

Free Progress Education

Last School
Auroville





Concentrated work - Workshop in collaboration with Shradhanjali 2023

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Morning concentration

Last School

The quest for beauty has been a dominant thread guiding Last School's journey in its seeking to embody an integral educational approach. A beauty both in its physical school environment as well as a formative condition of consciousness.

The Last School team has had the sense that its search for integrality cannot be found in formed or fixed systems and programmes of education, but rather it is something generated by a constant seeking, and a living response to life - a life that wants to grow and perfect itself.

Thus, Last School has stayed committed to a free progress approach which seems the most plastic for this openness of consciousness.

As The Mother remarks "*It should be known and we should not hesitate to proclaim it—that the whole purpose of our school is to discover and encourage those in whom the need for progress has become conscious enough to direct their lives.*"¹

It is not easy to describe something that is always evolving and adapting to events and circumstances. Yet there are broad patterns that have stood out through almost four decades of experimentation.

This publication condenses a few of the most significant comments of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo which have acted as guideposts and pathfinders. It also presents a summary of both the contents and the methodologies that have created the direction of the Last School team's journey.

Auroville wants to be
a new creation
expressing a new
consciousness in a new
way and according
to new methods -

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Preface

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.”²

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: “*In the physical the Divine manifests as Beauty*”. 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.”*³

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.

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*”⁴ 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.

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 needs 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.



Memecylon umbellatum - Mother's significance: 'Miracle - Air of Auroville'

A Dream

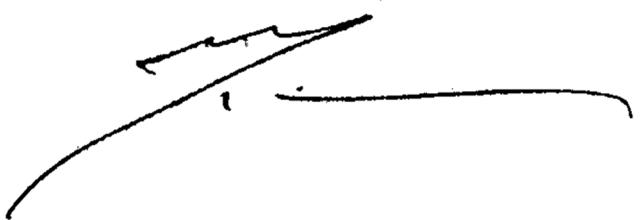
“There should be somewhere upon earth, a place...

In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bringing forth new ones.”⁵

“For millennia, we have developed outer means, outer instruments, outer techniques of living – and finally those means and techniques are crushing us. The sign of the new humanity is a reversal of perspective, and the understanding that inner knowledge and inner technique can change the world and master it without crushing it.

Auroville is the place where this new way of life is being worked out, it is a centre of accelerated evolution where man must begin to change his world through the power of the inner spirit.”⁶

It is not a number that we
want — it is a selection — it
is not full-blooded students that
we want, it is living souls.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. H." or "John H." The signature is written in a fluid, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.



“It is not a number that we want - it is a selection; it is not brilliant students that we want, it is living souls.”⁷

The Mother

The Charter of Auroville

1. *Auroville belongs to nobody in particular; Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.*
2. *Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages.*
3. *Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and from within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realizations.*
4. *Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.*

The Mother



Demonstration in the Art center - Workshop in collaboration with Shradhanjali 2023



*“If the growth of consciousness
were considered as the principal
goal of life, many difficulties
would find their solution.
The best way of not becoming old is
to make progress the goal of our life.”* ⁸

“The aim of education is not to prepare a man to succeed in life and society, but to increase his perfectibility to its utmost.”⁹

Last School
After School n: 1
2
3

Super School
No School

The Mother's list of names given for Auroville schools.

The Aim of Education in Auroville

*“I want to insist on the fact that it will be an experiment, it is for making experiments research, study” said The Mother in a conversation about Auroville.”*¹⁰

There are few directions given to Auroville on the topic of education by The Mother. From the beginning her guidance came in broad strokes rather than detailed explanations: an approach she referred to as a ‘pressure of consciousness’ which would ‘arrange’ people and things. The onus seemed to be rather on individual choice demanding an effort and a ‘rising up’ of consciousness. The seminal idea-forces that represent Auroville’s spirit, such as The Charter of Auroville, and the set of six steps she titled To be a True Aurovillian, among others, create the wholeness of vision as well as the programme of action – an individualized self-education – that every Aurovillian undertakes. Indeed, every person, who chooses Auroville, becomes a student of self-seeking, whether this search has awakened to awareness or not.

Amongst the few comments specific to education in Auroville, is a list in Mother’s hand of school names. For many years this was seen as names given by her to school buildings under construction in 1971 on the Last School campus in Aspiration. But was it really so?

