the minds and hearts of the 'new age parents and teachers'. All of us became enriched learners who benefitted enormously from these sessions. The sessions were very successful in getting parents highly interested, involved and inspired. The parents who were active participants of this workshop made their exit on the final day totally transformed, and instilled with so much enthusiasm, confidence and trust that they had had made a right choice in selecting AMIS for their child. *Oh yes! The very special school where the child learns and is not taught.*



## *Engaging and enlightening*

(Orientation day)



The new academic session of 2017-2018 began with an ice breaking session for the parents of the newly inducted students in Auro Mirra International School.

It was a bright sunny day when the enthusiastic parents trooped in and were welcomed and ushered in by our diyas. Harvinder didi addressed the parents about the ethos of the school and its unique approach. The parents were made to understand that by working together as a team - the parents and the teacher in perfect sync with each other - a wonderful difference can be made in the child's life. The rules and regulations of the school was introduced to the parents by Yamini didi. After this encouraging and thought provoking session, the diyas were introduced one by one to the gathering. Parents waited eagerly to know who were going to mentor their precious ones. First the pre-primary diyas were called upon and then the primary teachers were introduced based on the subjects and classes they were going to handle. This was followed by introducing the administrative staff and the support staff. The ice-breaking session ended with the sapling activity. This activity has great significance since it symbolizes the journey and the growth of the child under the nurturing care of the school much like the sapling starting its growth in a new pot.

The second session in the afternoon was attended by parents of tiny tots who had moved on and graduated from pre-primary to primary section. YES!! The first graders who were taking a quantum leap. Parents were made aware of the changes they were likely to experience and how to cope with it. This was truly an enriching and enlightening session.



## *Eid – Spreading love and goodwill*

(Ramzan Celebration)



Eid is a much awaited festival celebrated by Muslims worldwide that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of Fasting. The vibes of pure joy and festivities grow thick in the air as greetings of 'Id Mubarak' ring in the Eid morning and the sounds of Namaz performed in Mosques resonate across the city.

In AMIS, we celebrated Eid on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017 with tremendous enthusiasm. The pre-primary children joined the primary and gathered in the assembly ground for Eid celebration. The programme started, as customary, with observing silence and was followed by a beautiful and heart-warming verse which announced:

**"meine pucha khuda se ki tu mujhko milega kahan,  
khuda ne kaha mei miluga wahan neki hai jahan"**

***(Translation: I asked God, where will I find you  
God told me, you will find me where there is goodness)***

This festival of sharing and cherishing togetherness was better explained to children in a skit that showed children that the real essence of a festival lies in sharing your happiness with others and caring for them. The Skit was followed by an interesting fact that said in many villages of Barmer and Jaisalmer districts, Muslims celebrated Diwali and many Hindus fasted during the month of Ramadan and no one remembers how it came to be that way. Dates were distributed on the occasion. The programme ended with a lovely, melodious number sung by children which went:

**"aaj meri peshani ko kismat ne chuma hai,  
maahe muqaddas me roshan jahan hai "**

***(Translation: Destiny has kissed my forehead today,  
In the holy month illuminating the earth)***

## *Sublime and enigmatic*

(Yoga day celebration)

Yoga day celebration was organized on 21<sup>st</sup> June in Amis on the occasion of International Yoga day. Everyone including diyas were asked to come in white attire and armed with yoga mats. We assembled in the school ground during the zero period where carpets and mats were laid out and our yoga instructor Basavaguru bhैया began the event with much gusto. We began with meditation and warm up exercises and followed it up with Om chanting and prayers. We were eased into the yoga routine with various simple asanas which got more and more difficult as we advanced into higher levels. Nevertheless, students and diyas took on the challenge and displayed their best stretching abilities. The most awe-inspiring segment of the programme was reserved for the last when a solo yoga demonstration by Basavaguru bhैया left the audience in complete amazement. The gathering was mesmerized by his agility and flexibility as he performed his yogic feats. Besides the celebration, the event was highly useful as it showed how each simple asana helps to keep one fit and be rid of ailments without having to resort to complicated medical procedures.



