

Last School

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What's inside this issue:

- A SPACE OF INTEGRALITY
- SUBTLE PATTERNS OF THE UNIVERSE
- THE SCHOOL AS A TEMPLE
- AND A DISTANT RUSTLE OF TRESS



TOWARDS SUPER SCHOOL

JEAN-YVES LUNG

As we continue to explore what could be the Education of the Future in the Auroville context, it is relevant to start with the sequence of school names that the Mother gave for the Auroville schools:

Last School
After School n:1
Super School
No School

which we can see as a map left behind for a treasure hunt, a starter kit for our quest for a truer and more integral development of the human being.



Last School

Last School can be understood as the phase where essential competences are acquired in the different parts of our instrument human nature.

After School 1:1 2 3

'After School' would be a de-schooling phase leaving the 'last' school behind, to move towards a more exploratory and experiential path in all kind of domains, in search of one's true law of progress.

Super School

This done, one is ready to enter a 'Super School' phase, marked by a more intense and integral development.

No School

'No School' then would be the phase when the whole life has become a place of unending education and constant progress.



Last School



A SPACE OF INTEGRALITY

Towards Super School

Placed in this perspective, we could define Super School as a space of integrality,

*WHERE
KNOWLEDGE,
COURAGE, HARMONY
AND PERFECTION
ARE BROUGHT
FORWARD AS THE
FOURFOLD COMPASS
OF OUR QUEST.*

A space where knowledge will be more synthetic, with a deeper understanding than just cleverly juggling with concepts and words.

A space where the vital being would develop first the capacity to face all circumstances (particularly through the triple challenge) with courage, and second a sense of harmony and beauty in forms, as well as sense of mutuality and reciprocity in dealing with life and others.

Finally, a space where care is given to matter and, to its capacity to express a harmonious order, in a spirit of service and offering of one's field of work to a higher ideal.



The condition

This is only possible if freedom is given to the students, within that demanding frame, to find their own path of integral development and follow their own line of progress,

ALONG WITH A GROWING SENSE OF BEING PART OF THE HUMAN ADVENTURE AS A WHOLE,

and exploring the conditions of a real human unity.



AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

LAST SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

A SUBTLE PATTERN OF THE UNIVERSE

SATYAVAN BHATT

Last School Workshops act as a pause in the usual rhythm of the school, a deep breath before a new term begins. They are occasions to awaken that something else, for which we are here.

A week of exploration

For the second term of the school year, the workshop was oriented towards science on the theme of 'Patterns'.

It was organised to call the attention to details, patterns, and movements we do not necessarily notice as we move through our days. Through such observations we hoped for deeper questions to quietly take root.

Through the pathways of science, students were invited into explorations that seek to refine the capacity for keen observation.

Which as it matures, allow the being to witness life's movements with a quiet clarity rather than be absorbed by them.



The approach

The primary element we focused on as we prepared this workshop was to move away from abstract formulas and to emphasize the aspect of science present in the world around us, sparking their curiosity and sense of wonder in the students.

We wished for something very tangible.

To touch, to feel, sense, to explore the wonders and structure of the scientific perspective through the angle of the senses.

ASHWIN EZHUMALAI



*A SEEKING POWER FOUND OUT
ITS ROAD TO FORM,
PATTERNS WERE BUILT
OF LOVE AND JOY AND PAIN
AND SYMBOL FIGURES
FOR THE MOODS OF LIFE.*



DAY BY DAY

Day one

The week started with a presentation on sacred geometry.

We looked at the symbolism behind the numbers one to ten and the shapes associated with them which make up the physical and psychological reality we are immersed in.

What followed was a presentation on the basic properties of sound by Riccardo from Swaram.

After snack, the students dived into a practical exercise focused on precision and logic which involved drawing the 10 shapes associated with the numbers one to ten.

Following lunch the whole school visited the sound garden and received a sound bath where we were able to experience different instruments and the sounds produced by them.

Day two

The next day the students were introduced to basic poses of Acroyoga by Damien.

Following this Jana the entomology teacher showed a documentary 'The Queen of Trees' about the symbiotic relationship between an African fig tree and its sole pollinator, the fig wasp.

She then organized an "insect treasure hunt" in the school campus.

The last two hours were experiments involving the visual effect of varying frequencies of sound waves on water and laser on screen.



Day three

The third day of the week, the whole school visited the Ashram farm in Vanur.

There, we spent the day.

Some worked in the fields, some with the cows in the dairy in order to have some hands-on work as well as to get an understanding on some patterns and basic principles of farming.

Day four

On Thursday everyone had an ATB session with Francesco following which everyone made a functioning speaker with their own hands.

The materials provided involved thick craft paper, magnets, copper wire and glue.

Once they were done assembling the speaker they tested it by connecting it to a stereo amplifier and playing some music.





The aim of this workshop was to have a balanced exposure to theory and practice, classroom work and hands-on work outdoors as well as individual and collective work which gave the opportunity to work on the mental (sound experiments, geometry, entomology, self-made speaker), the vital (sound bath, ATB, sketching and observing the refined beauty of temples), and the physical (working in the Vanur farm and Acroyoga).