The names themselves invite a second look. What emerges is a developing sequence, a growth from a last outpost of schooling to something that evolves into a ‘no school’. The Mother’s list seems to be suggestive of a psychological progression.

“Do not aim at success. Our aim is perfection.

*Remember you are on the threshold of a new world, participating in its birth and instrumental in its creation.”*¹¹

As Auroville grew into an awareness of the deeper springs of its impulsion, so too was awakened the idea that an orderly progression through stages of psychological growth was not only possible but essential.

Asked to define what she meant by the term ‘free progress’ The Mother said:

*“A progress guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions or preconceived ideas.”*¹²

What did The Mother imply when she spoke of the education she sought as a progress guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions and preconceived ideas? It would appear that Auroville ought not merely to settle for systems and methodologies in common practice around the world. Would that not defeat its intention as a place for experiments, research and study and orient it towards programmes and methodologies constructed for an industrial age, utilitarian mindset, somewhat inimical to the spirit of Auroville?

*"We are not here to do (only a little better) what the others do.
We are here to do what the others cannot do because they
do not have the idea that it can be done.
We are here to open the way of the Future to children who
belong to the Future.
Anything else is not worth the trouble and not worthy of
Sri Aurobindo's help."*¹³

There is an imperative insistence on progress, a conscious progress that must arise from the deepest impulsions of the being. Moreover, this is combined with the idea of perfectibility rather than a pursuit merely of success, career and money – the commonplace reasons for education in modern times. And if the means to the goal becomes the growth of consciousness, limitless vistas open, for there is no limit to the growth of consciousness. We enter into a pattern of delight in learning as we explore the secrets of this mysterious universe that stretches outwardly before us and inwardly within us; and we discover the joy of the mind's soar and soul's dive into the infinite.

Finally, and most importantly, we find a primary focus on the necessity of bringing forward the soul personality as the true centre of life and action. Both The Mother and Sri Aurobindo repeatedly place this requirement as the one indispensable thing upon which a new consciousness may be securely constituted.

"...each human being is a self-developing soul and the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realized what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man,

is to help him to find his deeper self, and the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as 'the leader of the march set in our front,' will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacities of the psychological being towards a realization of its potentialities of which our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception. These new methods are on the straight way to this truer dealing. The closer touch attempted with the psychical entity behind the vital and physical mentality and an increasing reliance on the possibilities must lead to the ultimate discovery that man is inwardly a soul and conscious power of the Divine and that the evocation of this real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being.”¹⁴

It would seem that to be given conditions conducive to keeping a conscious awareness of its psychic being ought to be the birthright of every child in Auroville. This self-finding has been set by The Mother for all who choose Auroville as the first essential in the process of becoming what she called a 'True Aurovillian': "The first necessity is the inner discovery, in order to know what one truly is behind social, moral, cultural, racial and hereditary appearances. At the center there is a being, free, vast and knowing, who awaits our discovery and who ought to become the effective center of our being and our life in Auroville." ¹⁵



Science experiments conducted in the lab

The Instruments of Education

*“The Divine manifests in the psychic as love,
in the mind as knowledge,
in the vital as power
and in the physical as beauty.”¹⁶*

What are the processes of an education whose aim is the bringing forward of the inmost personality – the soul personality? What constitutes the content of such an attempt?

Already the aim of perfectibility rather than success, with the growth of consciousness as the means, calls for a different basis of action. Consciousness is everywhere but expresses itself in the individual through faculties present in every part of the being. These must be refined and developed.

Each instrument of the nature – mind, life and body – must be encouraged to grow and manifest its unique capacities. For the body, this is a balanced and stable strength, agility, endurance and beauty. The life spirit, the vital nature of the being, and the seat of its enthusiasms, energy, effort and courage is also the source of most of the difficulties that vex human nature. This is an aspect of the instrumental nature which is perilous to ignore. Yet, few modern systems address it consciously. The awakening and development of both the aesthetic as well as the ethical personality is essential for the fullness of self-expression. The mind in its turn, powered by an awakened and concentrated will, must be capable of wideness and suppleness, expansion and synthesis. And finally, an education aimed at perfection must subtly orient all its impulsions towards the deepest and inmost self as the sun orients the sunflower.

