



Newsletter

New Creation Bilingual School

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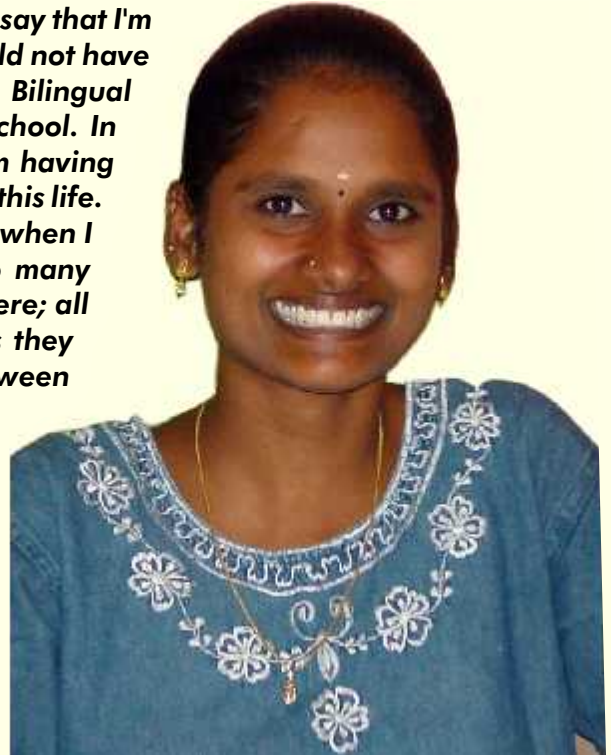
October 2006

My name is Sathya. I'm now 20 years old and I am proud to say that I'm doing the last year of my BA in English literature. This would not have happened if I hadn't been able to study at New Creation Bilingual School and live in 'Roy's Boarding', connected with the school. In every way the school was the gateway to the life that I'm having right now, I should say that I'm a very fortunate girl to have this life. I was born in Kuilyapalayam village and joined the school when I was 5 years old and spent 8 wonderful years there. So many sweet memories pop up when I think of my school days there; all

these nice play-way methods they used and the friendship between teachers and students.

Apart from the usual studying, in the afternoons we had clay work, wood work, dance classes, tailoring, swimming, drama and singing lessons. These courses added joy to us even more. I'm very thankful to all the teachers who taught me and made

me happy throughout my school time. After graduating next year, I will do a teacher training course and come back to the school., as a teacher!



MISSION STATEMENT OF NCBS

The school's mission is to provide an appropriate kindergarten, primary and intermediate education to children from Kuilapalayam and other villages, which are geographically connected to Auroville, based on the principles of integral education, as defined by the founders of Auroville, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The school strives to maintain a creative and joyful atmosphere, where the uniqueness of each child is respected and nurtured.

The school's aim is to provide a high quality bilingual education in Tamil and English, covering all of the standard academic subjects, physical education, and a wide variety of vocational options to prepare children for life in a rapidly changing world, while still maintaining contact with their Tamil cultural heritage. In the near future, children may also earn equivalency certificates so that secondary education can be continued in a school which is recognised by the Tamil Nadu Government.

New Creation Bilingual School is a day-school under the Auroville Outreach School Board for more than 200 children, with classes which range from pre-kindergarten to the eighth grade. All tuition, educational supplies, nutritious snacks and mid-day meals are provided free of charge.

Equal opportunities

And with Sathya's radiant smile and spontaneous offer we see that the line of individuals carrying the school from its very beginning onwards, will stretch and continue, maintaining and strengthening the gateway for an increasing number of children from underprivileged families who may come to be nourished, to learn and grow up into confident individuals, ready for life..

For more than 20 years, New Creation School, now known as New Creation Bilingual School (or NCBS) has drawn children from several nearby villages where the main livelihood opportunities are seasonal farming, employment within Auroville,

tiny shops and small scale industries. Private and government primary schools in the area do not meet everyone's needs and are beyond the means of the parents who are often living on subsistence levels. Therefore parents choose NCBS as here the children get good and conscientious educational opportunities as well as a mid-day meal, snacks at recess time, academic and basic vocational training, and sports, all free of charge. In this way, NCBS reaches all strata of the society including the socially marginalised, economically poor, physically and mentally challenged, and provides a chance for children to have a normal schooling in a caring and interactive atmosphere.

