

Last School

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EDUCATION FOR A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

DEEPTI TEWARI

Auroville is an experiment that “wants to be a new creation expressing a new consciousness in a new way and according to new methods”.

One of its essential concerns has been the development of educational processes befitting a learning society aspiring to “an unending education”.

As the collectivity has grown in complexity of material expression, this area, crucial to the evolution of a new consciousness, has become the key to its next steps. The idea that education should be child-centred has broad acceptance in today's world. The question is rather of converting this truth into suitable forms that comprehend the complexity of a child's psychological nature.



Each aspect, each instrument of the developing individual whether child or adult must be given its true weight to create a wholeness of being. This calls for a spherical rather than linear movement, with contents that are rich and vast; an approach that is both multi-pronged and inclusive of a variety of methodologies. Such a vast experiential progression is rather impossible to encapsulate in a single defined system.

TO BE PRACTICAL YOU MUST FIRST HAVE A VERY CLEAR VISION OF YOUR GOAL, OF WHERE YOU ARE GOING ...BUT THERE IS A LONG WAY TO GO BETWEEN WHAT WE ARE AND WHAT MUST BE. AND FOR THAT WE MUST BE VERY FLEXIBLE, NEVER LOSING SIGHT OF THE GOAL, BUT KNOWING WE CANNOT REACH IT AT ONE BOUND AND THAT WE MUST FIND THE WAY.

FOR THERE IS A STARTING POINT: WHEN YOU HAVE FOUND WITHIN YOURSELF THE LIGHT THAT NEVER WAVERS, THE PRESENCE WHICH CAN GUIDE YOU WITH CERTITUDE, THEN YOU BECOME AWARE THAT CONSTANTLY, IN EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS, THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE LEARNT, AND THAT IN THE PRESENT STATE OF MATTER THERE IS ALWAYS A PROGRESS TO BE MADE.

THAT IS HOW ONE SHOULD COME, EAGER TO FIND OUT AT EVERY MINUTE THE PROGRESS TO BE MADE. TO HAVE A LIFE THAT WANTS TO GROW AND PERFECT ITSELF, THAT IS WHAT THE COLLECTIVE IDEAL OF AUROVILLE SHOULD BE: 'A LIFE THAT WANTS TO GROW AND PERFECT ITSELF', AND ABOVE ALL, NOT IN THE SAME WAY FOR EVERYONE – EACH ONE IN HIS OWN WAY.





The conditions for a true individuality

Through years of experimenting with different forms, there has been one common seeking which has united the diversity of individual approaches within the team of Last School.

This has been the search for conditions that would bring forward the true individuality, the soul or psychic personality, to assume its role of unifying and organizing the psychological nature.

It has necessitated that the school be structured around a highly individualized model, - one that has demanded a sort of alert, listening stillness, vigilant for signs of such an emergence, - rather than a single, fixed and imposed pattern or programme.

Yet, there have been key elements, the pursuit of Beauty, for instance. It is no coincidence that the message The Mother gave to Last School in 1971 was:

The awakening of the aesthetic being leavened by the ethical is an essential basis on which to build the powers of reason; a reason that seeks to reach beyond itself towards the harmony of a supra-rational beauty and good.

TRUE ART MEANS THE
EXPRESSION OF BEAUTY IN
THE MATERIAL WORLD.

IN A WORLD WHOLLY
CONVERTED, THAT IS TO SAY,
EXPRESSING INTEGRALLY
THE DIVINE REALITY, ART
MUST SERVE AS THE
REVEALER AND TEACHER OF
THIS DIVINE BEAUTY IN LIFE.

To perceive in the world of forms an expression of the All Beautiful can be a formative experience, shaping the truth of being. This idea-force has remained a fulcrum upon which to orient contents and methodologies.

IN THE PHYSICAL
THE DIVINE
MANIFESTS AS
BEAUTY.

You say that Auroville is a dream?

YES, IT IS A "DREAM" OF THE LORD AND GENERALLY THESE "DREAMS" TURN OUT TO BE TRUE—MUCH MORE TRUE THAN THE HUMAN SO-CALLED REALITIES!



Another core idea has been that the mind must be refined to meet complexity: whether this is attempted by encouraging a variety of languages; or in the exploration of significant periods in humanity's social, cultural and civilizational growth; or, through a deep understanding of mathematical laws and the rigorousness of an awakened scientific temper.