The body and the life-spirit are the base and pedestal upon which the psychological being rests. Perfectibility begins with concentration in the body and a refinement of the life being. It is never too early to create the conditions for this. The training and purification of the senses, the development of balance and judgment, in action and in expression, are aspects that greatly influence the dynamic and practical side of the nature. Knowledge can be sought in all parts of the instrumental nature –

the intellectual, psychological, aesthetic and ethical, dynamic and practical – each grows when given conscious time and attention.

When speaking of the training of the mind, The Mother remarked that students should learn to think with ideas rather than with words, this, she said would be simply a small step to a greater progress when one could learn to think with experiences – a stage embodying a decisive progress from the present balance of human nature.

Her suggestion harks back to ancient Upanishadic education where students came to learn from a Rishi, a being of wisdom, and one who could lead through pithy aphoristic teachings such as '*Tat twam asi*', You are That; an experience regarded as the one true knowledge when it emerged from within in the awakened consciousness of the student's being. The core question of the Upanishadic quest: '*Kasmin Vijnate Sarvam Vijnatam*', Is there a knowledge, having which, all can be known, is a radiant light that can yet illumine the pathways to the future. The attempt was an evocation of the inmost entity within. And, if social and collective expression must be revolutionized, such a journey of discovery is essential to create the pathways to the future.

The illumined hero-soul, ready to embark on the quest of self-discovery, must be awakened to its full harmonious self-expression. Yoga is practical psychology, remarked Sri Aurobindo. And the time is ripe to generalize this psychological knowledge if the conditions of human consciousness are to change. It is the psychic being within who is able rightly to be the true guide and inspirer of such a progress; the teacher in a classroom can be merely the medium whose quiet wisdom in action creates the conditions for this alchemy to take place. The first learner of any classroom is always the adult instructor.



Body, movement and theater - Workshop on Physical Education 2020



Assembling a collective leaf-puzzle - Workshop in collaboration with Shradhanjali 2023

Contents and Methodologies

A new approach requires a conscious evaluation of the tools and materials used in the educational process. Textbooks have subtle orientations that create determinisms and psychological types that perpetuate the social, cultural and national order. Many artificial mental constructions and prejudices, unnecessary determinisms that limit the being, can be avoided if there is alertness in this regard.

In a free progress approach, the artificial pressures which are generated by the need to be successful in certificate and exam systems are removed. It becomes thus most important to awaken a fundamental commitment to the joy of progress. The key is to create a 'right road' that leads the students towards their own perfection. It is not only the head but the enthusiasm of the heart that is required. An academic approach does not work. The need is to take into account the psychological nature of the student.

In Last School the relationship between students and teachers is crucial for the learning process. The teachers are asked to be wise friends, guides and helpers not mere pedagogues. And this is particularly illustrated in the intense weeklong workshops that start every semester. The students and teachers become co-learners; companions and comrades in developing skills of one kind or another. These occasions highlight the best method which is personal example, suggestion and influence. They provide a period of good company, a satsanga of learning together to fire awake the highest will for progress.

The Mother worked hard to dispel the idea that some subjects were not 'spiritual'. It is not the subject but the manner in which it is 'taught' that is the issue: "[Students] are taught history or spiritual things, they are taught science or spiritual things. That is the stupidity. In history the Spirit is there; in science the Spirit is there: the Truth is everywhere. What is needed is not to teach all that in a false way, but to teach it in a true way."¹⁷

It seems almost a matter of asking pertinent questions: For instance, in the social sciences, one may ask: are the young persons, growing up in today's world, to be given a nationalistic perspective on human development? Do not the complexities of the present day world call for a larger outlook? Topics in these fields can be

consciously used to awaken the capacity for comparison and contrast, leading to a balanced, discerning judgment. One may easily work to create a vaster, more comprehensive and universal approach, – a celebration of humanity's material, social and psychological evolution.

