

DEEPANAM SCHOOL

June 2026 | newsletter | Issue 8



What's
Deepanam
School?

Well...

Set in the green surroundings of Auroville, South India, Deepanam is a school for children aged 7 to 14.

Founded in 2006, it is part of Auroville's aspiration for an unending education—where learning grows with the child, and school becomes a place to discover, explore and become. The teachers, too, remain learners, continually exploring their own ways of growing and discovering.



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OUR EIGHT-YEAR
LEARNING PROGRAM IS
DIVIDED INTO FOUR
MIXED-AGE GROUPS.

THE MIXED-AGE GROUPS
PROVIDE ABUNDANT
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
EXPLORATION AND PEER-
LEARNING.





DEEPANAM SCHOOL

Summer Deep Cleaning

As we got ready for the new school year, Honor and I spent some time cleaning and reorganizing the ATB classroom and storeroom.

What started as a simple cleaning task became a meaningful experience of teamwork, care, and connection.

We emptied shelves, sorted through all the materials, cleaned every corner, and found a proper place for everything.

We also passed on things that could be useful to others. It feels good to know that everything we have is needed, easy to find, and ready to be used.

Working together made the task enjoyable. We talked, shared ideas, and felt a real sense of teamwork. As the space became clean and organised, we also felt calmer and more ready for the year ahead.

A clean and peaceful environment makes a difference. We hope the children will also feel this sense of calm when they enter the ATB space. We are looking forward to welcoming them and beginning another year of learning together.

**"WHEN WE PREPARE OUR
SPACE, WE PREPARE
OURSELVES."**

— Natascha

Creating More Learning Spaces

Summer Renovation

Preparing Spaces for New Beginnings

As Deepanam has grown over the years, so has the need for more learning spaces. While the number of students has increased, our buildings have remained much the same. We have been looking at how we can make better use of the spaces we already have.

During the summer break, we focused on two areas that could make a real difference.

The first was the clay classroom. Because it was open on the sides, it was often difficult to use due to mosquitoes and changing weather. By enclosing the space, it has become a comfortable classroom that can now be used throughout the year.

The second project was the dining area. The space has been made more open, and the washing and cleaning area has been improved to make it more hygienic, practical, and easier to maintain.



Working Together

With the support of Ganesh and Bhaskar, the renovation work was completed during the summer break.

The project was made possible through donations received during our Christmas fundraising campaign.

Although the work took a little longer than expected, we are happy with the outcome.

These improvements have given us more functional spaces for learning, eating, and spending time together.

As we begin the new school year, we are grateful for these thoughtful additions that will support our children, teachers, and the wider school community for years to come.

— Mahavir

A missing link? Parent Survey

At Deepanam, we see parents as an important part of our learning community. This year, we introduced our first Annual Parent Feedback Survey as a way to listen, learn, and grow together.

We were grateful to receive responses from almost half of our parent community.

Parents shared thoughtful appreciation for the school's strengths as well as valuable suggestions for improvement.

Many parents highlighted the dedication of our teachers, the child-centered approach, and the wide range of learning experiences offered at Deepanam.

Their encouraging words reminded us of what our collectivity values most.

The suggestions for improvement gave us an opportunity to reflect together. Over several meetings, teachers carefully read every response and discussed practical ways to strengthen different areas of school life.



And if we listen?

Some of the actions include improving the maintenance of children's toilets, enhancing the dining experience, exploring more project-based and integrated learning, creating regular spaces for teachers to discuss the needs of every child, encouraging student leadership, and working closely with parents to support children's wellbeing at home.

To keep the process transparent, we have created a shared action tracker where parents can follow the progress of these initiatives as they are implemented.

— Ameya

A parent's reflection

As both a parent and a volunteer teacher at Deepanam, I get to experience the school from two different perspectives. During the summer holidays, I saw just how meaningful project-based learning can be.

My daughter was given a geography project on South America. At first, it was a place she knew very little about.

But with the encouragement of her teachers, she took ownership of her learning. She researched, explored, asked questions, and gradually became deeply interested in the topic.