All these fields of knowledge have been seen as important signposts guiding the journey of discovery; each subject domain an essential element in developing a complex individual being, capable of a vast synthetic thought.

Sri Aurobindo observes:

*VISION IS THE
CHARACTERISTIC POWER
OF THE POET, AS IS
DISCRIMINATIVE THOUGHT
THE ESSENTIAL GIFT OF
THE PHILOSOPHER AND
ANALYTIC OBSERVATION
THE NATURAL GENIUS OF
THE SCIENTIST*

the power of envisioning, the gift of discriminative thought and the capacity for analytical observation are crucial faculties, each an aspect of the mental nature representing a particular but significant side of the being. Each can be awakened best by a specific type of mental activity, and none deserves to be neglected in a growth that aims at a greater wholeness.

Hero Warriors

A conscious accent on the 'hero-quest' to power an awakened will-force and a sense of service and self-giving in the life-spirit have also constituted essential elements.

The necessity of training the body in balance, plasticity and endurance whether through participation in team sports or physical culture, dance or martial arts has been greatly encouraged.

Group expeditions, local or farther afield, as for instance, treks to the Himalayas, have been perceived as vital occasions for individual and collective self-finding - 'schools' to build will and character.

An education oriented towards "increasing perfectibility" must build upon the foundation of an awakened body and a life spirit capable of the discipline that can lead to self-mastery. Youth should have a firm grasp of the material field while being capable of lofty flight.

A conscious awareness and plasticity in the body, a wide openness in the life-spirit and as few artificial mental constructions in the mind will create the type that is responsive to the future.



The core of this experiment and experience is as large as life itself. The aim is to bring forth a rich, complex and integrated personality rather than one with a set of specialized competences; a personality for whom progress implies always a widening and deepening of activities and of the faculties involved.

Human beings need this enlargement and sense of uplifting to meet the demands of the future.

It is also the movement required by life in an aspiring collective. This élan of discovery, asking for a progressive mastery of many fields, has a natural tendency, once enkindled, to spread out from the school environment into other aspects of the city-in-making.

Yet, if true, there would be nothing artificially constructed, it would be the movement of a life growing and perfecting itself, a thing so natural as to be unnoticeable.

Finally, if this progression can be achieved, one may arrive at,

*AN UNENDING
EDUCATION, A CONSTANT
PROGRESS AND A YOUTH
THAT NEVER AGES.*

which is the call of Auroville's Charter:



AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

LAST SCHOOL WORKSHOPS



EXPRESSIONS OF DEVOTION

BHAVYO TRIVEDI

Each new term Last School begins with a new exhibition and weeklong workshop.

The power of forms

January 2025 opened with an exploration into the beauty and spirit of India—through her sculptures, gods, dynasties, and devotional art.

The corridor exhibition began with a simple online search: a way to bring closer the bronze and stone marvels shaped by centuries of devotion. Most of these sacred forms are far from reach—tucked in distant temples or museums around the world.

These high-quality images are often only available through foreign museums that have made them public domain.

We wanted to immerse ourselves in their vibrance by enlarging them, to feel their presence and poise.

Eleven large-scale prints lined the walls, each from a different time, dynasty, and tradition.

Despite the stylistic shifts, the power of the forms—expressions of devotion rather than realistic likeness—remained constant.

One of our younger teachers, Satyavan, led a walkthrough, offering context, stories, myths, and the history behind each statue.

The senior teachers chimed in, sharing their passion for India.

The exhibition highlighted a profound continuity: even today, artisans in Indian villages sculpt in much the same style, keeping alive a devotional art form that spans millennia.

This is the space the students and teachers of Last School would inhabit and work from for the next four months.



FROM THE KNOWN TO THE UNKNOWN

IN CONVERSATION WITH BHAVYO TRIVEDI

Each new term at Last School begins with a school-wide workshop week, where students and teachers come together to face shared challenges and work in silence, focusing on concentration, patience, and perseverance.

These workshops have become a vital tool in our functioning, serving as a way for the school to reconnect and set the tone for the collective attitude we wish to nurture.

They provide the framework for the themes that will be explored in various classes throughout the term.

