

PASSAGE

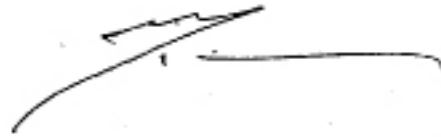
Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research, Auroville

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



AN EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY

It is not a number that we
want — it is a selection;
it is not brilliant students that
we want, it is living souls.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. H. ...', written in a cursive style.

PASSAGE

It is not a number of feet of
time it is a habit of
the mind that is the
great gain of it, know me



PASSAGE

'Living Souls'

This book is the combined effort of the students and teachers at
Last School and everybody who was involved in **PASSAGE.**

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Living Souls

An Experiment in Free Progress Education
Last School 2009



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.

“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
bring forth new ones...”

The Mother



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.

This publication, the main component of which is a photo essay, presents an experiment in **'free progress'** education from Last School, Auroville.

The core is *'Passage'* an *Installation*^o that a group of Last School teenagers created in February 2009. The installation, which took a few months of intense work, was a sort of evaluation and test, a culminating 'rite of passage', that would conclude one significant stage of the students' educational growth. Their journey, depicted in their own words with photographs of the event, attempts to capture the atmosphere, the charm and lightness of spirit, the promise of future possibilities, so evident in their work.

^o Installation: Art of three-dimensional works created to transform the perception of space.





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

The book is offered in three parts. The first summarizes in broad strokes the aspiration at the base of Auroville's educational experiments. The second, the heart of the book, is *Passage*, a practical illustration of free progress in action. The texts in this section are those the students used to guide their individual explorations. Part three delineates some lines of approach that have helped steer the teachers' team at Last School. In conclusion is a small selection of texts that could serve as luminous pathfinders to illumine the quest for an education oriented towards the future.



“If the growth of consciousness were considered as the principal goal of life, many difficulties would find their solution.”

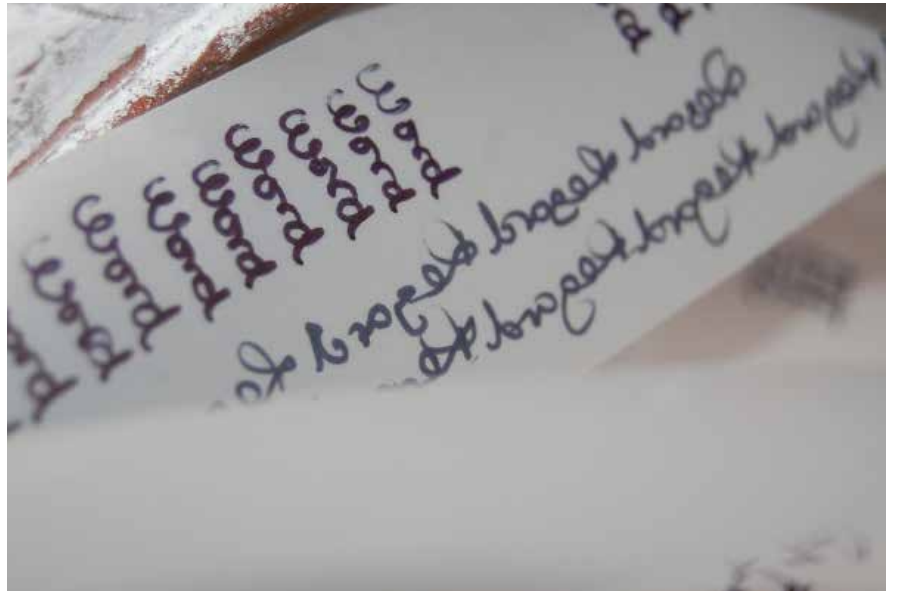


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*(To be a True Aurovilian, Auroville and the Religions,
On thinking with ideas, On Beauty, The Perfection of the Body)*



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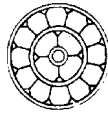
PART 1

Living Souls

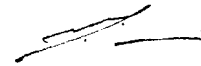
“To be practical you must first have a very clear vision of your goal, of where you are going ...But there is a long way to go between what we are and what must be. And for that we must be very flexible, never losing sight of the goal, but knowing we cannot reach it at one bound and that we must find the way.

“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.”

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 being, 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.



Dans le physique
le Divin se manifeste par
la Beauté.



“In the physical the Divine manifests as Beauty.”

Yet, there have been key elements, the pursuit of Beauty, for instance. It is no coincidence that in 1971, when Last School, the first Auroville school started in Aspiration, The Mother gave the above message. 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. 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.

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 available 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. The human being needs this enlargement and sense of uplift 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.