Later in the holidays, we visited a wildlife park that was home to animals from South America. To our surprise, she became our family's guide!

She recognised many of the animals, shared interesting facts she had learned, and even told us fun stories about them.



She made the whole visit engaging and enjoyable for all of us.

For me, this was a beautiful reminder that real learning doesn't end when school closes for the holidays. When children are encouraged to explore with curiosity and confidence, what they learn stays with them and becomes part of their everyday lives.

— Fleur,
Parent & Volunteer Teacher



Teachers' Journeys



Stories and Reflections

Each issue of this newsletter has focused on various experiences of students' journeys through the school year.

But who are the teachers writing the articles, interacting with these students? What are their stories? What brings them joy in this work & how have they grown through their adventures?

This section of the summer issue introduces 5 voices from the teachers team — some who have been around from the very inception of Deepanam and others who are just stepping into its world.

Much gratitude to them for sharing their stories. Many of our teachers here prefer to work quite silently behind the scenes. It is with the students that they open up the most.

— Aurevan

DO NOT DIVIDE
WHAT IS ONE. BOTH
SCIENCE AND
SPIRITUALITY HAVE
THE SAME GOAL—
THE SUPREME
DIVINITY.



A
conversation
with

Goma Thi

When I look back, I realize that teaching was never part of my original plan. I grew up in a village, studied in a government school, completed a diploma in nursing and worked in hospitals.

How my teaching journey began?

My first experience with teaching began very simply helping children in my village with their studies in the evenings.

Later, I volunteered in Pre-Creche and then moved to Deepanam School and found myself teaching children from different backgrounds.

From Kindness to Courage

I was nervous in the beginning, especially when I started teaching mixed cultural students..

But I kept showing up, learning, and growing.

Those experiences slowly taught me that kindness alone is not enough.

We also need courage, confidence, and the ability to make decisions.

From Aurevan and Preeti I learnt a lot by observing them. I learned how to engage children, establish routines, manage behavior with calm confidence face and create a positive learning environment.

Today, I still value kindness. But I have also learned the importance of courage. The two together have made me not only a better teacher, but a stronger person.

HAVE
THE COURAGE
TO BE COMPLETELY
FRANK WITH
THE DIVINE.



Growth begins when we stop trying to make ourselves smaller and start believing that our voice, our decisions, and our presence truly matter.



WHOSOEVER
HAS COURAGE
CAN GIVE
COURAGE TO
OTHERS, JUST AS
THE FLAME OF
THE CANDLE
CAN LIGHT UP
ANOTHER.

THE MORAL
COURAGE AND
ENDURANCE ARE
OFTEN MUCH MORE
DIFFICULT TO GET
THAN THE MATERIAL
COURAGE AND
ENDURANCE.



Joy Runs

One of the happiest moments in my teaching journey is when children who have moved to the next grade still recognize me and excitedly call out,

"Gomathil!"

whenever they see me,
even outside school.

They run towards me with the same warmth and affection.

Those moments remind me that while students may forget some lessons, they rarely forget how a teacher made them feel.

Their love is one of the greatest rewards of being a teacher, and it encourages me to continue growing, learning, and giving my best everyday.



Curious about Auroville

To start in silence

I was born in Sanjeevi Nagar. My parents worked in Auroville, and from childhood I was curious about this place.

I used to see my cousins happily riding their bicycles to school and noticed how Auroville children spoke to their teachers so freely.

At the same time, I was afraid of going to my own school. The fear was so strong that even the teacher's stick came into my dreams.

After my marriage, I joined AHA Kindergarten in 2016. In the beginning, I was very quiet. I hardly spoke for months. Those silent days taught me to observe.

Watching children learn with freedom slowly changed my understanding of education.



And... walk past fear

For a long time, I was a very simple person who was always afraid to speak.

Even seeing children jump into the swimming pool made me panic.

Fear blocks our growth, and we grow only when we are willing to take small steps through it.

So, I decided to learn how to swim at La Piscine. I wanted to face my fear instead of running away from it.