Sciences such as ecology can oblige one to see the earth body as a precious blue planet floating in space and worth preserving as fosterer of all life on earth. A good basis in science is essential for a robust capacity to deal with the material universe while yet retaining a sense of wonder at its mystery and variety: "*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.*"¹⁸

In an age that celebrates individuality and freedom, a certain moral relativism has set in. What is the position that Auroville schools should take? Most social systems approach this aspect of the nature as if it can be built upon reason. But the moral impulse is either a gut feeling or a sense of wideness that is more intuitional. This is a domain most germane to the developing personality. The power of reflective thought leading to discriminative intelligence, the Indian idea of vichar that arrives at vivek, is an essential element of the educational process. The intelligent will is the first instrument of the inmost being, the psychic being, and its powers must be awakened as early as possible. "*For children, precisely because they are children, it would be best to instill in them the will to conquer the future, the will to always look ahead and want to move on as swiftly as they can towards what will be.*"¹⁹ Teachers have to give thought to living situations, examples or contexts that can set in motion this significant aspect of the dynamic nature.

All challenges to the life spirit: in sports, in endurance training and in awakening the spirit of adventure; tests of will and tests of achieving and arriving at goals, are essential to the developing psychological nature. There must be awakened a consciousness and responsibility for the maintenance of the collectivity. Familiarity with accounts that activate the ethical impulse, hero stories that abound in every culture, are a marvellous tool to awaken this aspect of the personality.

Our sense of refined conduct often stems from a more inward appreciation of the Right and True being also the Beautiful. Children should discover this sense early for it becomes more difficult to address at puberty when the nature undergoes

powerful developmental changes. “In a general way, education, culture, refinement of the senses, are the means of curing movements of crude instincts and desire and passion. To obliterate them is not curing them; instead they should be cultivated, intellectualized, refined. That is the surest way of curing them. To give them their maximum growth in view of the progress and development of consciousness, so that one may attain to a sense of harmony and exactitude of perception is a part of culture and education for the human being.”²⁰

The body is the base upon which all is built. Youth should have a firm grasp of the material field within through an understanding, physical and psychological, of their own being; as also without, of the world they perceive around them. Padhyam Prithivi – Earth is His footing, says the Upanishad. This contact and knowledge of matter is invigorating. The robustness that comes from the touch of earth, combined with a conscious awareness and plasticity is the platform upon which to grow into fullness.

In the modern age the science of yoga has emerged from its secret retreats and the knowledge it gives of practical psychology is an empowering tool that the youth of today should not be denied: “It seems to me that psychology without yoga is lifeless. The study of psychology must necessarily lead to yoga, at least to practical yoga if not theoretical.”²¹ The gifts of accelerated psychological change that this science can give are the very tool required by a human mentality, arrested and bewildered by the complexity of problems it confronts.

What is Integral Education? Is it merely a juxtaposition of numerous subjects and activities? Or is it rather an attempt to create a larger and truer harmony through what The Mother suggested was “the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised.”

Finally, there are domains that lend themselves to soul awakening more directly; areas that are often relegated at great hidden cost, to a subordinate position. All that awakens the creative impulse – imagination, dreaming, visioning – is a most vital aspect of the educational process. “Poetry raises the emotions and gives each its separate delight. Art stills the emotions and teaches them the delight of a restrained and limited satisfaction. Music deepens the emotions and harmonizes them with each other. Between them, music, art and poetry are a perfect education of the soul;

they make and keep its movements purified, self-controlled, deep and harmonious. These, therefore, are agents which cannot profitably be neglected by humanity on its outward march or degraded to the mere satisfaction of sensuous pleasure which will disintegrate rather than build the character. They are, when properly used great educating, edifying and civilizing forces".²²

The Veda saw in the universe a conscious mediating energy, Agni, the mystic fire, the leader of the march, the priest of the sacrifice, 'the son of heaven by the body of the earth'. It is this mystic fire, the psychic flame in the inmost heart, which must be awakened and brought forward to generate the acceleration that can lead us on the pathways of the future. This will fashion the 'living souls', to hold Auroville's aspiration for Union.

Last School 1985-2024

"Peace through human unity.

Unity through uniformity is an absurdity.

Unity must be realised through the union of the many.

Each one is part of the unity; each one is indispensable to the whole."²³

*“Humanity is not the last rung of 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.”*²⁴

“India has or rather had the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it.

The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffers badly for it.

*An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised.”*²⁵

PATHFINDERS

On India

“India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood...”