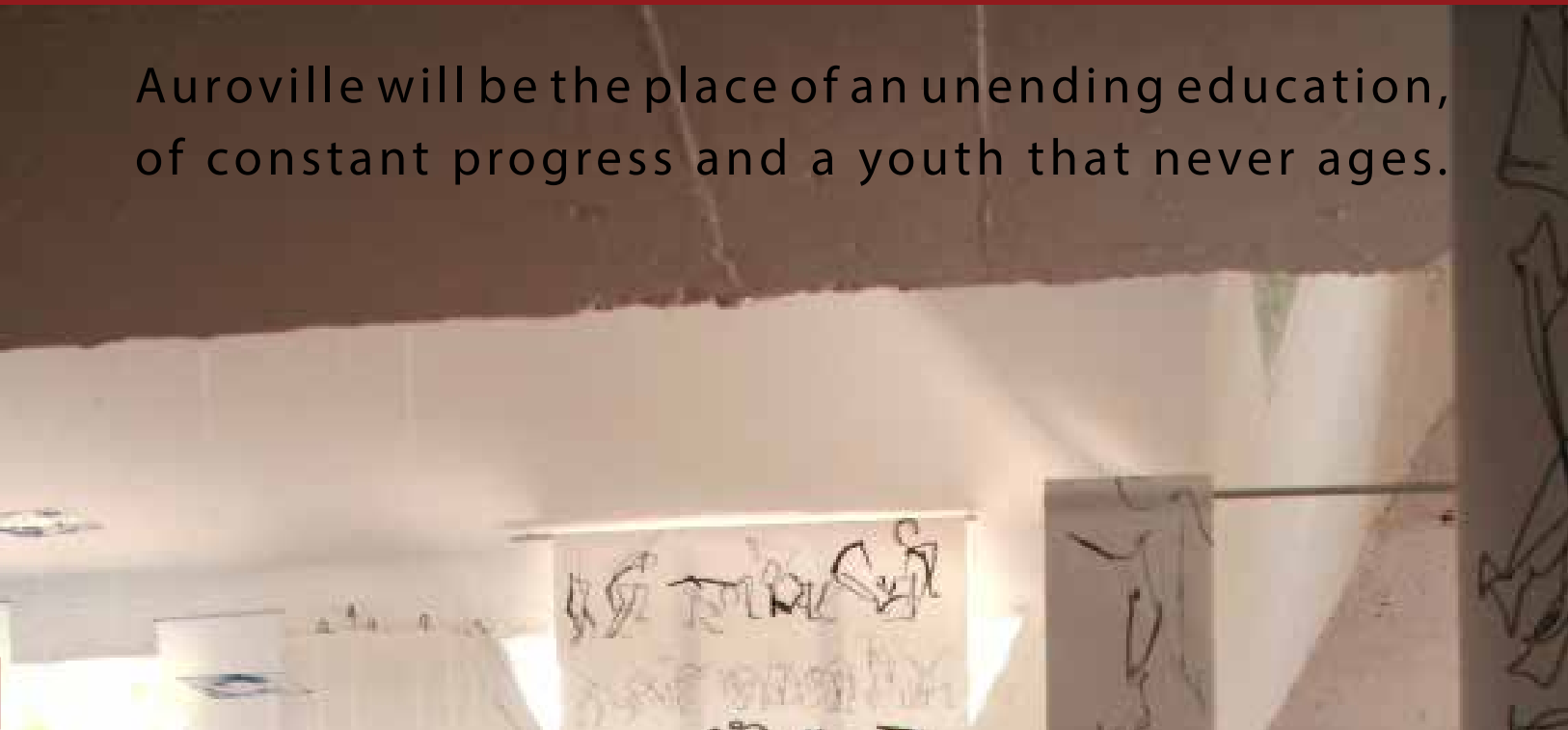
Finally, if this progression can be achieved, one may arrive at 'an unending education, a constant progress and a youth that never ages', which is the call of Auroville's Charter.

Last School 2009

Auroville sera le lieu de
l'éducation perpétuelle, du
progrès constant et d'une
jeunesse qui ne vieillit point.



Auroville will be the place of an unending education,
of constant progress and a youth that never ages.



“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.”



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.”

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 Aurovilian**^o among others, create the wholeness of vision as well as the programme of action — an individualized self-education — that every Aurovilian undertakes. Indeed, every person who chooses Auroville becomes a student of self-seeking, whether this search has awakened to awareness or not.

^o Page 116-117







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.”

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.