Day five

On the last day, we visited the beautiful Chola era temples of Airavatesvara and Gangaikonda Cholapuram to deepen the contact with the depth and richness of Bharat.

We spent the day observing, drawing, soaking in the patterns and sculptures adorning these ancient constructions.

“THE WEALTH OF ORNAMENT, DETAIL, CIRCUMSTANCE IN INDIAN TEMPLES REPRESENTS THE INFINITE VARIETY AND REPETITION OF THE WORLDS,—NOT OUR WORLD ONLY, BUT ALL THE PLANES,—SUGGESTS THE INFINITE MULTIPLICITY IN THE INFINITE ONENESS.”



TOWARDS

INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

FIRST AN OFFERING

IN CONVERSATION WITH SATYA-KA

I have been working here for nine years. When I think of Last School, a sense of happiness comes to mind. Seeing the kids come and go, making the snacks, cleaning the books, all this gives me happiness.

Nowhere else

This is the kind of school you would find nowhere else.

Even the kids love coming here everyday. This is why I love the school.

I see the school as my home, and I take care of it as if it were so. I come here in the morning and get all the water, books, and tables ready for the day, which makes the kids happy.

An offering

The first thing we do in the morning is get flowers and arrange them for the gods and for meditation.

This makes us see the school as a temple. Only when that work is done does the day begin for us.

Otherwise, it doesn't seem like we even came to work that day.

Only after we arrange the flowers and light the candles do we feel our day will go well.

என்னைப்
பொறுத்தவரை
லாஸ்ட் ஸ்கூல்
ஒரு கோவில்

சத்யா



Now that we have a new person working with us, our work has become more relaxed.

When it was just the two of us, it was rushed and we had just the right amount of time to finish our work.

Having one more person has been a significant help.



A JOYFUL PLACE

I have been working here for five years. Before this, I worked at Shraddhanjali for twenty five years.

Tuning in

Last School is a joyful place. Whatever difficulties I face at home, seeing the children here brings me joy.

In some places, people like us are given instructions. But here, we are encouraged to tune in and do what we feel is appropriate. Because of this, even when we are given work, we do it well.

After coming here, interacting with the kids has given me more confidence to engage with people.

I LOVE THE CHILDREN. EVEN WHEN I'M TIRED, I DO WHAT I CAN FOR THEM.

SUMATHI-AKKA



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

IN CONVERSATION WITH SIVAKAMI

As I'm new to the school, the two people who have worked here longer show me around the school.

It has been three months since I joined the school. I worked at Matrimandir before this. Matrimandir was different because it was a place where I could interact with the visitors. At school, it is the kids with whom I interact.

ANY WORK THAT IS DONE WITH WILLINGNESS IS ENJOYABLE. ONLY IF THE WORK IS DONE FROM COMPULSION, IT IS NOT ENJOYABLE. I DO ANY WORK THAT IS GIVEN TO ME WITH WILLINGNESS EVEN IF IT IS SOMETHING I MUST DO.

I even like the school's name. Anyone who knows about where I work says the same and is happy to hear that I work at such a wonderful place.



A QUEST BEGINS

A Dream

IT'S COOL THAT I CAN LITERALLY REALIZE MY DREAMS IN LAST SCHOOL.

Like for example:

I've dreamed my entire life of having a piece of chainmail armour, and once in craft class after finishing a project, Victor asked me what I want to do next, and as a complete joke, I said: chainmail.

To my astonishment, Victor didn't protest, and thus we got to work.

At first, we tried to do it the traditional way, where same-sized rings are woven together.

But this type of weaving proved to be complicated, slow, and a nightmare to do on a large scale, so Victor and I came up with a different method where four rings are connected to a smaller one.

That way, the orientation of the rings doesn't matter. With the method sorted out, it was time to find a way to seal the rings so they don't open under their own weight.

At first, we tried soldering them, but that took a long time and didn't work really well.

Then Victor found a mini welding machine, and it took us some time to figure out how to use it properly, but it worked like a charm.

After a week of spinning wire onto a nail to get coils, cutting each individual ring out of the coil, and carefully welding them together, we realised that this is going to take at least five years if we used only rings, so we sat down to think again and came up with a solution: we would use primarily metal plates and use the rings only to connect them together.

Victor found some plates that were perfect for the cause, so I sat there punching holes through the metal plates so the rings could hold them.

And Lo and Behold, after a year of planning, trial, error, smoke, and burns: Armour.

EGOR TULIN



AND ON IT GOES...

I have been in Last School since my early teens, and am so very glad to still be a student today, 30 years on!