And equally then our cultural conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal manifesting in the human race, evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim, it must be the idea of the spirit, the soul of humanity advancing through struggle and concert towards oneness, increasing its experience and maintaining a needed diversity through the varied culture and life motives of its many peoples, searching for perfection through the development of the powers of the individual and his progress towards a diviner being and life, but feeling out too though more slowly after a similar perfectibility in the life of the race. It must be an education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities [...] And at no time will it lose sight of man’s highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being.”²⁶



“The first necessity is the inner discovery”

To be a True Aurovilian

1. *The first necessity is the inner discovery, in order to know what one truly is behind social, moral, cultural, racial and hereditary appearances. At the center there is a being, free, vast and knowing, who awaits our discovery and who ought to become the effective center of our being and our life in Auroville.*
2. *One lives in Auroville in order to be free from moral and social conventions; but this freedom must not be a new slavery to the ego, its desires and ambitions. The fulfillment of one's desires bars the way to the inner discovery which can only be achieved in the peace and transparency of perfect disinterestedness.*
3. *The Aurovilian should lose the sense of personal possession. For our passage in the material world, what is indispensable to our life and to our action is put at our disposal according to the place we must occupy. The more we are consciously in contact with our inner being, the more are the exact means given to us.*
4. *Work, even manual work, is something indispensable for the inner discovery. If one does not work, if one does not put one's consciousness into matter, the latter will never develop. To let the consciousness organize a bit of matter by means of one's body is very good. To establish order around oneself helps to bring order within oneself. One should organize one's life not according to outer and artificial rules, but according to an organized inner consciousness, for if one lets life go on without subjecting it to the control of the higher consciousness, it becomes fickle and inexpressive. It is to waste one's time in the sense that matter remains without any conscious utilization.*
5. *The whole earth must prepare itself for the advent of the new species, and Auroville wants to work consciously to hasten this advent.*
6. *Little by little it will be revealed to us what this new species must be, and meanwhile the best course is to consecrate oneself entirely to the Divine.²⁷*

PROGRAMME

*Research through experience
of the Supreme Truth*

*A life divine
But
NO RELIGIONS*

“Our research will not be a search effected by mystic means. It is in life itself that we wish to find the Divine. And it is through this discovery that life can really be transformed.”

Auroville and the Religions

*“We want the Truth.
For most men it is what they want that they label truth.
The Aurovilians must want the truth whatever it may be.*

Auroville is for those who want to live a life essentially divine but who renounce all religions whether they be ancient, modern, new or future.

*It is only in experience that there can be knowledge of the Truth.
No one ought to speak of the Divine unless he has had experience of the Divine.
Get experience of the Divine, then alone will you have the right to speak of it.*

The objective study of religions will be part of the historical study of human consciousness.

Religions make up part of the history of mankind and it is in this guise that they will be studied at Auroville – not as beliefs to which one ought to or ought not to adhere, but as part of a process in the development of human consciousness which should lead man towards his superior realization.”²⁸



Bougainvillea flowers - Mother's significance: 'Protection'

On Beauty

*“In the physical world of all things it is beauty that expresses best the Divine. The physical world is the world of form and the perfection of form is beauty. Beauty interprets, expresses, manifests the Eternal. Its role is to put all manifested nature in contact with the Eternal through the perfection of form, through harmony and a sense of ideal which uplifts and leads towards something higher.”*²⁹

*“The discipline of Art has at its centre the same principle as the discipline of yoga. In both the aim is to become more and more conscious; in both you have to learn to see and feel something that is beyond the ordinary vision and feeling, to go within and bring out from there deeper things. Painters have to follow a discipline for the growth of the consciousness of their eyes, which in itself is almost a yoga.”*³⁰

*“Supreme art expresses the Beauty which puts you in contact with the Divine Harmony.”*³¹

“Let beauty be your constant ideal.

The beauty of the soul

The beauty of sentiments

The beauty of thoughts

The beauty of the action

The beauty in the work

*So nothing comes out of your hands which is not an expression of pure and harmonious beauty. And the Divine Help shall always be with you.”*³²

*“In the world of forms a violation of Beauty is as great a fault as a violation of Truth in the world of ideas. For Beauty is the worship Nature offers to the supreme Master of the universe; Beauty is the divine language in forms. And a consciousness of the Divine which is not translated externally by an understanding and expression of Beauty would be an incomplete consciousness. But true Beauty is as difficult to discover, to understand and above all to live as any other expression of the Divine; this discovery and expression exacts as much impersonality and renunciation of egoism as that of Truth or Bliss. Pure Beauty is universal and one must be universal to see and recognize it.”*³³

On Thinking with Ideas

“Regarding the questions that will be put to the students, I would ask the teachers to think with ideas instead of with words. And, a little later, when it becomes normal for them to think with ideas, I shall ask of them a greater progress, which will be the decisive progress, that is, instead of thinking with ideas, to think with experiences. When one can do that, one really begins to understand.”

