Helping students discover their passion

Living Routes is a U.S.-based educational non-profit organization which brings American college students to Auroville every year on a 16 week study programme. What do the students do, what is the intention behind the programme and how does it relate to Auroville? Aurovilian and guests serving as staff and faculty for the Living Routes programme respond.

Is: The programme structured?

Ethan: We do a three-week orientation where the students discover what Auroville is about, and introduce the programme – many of the students are in a multi-cultural, multi-U.S. college programme and it’s a very different form of work. Then they do a six-week internship where they work in Auroville on a work place. We call the service-learning “Living because during this time they contribute to Auroville and live in the community.

What skills do they have for internships?

Martin: This time the options included Sadhana Farm, Wull, paper, Auroville, Rangan, the earth foundations building project and Ayurveda.

Bindu: What we are looking for are people with a strong mind for the arduous. Ideally, we would like people who are interested in work to be done in conjunction with sustainability. We value diversity, people with diverse academic backgrounds, who are curious, curious but also who have a strong commitment to work. The student outside the classroom is also very important. Also, the composition of the group itself makes it stand apart from other programmes.

Blinds: It’s very much experiential. Education is not just a transmission. It’s very challenging for these students, who have not lived in the U.S. and come from privileged backgrounds, to be suddenly thrown into a “third world” dynamic and this can lead to many personal changes. We believe each student has a unique gift to offer, so we are not looking at screening students with knowledge. Rather, we’re trying to understand what to change.

Ethan: The spiritual aspect generally would not be part of traditional academic courses. We do yoga and meditation five days a week, we go on a one week meditation retreat and the students are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

Blinds: It’s a great opportunity for anyone,不管我ガングン or not, to see the different perspectives, attend as an observer, observing and learning. In that process, I have realized that I know little about my own inner house and the peace I live with here. There is so much to learn and someone by our excitement and also see the difference.

Martin: I have been given an opportunity to think about everything from a different perspective, almost as an outsider, observing and learning. In that process, I have realized that I know little about my own inner house and the peace I live with here. There is so much to learn and someone by our excitement and also see the difference.

Is: How do the students respond to this?

Martin: For someone the first feedback from Auroville students is an emotional response to how they wish to do this. We think Living Routes students are in good hands, and that the programme is fantastic. However, it’s pretty harsh that the course is mainly really outside faculty and that Auroville has not yet managed to come up with its own programme. The two are crucial here, because it’s when the students go out and interface with others and other Auroville courses, that’s what’s exciting. So, as a next step we have initiated a series of summer courses with different aspects of sustainability. On Saturday mornings we have open courses with the students in Auroville. The learning outside the class time is also very important. In the second semester we had Vika, and Aurovillian youth three semesters ago. The Learning Community is a new concept of life, and we have students who are interested in sustainability and personal growth.

Blinds: The Integrate Sustainability Seminar series, jointly offered by University of HawaiI at Manoa, India and Auroville, is organized by Living Routes Faculty. By bringing together Auroville and non-Auroville faculty and taking local initiatives to sustainability to the global context, we help Auroville students to work towards more integrated solutions and also transmit to them that Auroville should achieve this focus and be able to work effectively and work with other students.

Martin: This is also something that the Living Routes students can become a separate entity in Auroville, that they can realize themselves in a U.S. “M. The Living Routes team: Ethan, Priya, Blinds and Martin: Some Auroville students have done the internship programme, some come with courses being given for students in Auroville because they feel the community is so small and students are doing this a local student body. What is your opinion on this?

Martin: I think that we’re both mutual. The Living Routes students do not get completely isolated in India and Auroville, they wish to see the whole picture. They could have learned the same thing in one of the U.S. colleges.

Blinds: The Aurovillian inputs are crucial for the Living Routes programme. If the Living Routes students do not get connected to India and Auroville, then what’s the point? They could have learned the same thing in a U.S. college.

Prior: I would not find it very rich, if students choose to develop their own educational programme. How useful will this be in the future?

Ethan: We believe the education should be different because it’s about the whole person development, and how they interact with the nature. It’s about how the students live the life, and see their work.

Blinds: I do this programme because I believe education should be holistic and how people interact with the natural environment. It’s about how the students live the life, and see their work.

Is: How do the students respond to this?

Blinds: In general, they begin by being amazed at the place. A few weeks later they start thinking about their education and their experience are not the same. The students are exposed to so many people.

Is: What is the programme about?

Edén: We do a “seasick” week where they spend a few days on a sailing boat or in nature. All these are designed to catch personal journey. You can’t be taught this. By having an experience you can learn and grow. From this, it is a key aspect of the program.

How do the students respond to Auroville?

Ethan: As a generalization, they begin by being amazed at the place. A few weeks later they start thinking about their education and their experience are not the same. The students are exposed to so many people.

Blinds: Particularly, I would find it rather rich, if students choose to develop their own educational programme. How useful will this be in the future?

Ethan: We believe the education should be different because it’s about the whole person development, and how they interact with the nature. It’s about how the students live the life, and see their work.

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