

Last School

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PROGRESSIVE PERFECTION

DEEPTI TEWARI

Spirituality, Mother has said, is for man to become divine in consciousness and in action and to live inwardly and outwardly the divine life. She calls any lesser definition an imposture!

But the most common understanding of spirituality remains otherworldly; creates a separation, even an antagonism, between that which is temporal and earthly and that which is Godward and spiritual. Accepting the idea of a Life Divine realised upon earth can banish the attractions of Illusionism – the joy of the Nihil. Once and for all one may admit that becoming the king of a Nought is not as inspiring as turning this material world into a Tabernacle of Divinity.

There may have been a time when the idea of supraterrrestrial or otherworldly solutions carried force, but today, the spirit of the time seeks more comprehensive, inclusive solutions.





A Harmony of Ideas

A harmony of ideas can be established once we consciously recognize that the universe is progressive.

If we then allow that solutions cannot lie in higher siddhis or in otherworldly Nirvanas, – even the Buddha is said to have turned back at the threshold of the fathomless Zero; choosing to remain in the world till all beings were redeemed from Ignorance, – but in converting every least material thing into an expression of divinity, then life can become a wonder full of joy, meaning and purpose, and Mahasaraswati's work may proceed victoriously.

BUT ONCE WE ADMIT THIS PRINCIPLE THAT THE UNIVERSE IS PROGRESSIVE, THE UNFOLDING PROGRESSIVE, THAT INSTEAD OF SEEING EVERYTHING TOGETHER AND ALL AT ONCE, OUR PERCEPTION IS PROGRESSIVE, THEN EVERYTHING TAKES ITS RIGHT PLACE WITHIN IT. AND INEVITABLY, THE FUTURE PERFECTION MUST BE FELT AS SOMETHING HIGHER THAN WHAT WAS THERE BEFORE. THE REALISATION TOWARDS WHICH WE ARE MOVING MUST NECESSARILY SEEM SUPERIOR TO THE ONE WHICH WAS ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE. AND THIS OPENS THE DOOR TO EVERYTHING – TO ALL POSSIBILITIES.

SRI AUROBINDO OFTEN SAID THIS: WHAT APPEARED BEAUTIFUL, GOOD, EVEN PERFECT, AND MARVELLOUS AND DIVINE AT A GIVEN MOMENT IN THE UNIVERSE, CAN NO LONGER APPEAR SO NOW. AND WHAT NOW SEEMS TO US BEAUTIFUL, MARVELLOUS, DIVINE AND PERFECT WILL BE AN OBSCURITY AFTER SOME TIME. AND IN THE SAME WAY, THE GODS WHO WERE ALL-POWERFUL AT A CERTAIN PERIOD BELONG TO A LOWER REALITY THAN THE GODS WHO WILL MANIFEST TOMORROW.

AND THAT IS A SIGN THAT THE UNIVERSE IS PROGRESSIVE.

THIS HAS BEEN SAID, THIS HAS BEEN REPEATED, BUT PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND, WHEN IT CONCERNS ALL THOSE GREAT AGES, THAT THEY ARE LIKE A REDUCTION OF THE UNIVERSAL PROGRESS TO THE HUMAN MEASURE.

THAT IS WHY IF ONE ENTERS THE STATE IN WHICH EVERYTHING, AS IT IS, APPEARS PERFECTLY DIVINE ONE NECESSARILY GOES OUT OF THE UNIVERSAL MOVEMENT AT THE SAME TIME. THAT IS WHAT PEOPLE LIKE BUDDHA OR SHANKARA HAD UNDERSTOOD. THEY EXPRESSED IN THEIR OWN WAY THAT IF YOU COULD REALISE THE STATE IN WHICH EVERYTHING APPEARS TO YOU PERFECTLY DIVINE OR PERFECTLY PERFECT, YOU NECESSARILY GO OUT OF THE UNIVERSAL MOVEMENT AND ENTER THE UNMANIFEST.