IT IS QUITE
NECESSARY
THAT THOSE
WHO HAVE
COURAGE
SHOULD HAVE
SOME COURAGE
FOR THOSE
WHO HAVE
NONE.

Growing in Deepanam

Painting also came into my life unexpectedly. When I asked for work at Deepanam, I was given space to explore.

There was no pressure to create something beautiful or to impress anyone. I learned through quiet practice, patience, and observation.

One moment that stays with me is when a child didn't want paper and wanted to paint a tree instead. I simply let him.

That day reminded me that children often show us a better way when we are willing to listen.

Deepanam also encouraged creativity by sometimes saying no to ready-made materials.

That helped me look around, use what was available. Slowly, I also noticed a change in myself.

I am no longer the person who was afraid to speak. I introduce myself in meetings, share my thoughts, and feelings. I am more joyful and more confident.

— Chitra



THERE SHOULD BE
SOMEWHERE UPON EARTH...

A PLACE WHERE THE NEEDS
OF THE SPIRIT AND THE CARE
FOR PROGRESS

WOULD GET PRECEDENCE
OVER THE SATISFACTION OF
DESIRES AND PASSIONS,

THE SEEKING FOR PLEASURES
AND MATERIAL
ENJOYMENTS.



Finding my Place

First steps into Auroville

When I first came to Auroville, I did not know what Auroville was.

I had grown up in Chidambaram, completed my schooling there, and later went to Chennai to study fashion designing and fashion sketching. After my marriage with an Aurovilian, I came here without really knowing what I was coming into.

I still remember my first journey into Auroville. It was night, and he was taking me through the forest roads. Everything looked unfamiliar.

I had so many questions, but instead of explaining everything, he would tell me to look around, explore and find things for myself. At that time, I found it strange.

**TODAY, I
THINK
PERHAPS
THAT WAS MY
FIRST
INTRODUCTION
TO THE SPIRIT
OF
AUROVILLE.**

Growing roots

My son was born here in 2005. I was learning how to manage a home and a young child without having family nearby.

In 2007, we moved to Pondicherry. But even while living there, Auroville remained our root. We came back in 2012 to Auroville which became more and more our home. Today, our family has a house here.

This is my place.

How I joined Deepanam

My first training was in fashion, so naturally I tried to find work related to that. I worked for some time at Rangoli as a quality checker. But my son was very young, and managing full-time work and childcare was difficult.

My son's needs slowly changed the way I looked at work. I wanted to be available for him. That was when I started volunteering at Deepanam. I began with library and Light Group activities, and later became involved in Tamil and painting.

For almost two years, volunteering became an important part of my life. I would bring my son with me and stay nearby while he was involved in sports.



My fashion background also found its way into school work. I helped with costume design for a play, and later taught fashion sketching to eighth-grade students. I enjoyed sharing what I knew, but I also learned something important from that experience. Teaching is not about making everyone do what we want them to do.



Learning alongside Children

My next step was joining Grace Group and moving into co-teaching. At first, I wondered whether I was qualified enough to be a teacher. I did not have a conventional teaching qualification.

But I began to understand that integral education does not ask us to fit into only one definition of a teacher.

I can bring my painting. I can bring Tamil. I can bring fashion, costume design, plays and projects. I can bring the things I know and, at the same time, continue learning.

For me, teaching is not simply standing in front of children and giving them information. I am also learning with them.

Here, I have seen how important space and time can be.

A child may want to read something, experiment with an idea, make something with their hands or follow an interest that was not part of the original plan. If we give them that possibility, learning becomes something alive.



Why I continue

There are many things happening in my life outside school. There are family responsibilities, household work and all the usual ups and downs. But when I come to school, I can put those things aside for some time. I become active again. I meet the children. I work with my colleagues. I paint. I work with Tamil. I prepare classes. I stitch and create things. It gives me energy.

Earlier, I enjoyed aerobics and zumba. These days, I mostly walk and exercise at home in the evenings.

My free time is often filled with stitching and preparing for classes. My interests may have changed over the years, but the need to create and learn is still there.