Last School
After School n: 1
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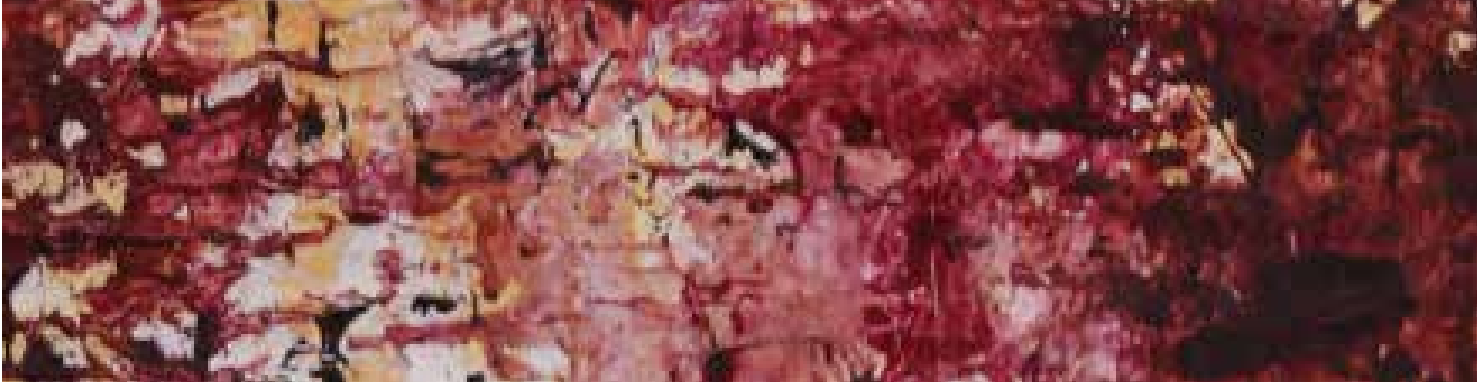
Super School
No School

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.”

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 mind set, 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.”

There is an imperative insistence on progress, a conscious progress that must arise from the deepest impulses 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.**

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."



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 Aurovilian'.



“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.”



A blue-tinted photograph of a modern interior space. The scene features several large, light-colored columns supporting a ceiling with recessed lighting. The floor is covered in a patterned rug or carpet. The word "PASSAGE" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

PASSAGE



PASSAGE

PART 2

PASSAGE

July 2003 – February 2009

The young teenagers Last School received five years ago now test their wings and prepare to venture forth into the next steps of their development. And, as we look forward we also look back. There is one continuing idea that this collectivity centered at Last School has clung to through all the ups and downs of the last two decades, the sense that The Mother's dream of an education, — "guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions and pre-conceived ideas", — is realizable. And suddenly, for no reason anticipated, just simply because it was so, we found it present in our midst, creating a programme of learning, development and action for all that was centered around this group. Each domain of learning, each significant centre of the developing human being — the field of the body; the life spirit both in its hero-quest and its beauty-seeking elements; the mind in its search for rigour and a refined discernment — all held together by a sweetness of an open heart. This has been the experience of each member of our little collectivity. And, we, teachers, and students — the lines are blurred indeed — are grateful. Perhaps it can be said with renewed faith that such an experiment can be repeated, even attempted to be generalized. Only is needed a whole-hearted choice; the mind's adherence, the life's enthusiasm.

The Teacher's Team, Last School, February 2009

“An intimation of a lurking joy”

I've reached a very interesting moment in my work and outside it: I see beauty all around me — all the time. I cannot stay angry or upset very long. Or even afraid... When I am afraid of whatever it be, I can step back and observe it. And if it still scares me, I look around, wherever I am, and I see shapes, patterns, colours, light, forms which I delight in. And I wonder how I can ever be miserable, fearful, full of hate or frustrated if I can see these daily and rejoice. I see I have been oblivious to this beauty a very long time (in the solitude of the Himalayas I'd notice it, but lose the eye for it soon after I came back); in time I will discover a lot more... But for the moment, what this journey — working on this exhibition, the circumstances that made me surpass my limits, made me explore colour — has offered me is a new way of perceiving my surroundings which fills me with incredible joy. This joy does not seem to blind me to the horrors of this world, the horrors man inflicts upon man, but brings me hope, endless hope that we can go farther still, that we can surmount all difficulties. For otherwise, why would there be so much beauty in the world?

AUREVAN



*"Pour garder l'humilité
et le sens du progrès."*

"a creation of self-creating, never conquered."






*"Now turn clear round, and seek the very source,
and that which lies before the source.
There lies your hope of strength."
Ursula Le Guin*



*"A God who cannot
smile,
could not have
created
this humorous
universe."*

Sri Aurobindo





*"... the strain of
the real constantly raised
by the tones
of the ideal."*

Sri Aurobindo

“Calm – sincerity – strength”







*"I do not know what
I may appear to the
world,
but to myself I seem
to have been only
like a boy playing
on the
sea shore, and
diverting myself,
in now and then
finding a smoother
pebble or a
prettier shell than
ordinary, whilst the
great ocean of truth
lay all undiscovered
before me."*

Sir Isaac Newton

Quelle est cette connaissance par laquelle tout ici est connu ?