The environment we seek to create during this week is one of minimal distraction, where each participant takes responsibility for maintaining silence and allowing others to concentrate on their work.

Even when emotions and reactions arise, individuals are encouraged to be mindful of the collective and strive to offer their best in service of the shared goal.



“AND I AM SIMPLY GOING TO ASK YOU A QUESTION—BUT IN FACT I EXPECT NO ANSWER—TO TELL YOU SOMETHING VERY SIMPLE:

WHEN DOES SOMETHING SEEM IMPOSSIBLE TO YOU?—IT IS WHEN YOU TRY TO DO IT.”



Lola organized the workshop, and she was certain that she wanted to work with something very simple. Where would the simplicity come from?

First there was a series of paintings of lemons. In preparation Lola used simple colors and simple compositions to look at different ways lemons can interact with each other.

I had some homework to work on bananas and some other fruits, and suddenly we were having a good time.

There's a world inside the shapes of the fruits.

And so, you go from the known into the unknown very quickly.

And soon, you stop, you start switching your brain off and start erasing pencil lines. And you find shapes and unnoticed elements unlinked to preferences.

Proposing easy-to-do shapes was very important. You can trace this banana or a capsicum, a hundred times. And you don't have to really think twice.

But then when you start erasing, you forget about the shape of the capsicum, and you just focus on what's there.

I think that was the point of the workshop.

“THAT ALONE WHICH IS NOT IN YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS YOU CANNOT REALISE.

IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT!”





FOR THOSE FEW DAYS, WE WENT FROM THE KNOWN INTO THE UNKNOWN AGAIN AND AGAIN.

Until towards the end, the last logical step was to go into 3D and into matter, where you take these kinds of random materials that a lot of our students hadn't worked with, and you would make them into the known, which was a composition using the two, three fruits and vegetables.

Of course, Lola has a way of tying everything in together and making sure that no one's left behind. She really managed to pull everybody through.

And no matter how simple or complex their work was, there was an added value of the unknown that came in.

THAT WAS THE WORKSHOP.



The shift into shapes

And the results of the workshop were quite interesting because it's been a while since we have gone into matter and 3D.

And, we actually weren't certain.

Towards the end of the week, Lola and I had a chat and decided to step into this 'matter story.' With Pongal coming up, we could use extra days, this would be interesting too.

We normally stop the workshop at the end of a week, before the kids go crazy. But this time we extended the time. We let them go a little crazy.

Some of them really struggled, but most of them managed to pull through, and they could understand why we had to do such long, extensive research work in order to get here, into matter.

I think a few of them managed to catch a glimpse of that.

FOR THOSE FEW DAYS, WE WENT FROM THE KNOWN INTO THE UNKNOWN AGAIN AND AGAIN.



“THE ESSENCE OF THE QUESTION LIES IN THE RENDERING OF THE TRUTH AND BEAUTY SEIZED BY THE SPIRIT.”

TOWARDS

INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

A BROAD PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN HISTORY

JEAN-YVES LUNG

Our study of history is shaped by the question: What is the movement of consciousness behind the human adventure? Drawing on Sri Aurobindo's Human Cycle, we explored how civilizations evolve through symbolic, typical, individualistic, and subjective stages, towards a spiritual age. —as a collective soul in formation.

The nature of religions

This year we studied the Abrahamic traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—as distinct yet complementary expressions of knowledge, love, and will.

Though often viewed in opposition, from a spiritual perspective they echo the threefold path of the Indian yogas: jnana, bhakti, and karma. These offer inward disciplines toward integration and self-realization, rather than institutional belief.

We also looked at Europe's roots: Athens as the seat of reason, Rome of power and order, and Jerusalem of faith. These founding impulses helped shape modern Western consciousness.

The Islamic Golden Age was highlighted as a crucial transmitter of ancient Greek and Indian knowledge, enabling the Renaissance and modernity to emerge in Europe.

Turning east, we studied ancient China and its pursuit of harmony—both social and spiritual.

The 6th–5th centuries BCE saw the lives of Confucius, Buddha, and Socrates—three luminous thinkers in different parts of the world—each offering a path to truth: ethical responsibility, spiritual liberation, and philosophical inquiry.