Coming from a background where domestic violence is not unusual, the children receive a much needed respite from the daily turmoil in their lives, and are offered a positive channel through which they are able to grow towards a higher and truer reality.

For those who are keen to continue studying after leaving the school, follow-up opportunities are available in Auroville as well. All pupils attaining grade 8 have the opportunity each March to take a test for entry into Udavi School in Edyanchavadi where they are able to study up to standard 10, or into After School, where they can study up to standard 12. After completing the 12th standard successfully they may apply for entry into a college or university. We have come a long way in our service to the village children, but we still have a long road ahead of us in maintaining, strengthening and improving the programmes we offer out of care and respect for these often so eager and adorable kids.

In this and the following issue of our newsletter we wish to highlight the persons who, voluntarily and with so much goodwill and love, have served and inspired the school to become what it is today.

André & Babu

It all started in 1983 when the New Creation settlement was founded amidst humble beginnings



by a French man, André Tardeil, and his Tamil wife, Babu. Strongly motivated by the vision of creating a bridge between the residents of the surrounding villages and of the growing township, these two Aurovilians started off with a boarding school in 1987 and gradually expanded the capacity for education after recognising the still very squalid, often violent nature of the villages to which these children belonged. Under their wholehearted guidance and care, the New Creation settlement blossomed and grew into a sprawling, lively community with plenty of opportunities for young kids to get involved in some sort of livelihood. While André and Babu continued, and still continue, coordinating the New Creation settlement and all its buzzing activities such as a number of guest houses and residences, a child development centre, a sports area cum swimming pool and vocational training workshops, the administrative and educational aspects of the school have been gradually taken over by other individuals.

Roy

In 1990 New Creation welcomed the arrival of Roy Wicks, a retired police sergeant and school welfare officer from the U.K. During a trip through India after his wife had passed away, Roy visited Auroville, and was immediately recruited by André to teach English in New Creation School. Six months later he returned and, during the subsequent 13 years, gradually built up the campus, developed a Tamil & English schooling system, and added 'Bilingual' to the school's name. During the very first years, Roy was academically assisted by volunteer Greta Jackson of UK, who introduced the 'play-way' method of teaching to the school. While a great deal of the expenditure came out of his own pocket, Roy also raised funds by approaching friends and institutions abroad and some of the school's present supporters date from that time (*thank you!*). Besides the already existing 'UFO' buildings, earlier designed by Aurovillian architect André Hababou, now additional living spaces, kindergarten classrooms and a dining area were built. Roy also organised a boarding facility about which a future newsletter will tell more.

Roy tells us: "**If God had spoken to me prior to my coming to India and told me that he was going to put me in charge of a school with 240 children and teachers, I would have said without hesitation, 'Sorry, Lord, but you've got the wrong man, I'm not able to do this, you must find someone more suitable.' But at all times when I was unable to cope with a situation because of my lack of knowledge and experience, someone became available, from somewhere and, somehow, I was given the ability or the advice needed, and always managed. Perhaps my biggest source of help and encouragement was Heidi Watts of Antioch University, who came here for some months, year in year out., God bless her.**"

Most unfortunately, Roy suffered from a serious knee injury and had to return to the U.K. in 2001, from where he maintains regular contact with his teachers and children. Although he is over 80 now, it will be a great day when he can return..!



In the next issue we will present to you the remaining individuals belonging in this time-line, namely Mike & Sue Hawthorne, the late Mrs Anna Bowers and S.Vengadesam, better known as "Tamil teacher Shankar", who is the school's present principal.

For now we bring, as usual, two teachers to the fore in our Newsletter. This time we introduce our 5th grade teacher, Pugazhendhi, and a volunteer English teacher, Lycia Parker, who recently spent two months with us.

Pugazhendhi

Pugazhendhi, a friendly man in his mid-forties from Chinna Mudaliyarchavadi, on the way between Auroville and Pondicherry (now called Puducherry) town, teaches 5th standard, i.e. kids which are mostly 10 year-olds. He has been involved in the school for a long time and has seen students, teachers and headmasters come and go. During transition periods when the school would have no principal for a while, it was mainly Pugazhendhi around whom a group of teachers would form to take things in hand.