*"Indifference deepen into infinity's calm
And joy laugh nude on the peaks of the Absolute."*

Sri Aurobindo



Sound of Silence

I began with exploring two ideas — 'Silence' and 'Sound'.

Silence meant for me not absence of Being but the fullness and the very space of all. Something which contained power yet was intangible. Sound was its manifest expression.

With silence came introspection; the rising above immediate surroundings, petty concerns, slowing down and turning the eye within; recognizing one's fears and limitations and choosing to step beyond them. To pull out the experience from within, to give it expression, is what I associate with sound.

The experience preparing for the exhibition was to find my way of being suddenly extended to include more subtleties, more rhythms, more plays of light, shade and colour.

Suddenly the phrase 'sound of silence' spoke deeply to me. I have a sense of making a first step into a 'passage' of endless discovery.

SHRISHTI



"An inexpressible rhythm of timeless beats."





*"A word, a laughter, sprang from Silence's breast,
A rhythm of Beauty in the calm of Space,
A knowledge in the fathomless heart of time."*

Sri Aurobindo



*"A sudden silence and a
sudden sound,
The sound above and in
another world,
The silence here and
from the two a thought.
Perhaps the heart of
God forever sings
And worlds come
throbbing out from
every note;
Perhaps His soul sits
ever calm and still
And listens to the Music
rapturously."*

Sri Aurobindo



*"Stillness,
the sound of a bird walking
on fallen leaves."*

Ryushi





*"Listen a frog
jumping into the silence
of an ancient pond."
Matsuo Basho*





*"A void, a cipher of some Secret Whole,
Where zero held infinity in its sum
And All and Nothing were a single term."
Sri Aurobindo*



*"Breaking the Silence with appeal and cry
A hymn of adoration tireless climbed,
A music beat of winged uniting souls."
Sri Aurobindo*



*"His laughter breaks out in green trees
His moments of beauty triumph in a flower."*

Sri Aurobindo



ve;j xd;iw mwpe;jhy; midj;ijAk; mwpe;jjhFk;.

Carpe Diem

The concept of Time is a big discussion in my life: to define it, explain its properties and materialize the idea. Presently, my conclusion is that time is what separates us from everything else: it separates me from what I am, from what I was, from what I will be, and from the fact that I will become the dust that you will too! It is a fundamental law — even a necessity that restrains absolute chaos — for without this law everything would be a conglomeration of past, present and future; an anarchic unity. In a way, this is the manner I approach most circumstances. I see the present as the thing to focus on. I learn from the past and do not expect too much of the future, for we can never know for certain what is to happen next. I started out with the words 'Love' and 'Dream' but then discovered what interested me more was 'Time and Dream' — for dreams transcend time and you enter an unlimited space of infinite possibilities. In a way, they are contradictory: one limitless and free; the other bound and structured. With this idea, I tried to create my work: something systematic and logical for Time; and, something light and layered for Dream.