In China, the Legalists, Confucianists, and Taoists proposed outer, moral, and inner laws—three stages of evolution in society's maturity.

In reflecting on these diverse traditions, students began to sense a shared human aspiration across time and space. Understanding this deeper unity is vital to educating for a world where diversity can be held within a greater synthesis.



Introducing complexity through the Mahabharata

This year, we explored the Mahabharata, focusing on the psychological dimensions of key characters—Duryodhana, Arjuna, Bhishma, Krishna, and Karna—as a lens to explore the many facets of human nature.

We expanded on the concepts of Dharma, Svadharma, and Svabhava, examining how these ideas relate not only to the characters but also to our own lives.

Debates were organised around key dilemmas—Bhishma's renunciation of the throne, Duryodhana's refusal to yield even five villages to avoid war—arguing that the Dharma of a true Kshatriya is to stand firm and fight for what he believes is right.

These raise deeper questions: who defines what is right or wrong?

How are our identities—our Svabhava and Svadharma—shaped by factors such as upbringing, education, tradition, and society?

Is there something within us that transcends these influences?

To ground these ideas in lived experience, students took on week-long personal challenges touching mental, vital, and physical aspects of themselves: from limiting screen time to nature walks, cooking, or reading daily, they tracked progress and shared reflections.

Alongside we read passages from the Bhagavad Gita, which offered deeper insights into these issues.

There was a clear interest in continuing this exploration in greater depth.

**SATYAVAN
BHATT**



“AUROVILLE: AT LAST A PLACE WHERE ONE WILL BE ABLE TO THINK ONLY OF THE FUTURE.”



LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE

DEEPTI TEWARI

Students are introduced to the world's diversity and its underlying oneness, to develop self-reflection and expression—written and oral.

A comprehensive approach

The youngest students are around 14–15, the middle group 16–17, and the oldest 18 and above.

Though conducted in English and rooted in Literature and Poetry, the classes also include Philosophy, Yoga Psychology, History, and Culture. Whatever the subject, the aim is to deepen our perspective on life—its meaning and purpose.

Students are always encouraged to ask their questions, however off-topic they may seem. The intent is to draw out what a story or idea reveals about the human condition and our collective movement toward a more conscious future.



This year, students were especially responsive to psychological and philosophical questions.

Topics were often set aside in favour of deeper inquiry—exactly as it should be, for learning must serve life, not the other way around.

Youngest group

The youngest group began with *The Wizard of Earthsea*, a story that illustrates the journey of confronting Good and Evil within and without, and growing toward a wholeness of being.

This was followed by short stories and poems that helped develop critical reading skills while exploring the human condition.

In Term 2, we studied the inspiring life of Helen Keller and her teacher Ann Sullivan, focusing on how the human spirit evolves through challenge.

We also examined India's freedom struggle, post-colonial challenges, and democratic journey.

The term concluded with sessions on our psychological nature and the planes and parts of the being.