Pugazhendhi tells us: **"More often than not, our children are the first generation in their families to go for schooling. And while they are lovely kids, my colleagues and I are in a critical atmosphere in teaching these children. I use the term "critical"**



because our children hardly get any understanding from their parents, or help to do their homework and to clear their doubts. They are only educated at school, 7 hours a day.

When I joined the school in 1991, I was just a B.Sc. graduate in mathematics and had trained as a teacher in Chennai. I didn't know anything about innovative and play-way methods of teaching. I learned a lot from Ms Greta who was volunteering in the school at the time and, later, from Ms Heidi Watts, a retired professor of Antioch University in USA. She, and student volunteers from her school, have been coming here every year for three months, helping and training us teachers by giving workshops and lectures.

The Mother says "Learning is a never ending

story", and I believe that only when teachers are strong in their teaching, children can be strong in their learning. The more the teachers learn, the more the children learn."

Lycia

Lycia Parker studies Experimental Psychology in the U.K. and is particularly interested in Educational Psychology. Bright, energetic, and eager to see and sense different peoples, Lycia stayed with us for two months, working daily with the children and teachers.



This is what she observes:

"Since finishing my schooling in the U.K., I have had the pleasure of teaching English to people from different parts of the world – however, I can honestly say that NCBS is where the teaching has been the most rewarding. As the staff and pupils of NCBS have demonstrated, the desire to learn is a human instinct. The challenge is finding the best way to enable this process. NCBS aims to give its children an integral education and there is no doubt that this aim is achieved. While the children may initially arrive at the school with runny noses, teary eyes and an incredible ability to dirty their school dresses, by 8th standard, they are multi-skilled, balanced and immaculately dressed young adults, with reasons to be proud of themselves and the foundations to go on to have beautiful futures. There are however, of course, a number of challenges that need to be constantly faced in order for this process to take place. Most of the children come from homes where formal education is a relatively new concept and so, alone, the children must learn to develop self-discipline and the ability to accept being part of a structured environment. Another challenge that the school faces, is finding the correct balance between giving the students a formal education and a support for their emotional and personal development. I think one can only congratulate all the many dedicated people behind NCBS who help to create such a happy school with ambitious aims in the face of numerous obstacles and difficulties."

Momentum and ... survival measures

As you may have gathered from the above, we now have a good organisational set-up in place with a strong momentum for further improvements and a solid team to guide the process, and with recognition and appreciation from the surrounding villages steadily increasing. However, we find ourselves to be constantly short of funds. Even though the salaries of our paid staff and the maintenance of Aurovilians working at the school, part of the nutrition budget and some funds for educational material come from the Indian Government via SAIER, Auroville International centres and other Auroville associated NGOs, it is difficult to maintain our present level of functioning and impossible to make necessary improvements. The school badly needs some reliable steady income in order to give these children what they need in order to become better equipped to face life in all its complexities.

Due to changes in the world economy funds from some of the major sponsoring agencies of the school have diminished and there is just not enough..

We have taken several measures to diminish the monthly expenditure, and may have to resort to a reduction in services. This means that the present

On behalf of the school's present and future students, we ask you to please help us with this. Send NCBS a standing monthly contribution, either through the AVI Centre in your country (via which you can receive tax exemption) or directly to the school. In this way you will participate with us in the evolution of this promising school and ensure that numerous young individuals, like Sathya, can look up to their future with confidence and pride, and smilingly observe: "I should say that I'm a very fortunate person to have this life..".

The New Creation Bilingual School Support Group

Principal Shankar, and Franca, Janet, Mauna, Suriyagandhi, and Core group members, along with all the school's children, teachers, other personnel and friends.

(Dr. Heidi Watts of Antioch New England Graduate School in USA, Martin Littlewood of Auroville International UK, and Satyakam and Devasmita Patnaik of Auroville International France, all long time friends and supporters of the school, attend our meetings when present in Auroville.)



Learning to count.. on the future..

educational and nutritional programmes as well as general maintenance of the infra-structure may suffer, and extracurricular activities for students such as summer camps won't happen.

In order to prevent such drastic measures, we calculated the additional amount needed per month per child for education, school meals and summer camp, and prepared a donation slip hoping that you could help us by taking responsibility for some portion of our monthly budget. No amount would be too small to make a difference.

**The monthly amount still required per child is
IRS 990, €18, £12, US \$22.**

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www.auroville.org/education/village_schools/newcreation_bilingual.htm