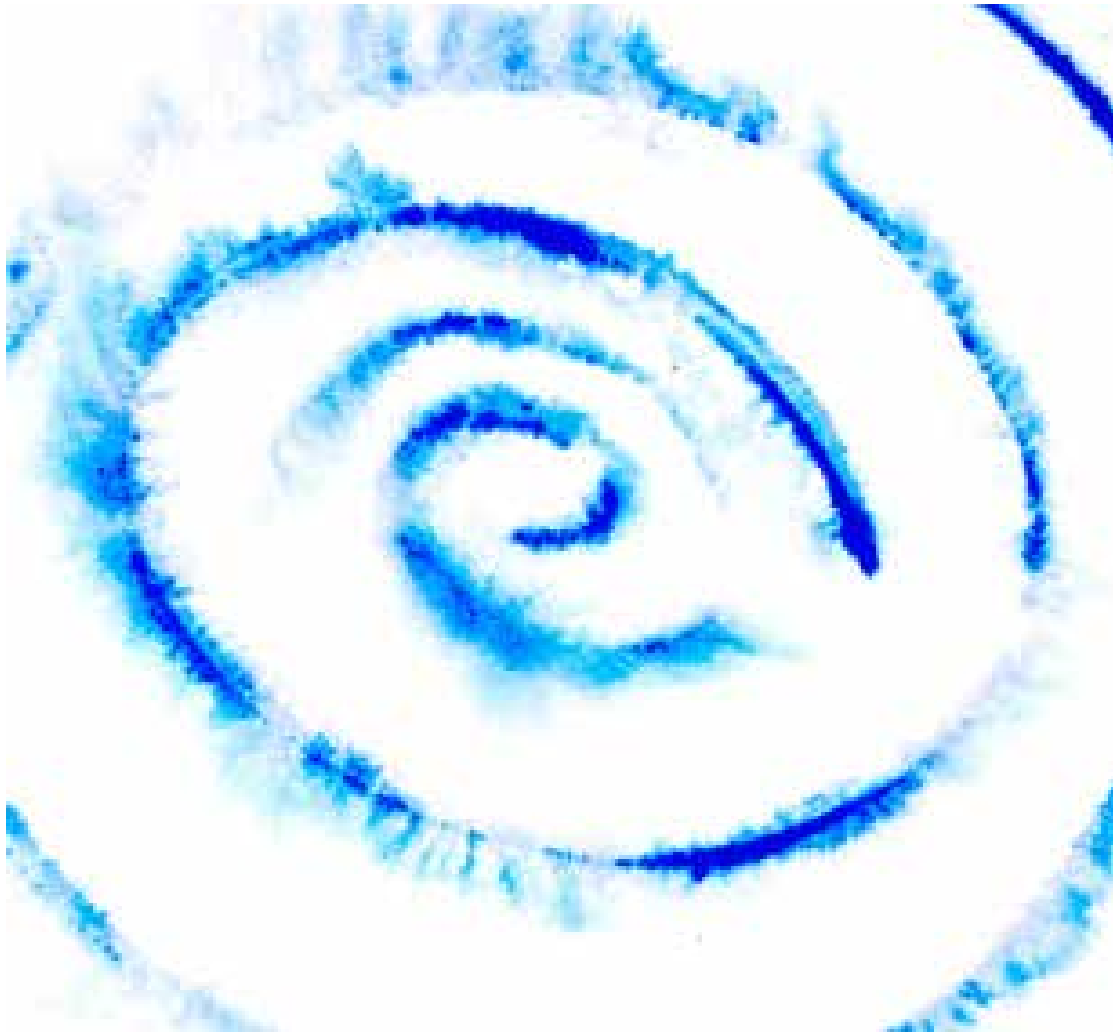
ANADI



*"I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there
My jeweled dreams of you."*

Sri Aurobindo







What is that knowing which everything here can be known?

*"Here, but here upon this
bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump a life to come."
Shakespeare*





*"For each age is a dream
that is dying
Or one that is coming to birth."
Arthur O'Shaughnessy*



*"We are the dreamers
of dreams."*





*"For who would bear
the whips
and scorns of time."
Shakespeare*



*"To die,
To sleep, to sleep, perchance to dream.
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come."
Shakespeare*



*"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of;
and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."
Shakespeare*



Essence – Nonsense

The basis of my work in a single word is: 'Change'
Individual Change — Collective Change — Transformation.

'Red', the colour of material manifestation, embodies this energy. It is fire, it is intensity. Mystically it is the colour of Union. Red is the soil of Auroville, and it holds that concentration of power I am looking for. I also explored 'Word': as essence and nonsense; meaning and absence of meaning. While working on newspapers, modern mediums of mass produced words, a babble of information and data representative of our society, a need arose to find again that sacredness and spirit of 'Word' as pure symbol of ideas and experience. And complementing 'Word' is '*Regard*' or '*Gaze*': an ephemeral yet powerful look — contained in a moment but leaving its imprint for a lifetime. These are the main threads that led me on my journey — '*Passage*'.

SMITI



*"It is with words as with sunbeams,
the more they are condensed the deeper they burn."*

Robert Southey



*"Strength in the spirit,
Wisdom in the mind,
Love in the heart."
Sri Aurobindo*

*"Lali mere lal ki
jit dekhun tit lal,
Lali dekhan main gayi
main bhi ho gayi lal."*

Kabir

*The redness of my Beloved
wherever I look I see red,
I went in search of this redness
and I myself became red.*