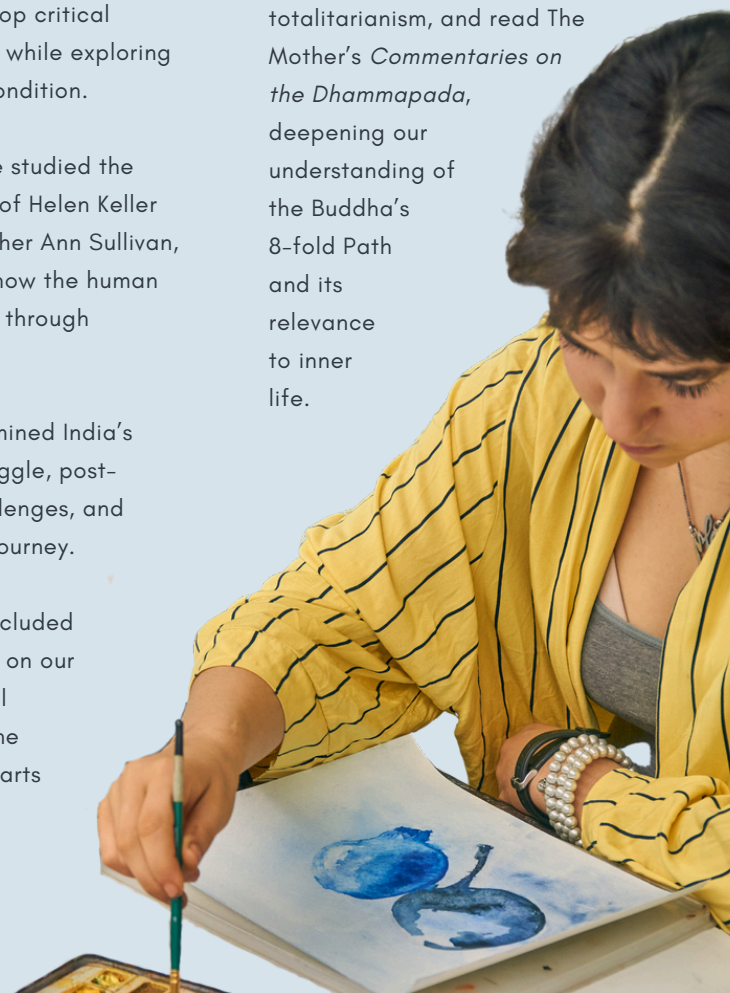
Middle group

The middle group began with Sri Aurobindo's *Perseus the Deliverer*, which, though set in Greek myth, reveals his vision of consciousness evolving from violent force to the calm light of reason.

We then turned to *Romeo and Juliet*, exploring Shakespeare's poetic brilliance and the psychological depth of his characters.

Students worked on interpretation and analysis, concluding with viewings of different film versions to see how meaning shifts with interpretation.

In the final term, we studied *Animal Farm*, Orwell's masterful satire on totalitarianism, and read *The Mother's Commentaries on the Dhammapada*, deepening our understanding of the Buddha's 8-fold Path and its relevance to inner life.



Oldest Group

The oldest group began with two plays by Sri Aurobindo—*Rodogune* and *Eric*—which, along with *Perseus the Deliverer*, completed our journey through his dramatic works. Set in West Asia and Viking-era Scandinavia, these plays reflect the slow, often painful evolution of human consciousness.

We then turned to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, engaging deeply with its psychological complexity and culminating in a film viewing.

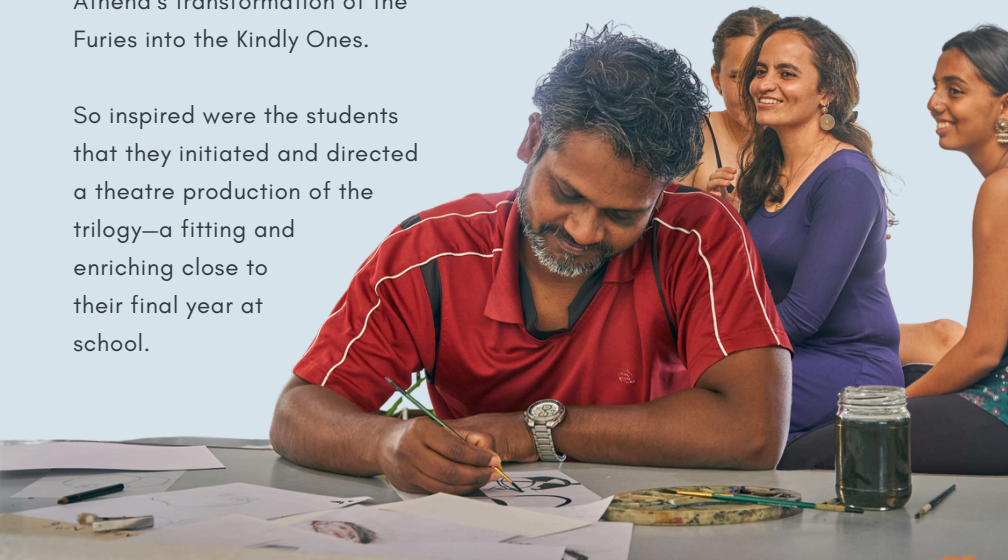
A major focus this year was Aeschylus's trilogy *The Oresteia*, which traces Athens' transition from blood-feud to law through Athena's transformation of the Furies into the Kindly Ones.

So inspired were the students that they initiated and directed a theatre production of the trilogy—a fitting and enriching close to their final year at school.

In philosophy, we studied *The Aim of Life*, exploring Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam through the lives of their founding exemplars.