Question: “You have asked the teachers “to think with ideas instead of with words”. You have also said that later on you will ask them to think with experiences. Will you throw some light on these three ways of thinking?”

“Our house has a very high tower; at the very top of that tower there is a bright and bare room, the last one before we emerge into the open air, into the full light. Sometimes, when we are at leisure to do so, we climb up to this bright room, and there, if we remain very quiet, one or more visitors call on us; some are tall, others small, some single, others in groups; all are bright and graceful. Usually, in our joy at their arrival and in our haste to receive them well, we lose our tranquility and come galloping down to rush into the large hall which forms the base of the tower, and which is the store-room of words. Here, more or less excited, we select, reject, assemble, combine, disarrange, rearrange all the words within our reach in an attempt to transcribe this or that visitor who has come to us. But most often the picture we succeed in making of her is more like a caricature than a portrait.

“And yet if we were wiser, we would remain up there at the summit of the tower, quite still, in joyful contemplation. Then, after a certain length of time, we would see the visitors themselves descending slowly, gracefully, calmly, without losing anything of their elegance or their beauty and, as they cross the store-room of words, clothing themselves effortlessly, automatically, with the words needed to make them perceptible even in the material house.

“This is what I call thinking with ideas. When this process is no longer mysterious to you, I shall explain what is meant by thinking with experiences.”

“When you think with words, you can express what you think with those words only. To think with ideas is to be able to put the same idea in many kinds of words. The words can also be of different languages, if you happen to know more than one language.

This is the first, the most elementary thing about thinking with ideas.

“When you think with experience, you go much deeper and you can express the same experience with many kinds of ideas. Then thought can take this form or that form in any language and through all of them the essential realization will remain unchanged.”

³⁴



Classroom work



School trek - Singalila National Park 2023

On the Perfection of the Body

"The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. Sariram khalu dharmasadhanam, says the old Sanskrit adage, - the body is the means of fulfillment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.

A divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base. The soul with the basis of its life established in Matter ascends to the heights of the Spirit but does not cast away its base, it joins the heights and the depths together. The Spirit descends into Matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more and more divine."

The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinization; all is to be seized, exalted, made utterly perfect. The mind now still ignorant, though struggling towards knowledge, has to rise towards and into the supramental light and truth and bring it down so that it shall suffuse our thinking and perception and insight and all our means of knowing till they become radiant with the highest truth in their inmost and outermost movements. Our life, still full of obscurity and confusion and occupied with so many dull and lower aims, must feel all its urges and instincts exalted and irradiated and become a glorious counterpart of the supramental super-life above. The physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and the life divine assume a body divine." ³⁵



Live model drawing - Art Center

Endnotes

1	CWM 12:118	19	CWM 12:404
2	CWM 13:318/9	20	CWM 12:121
3	CWM 12:235	21	CWM 12:248
4	CWSA 26:31	22	CWSA 1:447
5	CWM 12:93	23	CWM 13:208
6	MA 9:221	24	CWM 13:197
7	CWM 12:118	25	CWM 12:251
8	CWM 12:123	26	CWSA 1:427
9	CWM 12:120	27	CWM 13:213
10	MA 8:427	28	CWM 13:212
11	CWM 12:120	29	CWM 12:234
12	CWM 12:172	30	CWM 3:105
13	CWM 12:113	31	CWM 12:234
14	CWSA 25:23	32	CWM 12:231
15	CWM 13:213	33	CWM 1:349
16	CWM 13:380	34	CWM 12:187
17	CWM 12:403	35	CWSA 13:521
18	CWM 12:248		

CWSA - Collective work of Sri Aurobindo

MA - Mother's Agenda

CWM - Collected works of The Mother

In works, aspiration
towards Perfection is
true spirituality



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