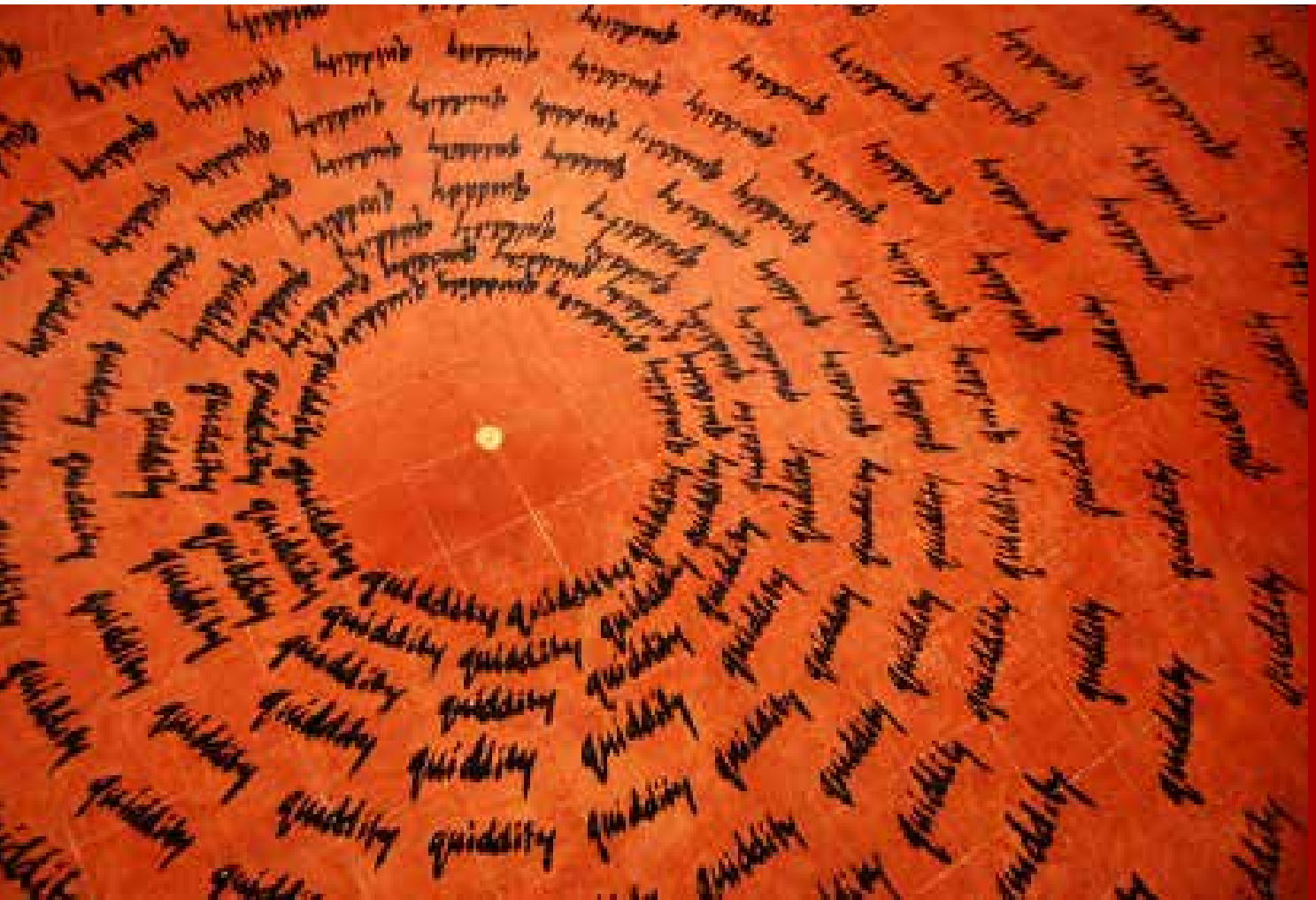


rr~ Roe~ vfl

*"This universe consists of
what that finest essence is,
it is real, it is the soul,
that thou art".*

"That Thou Art, is the key to the knowledge of the essence through the realization that our individual self is identical with the essence, which is the ultimate Reality."

The Upanishad





khw;wk *Aim* *Espoir*

kiSmn! iv}ate svRimd< iv}atm! ,





*"The Supreme's gaze looked out through human eyes
And saw all things and creatures as itself
And knew all thought and word as its own voice."*

Sri Aurobindo





"All Knowledge ended in the Unknowable."

Sri Aurobindo

“Dwell upon words, step behind them — live in the ideas they want to embody. Step behind this too and go into the experience that gives breath to language... and there, in the silence beyond words, you will find something essential!”



After word

'An intimately differentiated oneness'

The task assigned to the students had been to create an installation, covering every aspect of conceptualizing, design and planning *in situ* in the totality of available space at the Pyramids; an installation, which would demonstrate an engagement of all aspects of their being including the use of ideas, of voice and body movement in a creative harmonization. There would need to be a happy interplay between individual works and the collective space, as also an attempt at synthesis between individual improvisations culminating in a group movement.