When I look back, I realise that I did not come to Auroville with a clear plan for my life. And I continue in education because here I am allowed to learn, create, explore and grow—and to help children do the same.

Maybe that is what I was searching for without knowing it.

A PLACE WHERE
I COULD BE MYSELF,
AND WHERE LEARNING
NEVER REALLY ENDS.

— Narmadha

Selvi

A new beginning

When I was probably six or seven years old, I came to Auroville with my mother and brother. I studied here, went to Aikiyam, and New Era Secondary School and later went to Chennai for my bachelor's degree at Madras Christian College. I then completed my master's in Political Science at Pondicherry University.

Coming here was not only a coincidence though since I studied here in 2008-09 and always had a longing to come back to Auroville my home...

I taught at Last School for about three to four years. Then I took a completely different path and spent three years learning baking professionally—one year at Coffee Ideas and two years at Bread & Chocolate.

My interest in baking actually goes back to my childhood.

My mother had worked at Auroville Bakery, so baking was always somewhere around me. I wanted to understand it properly and learn the skill for myself.

After three years, I felt I had learnt enough to take that experience with me and move on.



I wanted to return to teaching, but I also wanted a new environment and a new experience.



That brought me to Deepanam.

This year has been a new beginning for me. I teach Mathematics, Tamil 2 for the Grace group, and Tamil 1 for Faith and Hope. I am also one of the three class teachers for Grace, along with Narmadha and Bhakti.

The biggest difference I noticed immediately was the size of the group. In my previous school, I was used to working with very small groups—sometimes only five or six children. Here, there are around twenty students.

Children between eleven and thirteen have so much energy! They are all different, and they are at such an important stage of growing up. Managing a larger group is definitely a challenge, but I see it as a learning opportunity for myself.

My main goal is not only to teach my subjects well. I want to know the children. I want them to feel that they can come and talk to me when something is bothering them. Sometimes they may need a teacher, sometimes a friend, and sometimes simply someone who will listen to them.

Today, children can find information about almost anything online. So I feel that what we can give them as teachers is something different our presence, our understanding and our relationship with them.

I want to become more emotionally connected with my students and be there for them beyond academics.



A PLACE OF UNENDING EDUCATION OF CONSTANT PROGRESS AND A YOUTH THAT NEVER AGES

Learning together

One thing I really appreciate here is that teaching is not something we do alone. We have discussions about the children, their wellbeing and the situations they are going through.

Sometimes a problem needs a very careful response. For example, if there is an issue between children, we cannot always solve it by directly pointing out who did what. Sometimes that can make the situation bigger. We have to understand what is happening underneath and find a way to support the children.

Our Friday meetings are very useful for this. We share ideas, resources and experiences, and we discuss what is working and what is not.

I am also learning a lot from the other teachers. Sometimes I may not feel completely confident about a particular subject or approach, but there is always someone who can guide me, share material or suggest another way of looking at it. I like that.

I am not only trying to become a better teacher; I am also learning to become a better learner.

Parents are also part of the process. They may help with transport for a field trip, participate in an activity or simply follow what the children are learning through their projects. It creates a feeling that education is something we are all part of.

Frisbee and giving back

I had opportunities to travel, play in international Frisbee tournaments and represent India few times as part of both mixed and women's national teams. Those experiences gave me a lot, but they also made me realize how much Auroville had contributed to my journey.

I received support here when I needed it. People encouraged me, helped me and gave me opportunities. So, coming back and contributing through sport and teaching felt natural to me.

For about two years, I had to step away from Frisbee because of responsibilities at home. It was not easy to stop something that had been such an important part of my life. Now I am slowly coming back to it.

I have a coaching session today, and even that feels exciting. I don't want to rush back or put pressure on myself.

I just want to begin again, step by step.

Keep Learning

In Auroville, I have seen people move from one kind of work to another without being judged.

Someone can be teaching today and want to learn farming tomorrow. Someone can work with their hands, garden, cook, teach or create—and none of these choices make a person more or less important.

That has changed the way I think about life.

I recently thought about learning more about agriculture or farming. In another place, I might think,

'Do I have to go back to college?'