The Greek spirit was encountered through *Plato's Apology* and *Meno*, the latter introducing his idea of learning as recollection.

We followed Alexander the Great's epic sweep across West Asia and concluded with Adi Shankara's profound vision of *Advaita Vedanta*—a return to India and to the timeless inquiry into unity.



HUMANITY IS NOT THE LAST RUNG OF THE TERRESTRIAL CREATION. EVOLUTION CONTINUES AND MAN WILL BE SURPASSED.

IT IS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL TO KNOW WHETHER HE WANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ADVENT OF THIS NEW SPECIES.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE SATISFIED WITH THE WORLD AS IT IS, AUROVILLE OBVIOUSLY HAS NO REASON TO EXIST.



THE ORESTEIA: ACT ONE

GOOD WIN OUT IN GLORY IN THE END

When I was fourteen years old, Jasmine brought the sky into the Last School halls.

As my classmates and I walked through her exhibition every day, we would whisper of our own senior year and what we, as a collective, would give back to the school.

Senior year found Julia and I reading Aeschylus' The Oresteia in class and talking the characters over for hours after.

Slowly the idea took shape- why not direct a performance for the end of the year?

Unlike our previous plans to do an art installation or presentation, the creation of this particular project would involve many others in school, and would be a collaborative experience that everyone participating would remember.

And thus began our journey, involving Last School and Future School students, Last School teachers, and so many others along the way.

Rehearsals in pouring rain, and rehearsals when the sun was so blinding we could barely see one another on stage.

The Sunday afternoon meetings I would forget about and rush to with my hair oiled, the times Julia and I spent calming each other, the times Julia and I spent going "are we crazy? do you think we can do this?" back and forth, neither of us really knowing the answer, when the only webbing twixt our fingers was trust.

I loved watching all of us, cast and crew, bloom and step into the larger-than-life roles we each had taken on. I cried the entire night before the performance, but when I stood on stage in the final moments, tears didn't come.

I graduated Deepanam during Covid- I never had the opportunity to stand in the amphitheater looking out at the faces of people I love, wrapped in the bittersweetness of leaving Deepanam, the way I thought I would when I was thirteen.

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TAT TVAM ASI

i only did it at eighteen, surrounded by people I love, wrapped in the bittersweetness of leaving Deepanam and Last School and Auroville all at once.

I think our senior project was filled with more joy than any of my classmates could have hoped, and as we took our bows I thought again of the clouds in the halls, and I was back there, fourteen, dreaming soft dreams once more.

MANYA SEKAR



SWAN OF THE GODS

Playing Cassandra was one of the most challenging roles I've taken on. Unlike past plays, this wasn't just about memorizing lines and speaking loudly — it demanded something raw. People joked early on that I was cast because "you're crazy!" and honestly, after a few rehearsals, I kind of got it.

I missed quite a few practices and only began properly learning my lines about eight days before the show. I got feedback on how to scream, appear possessed, and express Cassandra's pain and madness. I didn't get to practice much of that. In the end, I mostly relied on what came naturally, trying to carry the emotion and to not overthink it.

Aurevan helped me understand the story better through my lines and gave me ideas to explore the character more deeply. There was also a last minute problem where my belt came off and Smriti helped stitch it back together the night before the show.