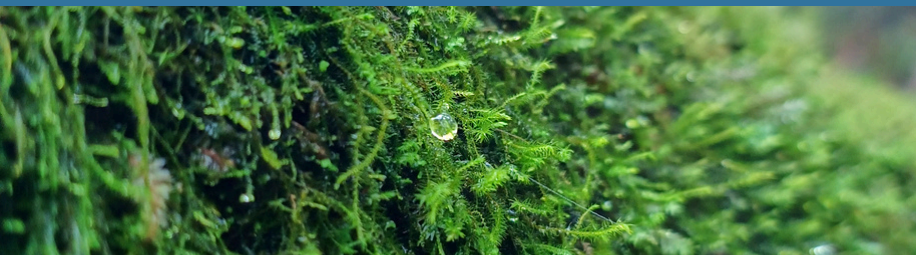
Last School's approach towards a free progress education has been such a blessing. Almost from the start I was given the chance to study subjects I was interested in, I was challenged to go beyond what I thought were my limits, both in the class room and outside of it.

I WAS ENCOURAGED TO FIND MYSELF AND BE TRUE TO MY SELF. THAT HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN EASY.

I have found over the years that every time we study, (re-)read or explore works by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother another layer is revealed, there is a different, deeper understanding. It often goes hand in hand with the stages of my inner and outer development.

I am so grateful to have been given, and to still have, the time and space to go on these discoveries with fellow Auroville adventurers. I hope for many more years of learning in Last School!

ANANDAMAYI LEGRAND



THROUGH THE HIMALAYAN FOOTHILLS

HILL AFTER HILL WAS
CLIMBED AND NOW,
BEHOLD, THE LAST
TREMENDOUS BROW
AND THE GREAT ROCK
THAT NONE HAS TROD;
A STEP, AND ALL IS SKY
AND GOD.

SILENCE AND MYSELF

ISHA MEENAKSHI

Silence — disturbed only by a distant rustle of trees — fills the misty air, and I think to myself, this is exactly what I came for.

Just out of reach

Two weeks have never felt longer. Perhaps it was the hours I spent in solitude; just me, the mountains, and occasionally the whisper of a trickling stream nearby.

*I HEAVED MYSELF UP
HILLS AS I CRUMBLLED
AND DROWNED IN
TEARS, TEARS OF
ENDURANCE; I
REFUSED TO TUMBLE
DOWN.*

Sunrise after sunrise, sunset after sunset, I breathed in the vast beauty of snow capped peaks in the far distance, and the green, fog- covered mountains that seemed just out of reach.

When I noticed myself being pulled in too deep into my pathetic puddle of sulk, I told myself two things: look up, and look around.

This made it impossible to frown.

There was no question about me reaching the top; I had no choice. The only choice I had was what I told myself. I will attain victory.

Welcomed by the warmth of our guesthouse, I burst into tears. Victory.

As I waited for my tea to cool down, for others to finish eating, or as I simply rested in bed, I brought out my cherished notebook and pens to sketch what I saw. They allowed me to step aside and notice little details and capture these moments. I am now left with drawings that bring back those memories of delight.

I'm back home now, a veteran of the mountains.

Days fly by as they did before, but now I know what I'm capable of; mentally and physically. If I did it up there, I can do it down here too.



I LEARNED HOW TO MANAGE MY TIME BETTER, HOW NOT TO GIVE UP, HOW TO KEEP GOING DESPITE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL TIREDNESS, AND HOW TO BECOME A BETTER VERSION OF MYSELF BY CONTROLLING MY MIND, MY EMOTIONS, AND MY BODY A BIT MORE WISELY.

GAIA POSADA DEL TORO

The attitude to the collective

People in our group were always ready to help in whatever way they could. A simple act of walking next to you or holding your hand, gives you a sudden boost of energy and reassurance that they're there for you.

NO ONE HAD TO BE TOLD "THE GROUP'S NEEDS COME BEFORE INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES."

Everyone embodied it and brought tremendous goodwill and spirit into the atmosphere that we ended up becoming one whole family.



The preparation

The 3-6 month training before the trek is not just to physically strengthen one's body, but also to form bonds between the group and get to know everyone, so that we can be there for each other up in the mountains.

THE SELFLESSNESS AND WILLINGNESS TO HELP THAT I WITNESSED AND RECEIVED, MARKED ME WITH AN OVERWHELMING FEELING OF GRATITUDE THAT I WILL CARRY WITH ME FOREVER.

SIMRAN SHAH



Since the beginning, I had been walking fast to be one of the first to reach the guesthouse. I wanted to prove to myself that I could push my limits.

And on one day s I chose to slow down.

I walked with my head lifted the whole time, not staring at the ground. I was actually present with the mountains, mesmerized by how beautiful everything around me was.

This walk became one of my favourites, simply because I was there, fully, quietly, without spiralling into thoughts that, in the end, were pretty useless.

I THINK THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I WALKED WITH THE MOUNTAINS, INSTEAD OF JUST PASSING THROUGH THEM.

**EILEEN CANOT
PEYRACHE**

The contrast in nature—the amazing landscapes and the peaceful energy around me while walking—while inside there was that constant noise of the mind talking about limits, which I ended up not listening to so much, because throughout the trek I maintained a mindset of resistance, continuity, and toughness.

GAIA POSADA DEL TORO





Last School

A UNIT OF SAIER, AUROVILLE

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

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

Last School
After School २:१
Super School
No School



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PHOTOGRAPHY: ASHWIN EZHUMALAI

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