'Do I need another degree?'

**IN AUROVILLE, I FEEL
I CAN SIMPLY FIND A
WAY TO LEARN.**

**THAT FREEDOM GIVES ME
A FEELING OF AWAKENING.**

**THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS
I STILL WANT TO EXPLORE.**



Moving forward

The last few years have also brought many responsibilities in my family. I have had to learn how to manage different situations at home while continuing with the things that matter to me.

Living with my mother and supporting my family has taught me patience, strength and the ability to adapt.

I try to give my full potential to whatever I am doing—whether it is teaching, sport or family.

That is why this new role at Deepanam does not feel like another stressful responsibility to me. It feels like a new beginning.

I am learning a new school, learning from new colleagues and getting to know a new group of children.

At the same time, I am slowly finding my way back to Frisbee.

For me, that is one of the beautiful things about growing up in Auroville—the feeling that there is always another possibility, another thing to learn, and another beginning waiting for us.

I DON'T THINK I HAVE
TO CHOOSE ONLY ONE
THING IN LIFE.
I CAN TEACH.
I CAN PLAY.
I CAN LEARN
SOMETHING
COMPLETELY NEW.
I CAN TAKE CARE OF
MY FAMILY.



Aspirations for a new school year

Questions To begin with

Whenever I think about the beginning of a new school year, I feel a sense of joy and excitement. There are always so many things waiting for us new projects, new ideas, new questions and so many possibilities to explore together.

But for me, a new school year is not only about what we are going to do. I also think about how we are going to be together.

**WHAT KIND OF ATMOSPHERE
WILL WE CREATE IN OUR
CLASSROOM?**

**HOW WILL WE LEARN FROM
EACH OTHER? HOW WILL WE
GROW TOGETHER?**

This year, I would like harmony to be at the heart of our class.



Harmony

Harmony does not mean that we will always agree or that everything will always be easy. We will have differences, misunderstandings and difficult moments.

What matters is learning to listen to one another, respect our differences and find a way forward together.

I hope our classroom will be a place where children feel curious, confident, connected and happy to learn.



At this age, they are becoming more independent in their thinking, and I would like to give them the freedom to question, explore and discover things for themselves, while also being there to support them when they need it.

There are many projects I am looking forward to, especially those that connect the children with the place around them. I would also like to bring different subjects together through projects. Learning does not really happen in separate boxes.

History can connect with geography, science with mathematics, literature with art and all of these can connect with the world we live in.

Through projects, I hope the children will experience the joy of making these connections themselves, asking questions, trying things out and discovering something they did not know before.

I also hope that, as a class, we can develop a stronger sense of responsibility. Not only responsibility for our own learning, but also for one another and for the class as a whole. Sharing, helping, taking care of our space and supporting each other can slowly create a real sense of community.

Above all, I hope every child feels that they belong.

I want our classroom to be a place where they can be themselves, express their ideas freely, make mistakes without fear, take risks and discover what they are capable of.

— Bhakti



DO NOT DIVIDE
WHAT IS ONE. BOTH SCIENCE
AND SPIRITUALITY HAVE THE
SAME GOAL—THE SUPREME
DIVINITY.

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THEM IS THAT THE
LATTER KNOWS IT AND THE
OTHER NOT.



STOP THINKING THAT YOU ARE OF THE WEST AND
OTHERS OF THE EAST. ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE OF
THE SAME DIVINE ORIGIN AND MEANT TO MANIFEST
UPON EARTH THE UNITY OF THIS ORIGIN.





TO LOVE TO LEARN IS
THE MOST PRECIOUS
GIFT THAT ONE CAN
MAKE
TO A CHILD, TO
LEARN ALWAYS AND
EVERYWHERE.

- Mother



Lending a hand

Deepanam School is growing in numbers, constantly developing its curriculum and updating materials.

Currently it is in urgent need of additional classrooms to welcome new students for the coming school year.

If you would like to help with fundraising efforts, or have contacts you can reach out to, please do get in touch with us.

With much gratitude,
Deepanam Team

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