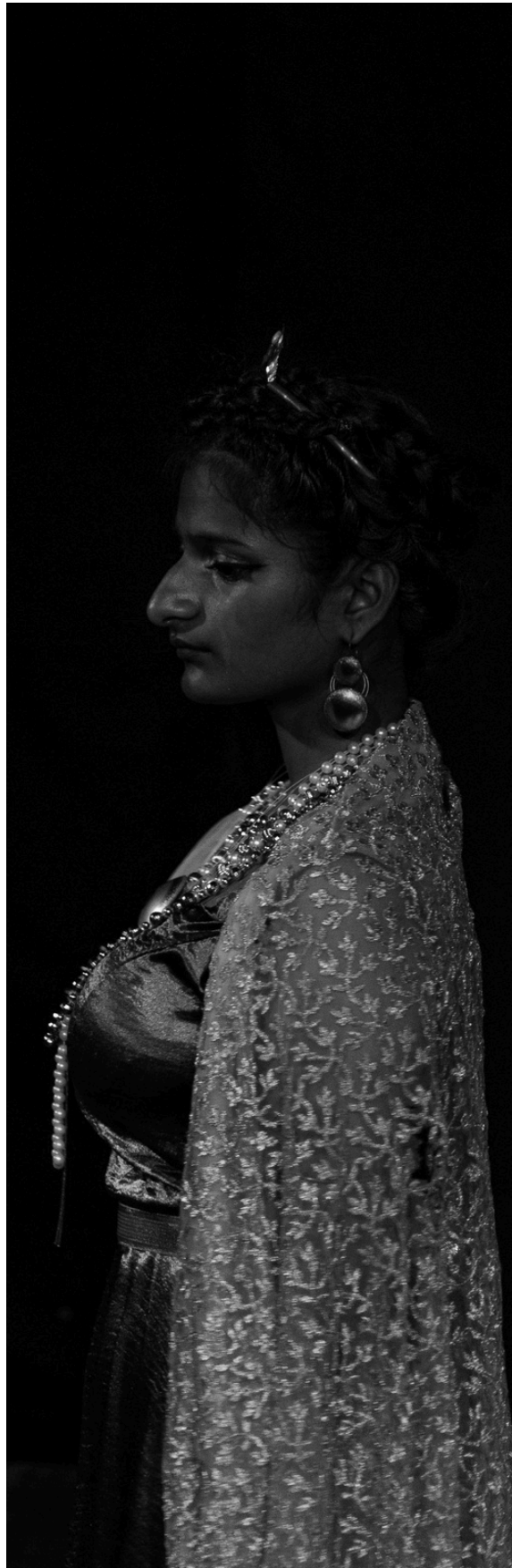
The performance itself was intense. I was really nervous, which weirdly helped. At one point I blanked out mid-monologue, looked at Manya for help, but before she noticed, Satya said his line and saved me, I guess. Backstage, I nearly cried trying to figure out which lines I'd missed — I realized them while lying dead on stage.

Looking back, I knew this role would be insanely challenging, but I chose to deal with that reality later.



Our early rehearsals were mostly just reading lines, but once we started acting them out, I realized Cassandra's madness wasn't just about screaming, it was about showing her pain, her helplessness, her burden of knowing the truth and knowing no one would believe her. Well, done is done.

ANANTINI JOAN MOHANTY



Why Tragedy...

Tragedies were never, really, my style, though I did already take up small roles in tragedies in the past.

In this play, I enjoyed acting out the emotions of the character, and, I found, theatre can be an interesting exercise to explore emotions and viewpoints, while maintaining a neutral position. One can live an emotion, or view point, as an experience, rather than as something tied to oneself.

After the performance, I was reflecting with a spectator, who was wondering why Greek plays always contain a lot of negativity.

They said, it took them also a while to understand, that the purpose is, theatre served as a catharsis. Now it makes sense, why tragedy.

I also appreciated that there was nevertheless a speck of humour now and then. And, that the play, which portrayed a tragedy, was, however, presented without a heavy atmosphere

DYUMAN MEZZETTI

*BUT JUSTICE TURNS THE BALANCE SCALES,
SEES THAT WE SUFFER AND WE SUFFER AND WE LEARN.
AND WE WILL KNOW THE FUTURE WHEN IT COMES.*

Being part of the chorus in the play was a cool experience. It taught me the importance of dedication— without a main role, which was tough in the beginning, but ended up being really fun in the end.

SHALEV ROZIN



Last School
After School n:1
Super School
No School

Last School

A UNIT OF SAIIR, AUROVILLE

Last School in Auroville, India, works primarily with teenagers. Its educational approach, anchored in Sri Aurobindo, is centered on an integral development through the method of Free Progress.

The school offers an environment of beauty, where students asking their own questions, approach learning outside the constraints of traditional academic programs or external standards. Thus stepping firmly away from formal diplomas, Last School seeks to develop individuals who are better equipped to address tomorrow's complex challenges, invent new solutions, and contribute to an evolving society, rather than simply integrating into the existing one.



PHOTOS: ASHWIN EZHUMALAI

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“IN THE PHYSICAL THE DIVINE MANIFESTS AS BEAUTY”
Mother's message to Last School in 1971