The Pyramids, as Last School's centre for creative arts, has hosted many student expositions. But this installation was unlike previous expressions. For the many intense weeks of preparation all other classes were cancelled. The students demonstrated an extraordinary steadfastness putting in eight to ten hours every day which became seven days a week in the concluding stage — their work became a veritable tapasya of art. Individually, each had to overcome many personal obstacles and psychological incapacities, which they did through wholehearted perseverance and also a support for each other that helped carry the downhearted through moments of difficulty. The success they built was nine parts persistence and endurance.





kiSmn! iv}ate svRimd< iv}atm! ,

ve;j xd;iw mwpe;jhy; midj;ijAk; mwpe;jjhFk;.

Quelle est cette connaissance par laquelle tout ici est connu ?

What is that knowing which everything here can be known?



“The best way of not becoming old is to make progress the goal of our life.”

The students chose to call their installation: 'Passage'. The texts accompanying the photographs were those the students integrated into their installations or voiced through their self-choreographed body movements. The group being multi-lingual, many of the words were meant to connote a sense particular to a specific language be it English, French, Sanskrit, Tamil or Hindi.

Viewers were given an experience of a totality, most striking because it became much more than an art installation. The students admirably incorporated aspects of body movement, language and poetry and a sharp self-analysis in their work, even as they coordinated their effort and harmonized individual work spaces with the rest to create a single multi-faceted whole. A fineness and mature sensibility was palpable that seemed to belie their actual youth and relative inexperience.

While the four continue as students of Last School, they have conclusively demonstrated their capacity to be free self-organizing entities who will do well wherever their hearts' fire leads them.

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

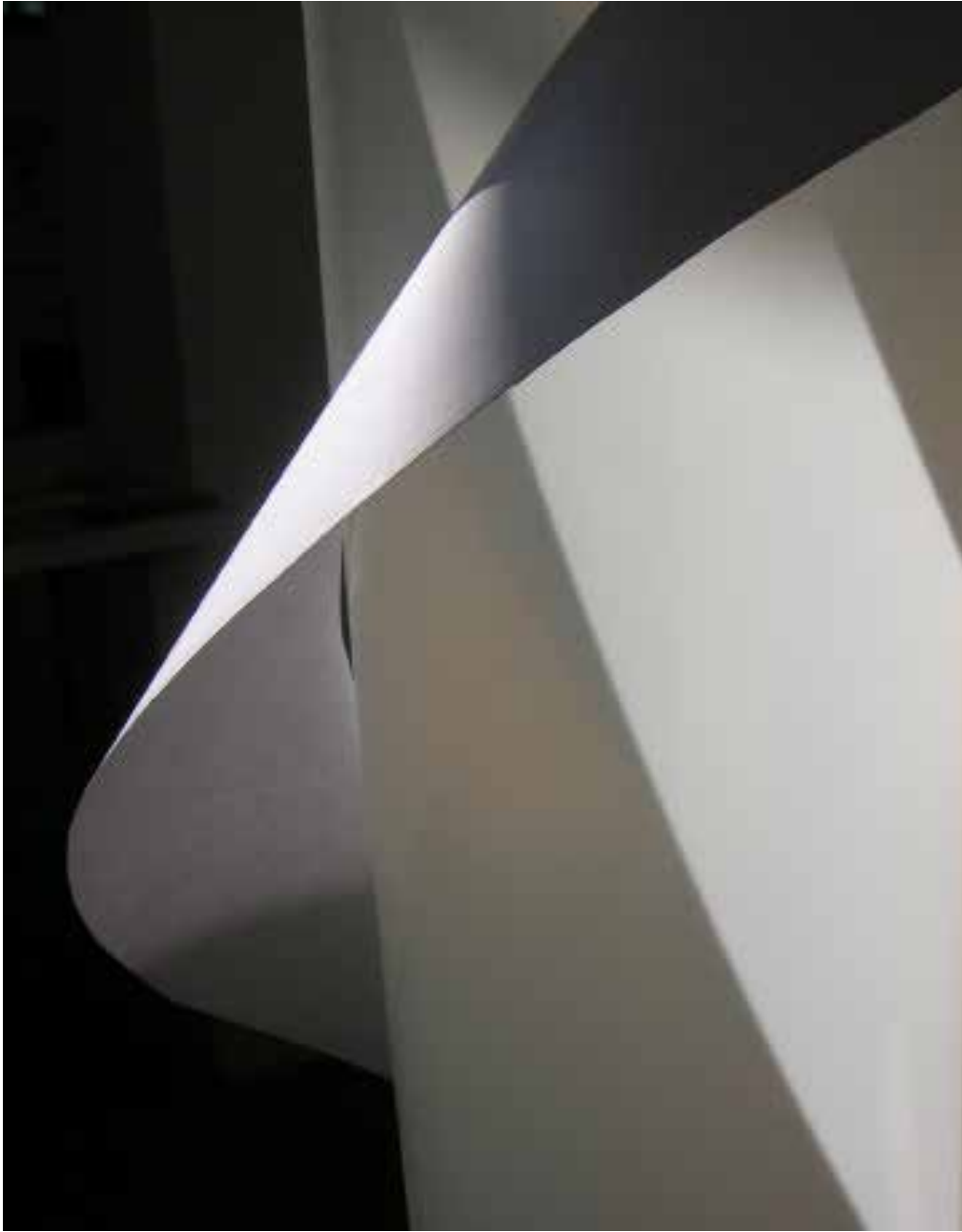


PART 3

The Instruments of Education

What are the processes of an education whose aim is the bringing forward of the inmost being — the soul entity? 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, harmony 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 impulses 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^o 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 poise of human nature.

^o full quote on 122

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 tvam 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 these pathways.

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 if the conditions of human consciousness are to change the time is ripe to generalize this psychological knowledge. 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 class room is always the adult instructor.

'is6 m6vt t6T'
t6hT 916 uoY

Is there a knowledge,
having which, all can
be known ?

An abstract painting featuring vibrant red and blue splatters and brushstrokes against a light, textured background. The red is the dominant color, appearing in various shapes and sizes, while the blue is more subtle, often appearing as thin lines or small patches. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and contrast.

'Tat tvam asi'
You are That

Is there a knowledge
having which, all can
be known?

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.

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.”

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 encourage one to see the earth body as a precious blue planet floating in space and worth preserving for 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 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.”**

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 intuitive. 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.”

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 work upon 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.”

The body is the base upon which all is built. Youth should have a firm grasp of the material field: within themselves through an understanding, physical and psychological, of their own being; as also without, of the world they perceive around them. *Padbhyam 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.”

The gift of accelerated psychological change that this science can give is the very tool required by a human mentality, arrested and bewildered by the complexity of the problems it confronts. 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 brings forward 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.”

The Veda divined in the universe a conscious mediating energy, *Agni*, the mystic fire, the leader of the march they called it, and 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 to the future.

It is this fire that has the power to shape in its flame the ‘living souls’, to hold Auroville’s aspiration for Union and Oneness.



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."

The Mother

“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.



PROGRAMME

Research through experience of the

Supreme Truth

A life divine

But

NO RELIGIONS



“PROGRAMME

Research through experience of the
Supreme Truth

A life divine

But

NO RELIGIONS”

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.” The Mother

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.”

The Mother

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.”

“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.”

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

“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.”

“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.”

The Mother

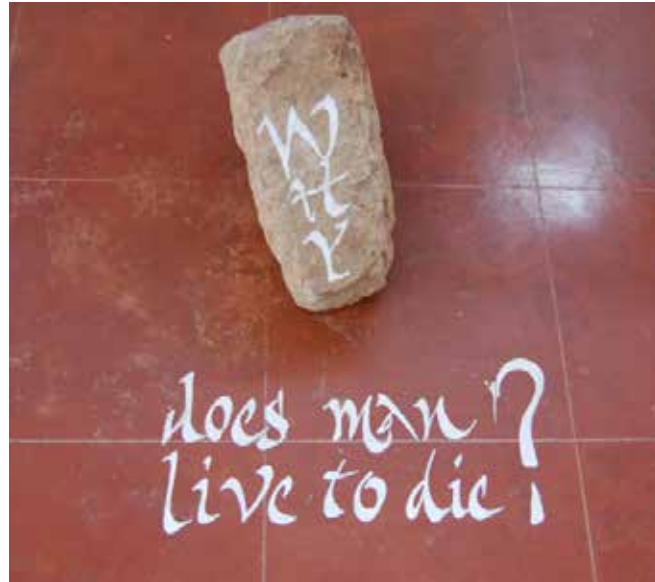
On the perfection of the body

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 the 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.”

Sri Aurobindo



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Quotations from: The Collected Works of The Mother – CWM; Mother’s Agenda – MA; Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo – CWSA.

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Preface

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15. CWM 12:120	20. CWM 13:318-19		107. CWM 12:403
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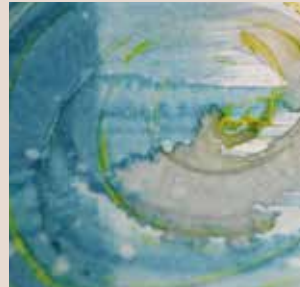
PASSAGE

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In works, aspiration
towards Perfection is
true spirituality





An Education for 'growth of consciousness and increasing perfectibility'.

Taking as significant illustration, an Art Installation, *Passage*, prepared by a group of teenage students of Auroville, Last School presents their educational growth and development. What is revealed is a vivid example of action research — a seeking into the forms of Free Progress education — an approach The Mother spoke of as 'a progress guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions and preconceived ideas'.