THIS IS CORRECT. IT IS LIKE THAT.

THEY WERE SUFFICIENTLY DISSATISFIED WITH LIFE AS IT WAS AND HAD VERY LITTLE HOPE THAT IT COULD BECOME BETTER. SO FOR THEM THIS WAS THE IDEAL SOLUTION. I CALL IT ESCAPING, BUT STILL ... IT IS NOT SO EASY! BUT FOR THEM IT WAS THE IDEAL SOLUTION – UP TO A CERTAIN POINT, FOR ... THERE IS PERHAPS ONE MORE STEP TO TAKE.

BUT IT IS A FACT. IF ONE WANTS TO REMAIN IN THE UNIVERSE, ONE MUST ADMIT THE PRINCIPLE OF PROGRESS, FOR THIS IS A PROGRESSIVE UNIVERSE. IF YOU WANT TO REALISE A STATIC PERFECTION, WELL, YOU WILL INEVITABLY BE THROWN OUT OF THE UNIVERSE, FOR YOU WILL NO LONGER BELONG TO ITS PRINCIPLE.

IT IS A CHOICE.

ONLY, SRI AUROBINDO OFTEN USED TO SAY:

PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE THE EXIT FORGET THAT AT THE SAME TIME THEY WILL LOSE THE CONSCIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THEY COULD CONGRATULATE THEMSELVES ON THEIR CHOICE! THEY FORGET THAT.

A Transmutation of Life

But achieving this progressive transmutation of mind, life and body is the most difficult of all things.

It is not for nothing that all other great paths to divinity have seen it as impossible and chosen rather to escape to other-worldly perfections.

Human nature has been compared to a dog's tail – straighten it ever so much as you will, it returns to its original curl. But it is this curl, this return to type that Sri Aurobindo and Mother want to reverse once and for all. They never minimise the difficulty of the task.

Yet where might we begin?

To Know Oneself

To know ourselves – something that is completely in the hands of each of us – is the simplest and most obvious key in any effort for progress. Instead of worrying about the progress or lack of it in others, we need to concentrate upon ourselves.

This is the material field that is wholly in our hands, in our control, and we can do with it whatever we will.

Either we use the lifetime given us to grow, to progress and reach our highest destiny.



Either we break even those limits through the sheer power of our aspiration; we take the tide at its flood and sail deep into the universality that is our future potential, or we dawdle in the ebb waters of self-centeredness and waste a lifetime.

The choice is ours.

The paradox here is that one can really progress best by surrender: by turning each thought, movement, action of our being into an offering to the highest Truth.

And when we rigorously and minutely surrender to the light the substance that is gathered within our small individuality we make our best contribution to the totality of the macrocosm.

The first thing to do is to scrutinise every corner of our being as if with a microscope. This reordering and illuminating ray is the characteristic action of the Mahasaraswati power within us. We have only to call her forward and surrender to her this field that is given us as our own.



PLATO, ARISTOTLE AND SRI AUROBINDO'S SYMBOL

JEAN-YVES LUNG

Plato and Aristotle, who lived in fourth-century BCE Athens, had two very different approaches to conceiving and organising the collectivity, approaches that may find an echo in the debates taking place in Auroville today.

Can Sri Aurobindo offer a way to reconcile them?

And can their reconciliation offer the key to a new creation?

For Plato, the city, the polis, must first be conceived by philosopher-kings, for only those who possess knowledge are fit to rule. They discover its ideal pattern through Reason, which perceives the truth of things. This pattern must then be translated into life, ideally through education, from the top down, as the expression of a true order that Plato calls Justice.

For Aristotle, initially a student of Plato, the collectivity is a community of people, a *koinōnia*, united by a common purpose. They realise this purpose through mutual assistance and collaboration, allowing the community to take shape organically, from the bottom up, through the quality of the relationships among its members as they seek the common good.

They also share two important features: the importance of integral education and the recognition of a Good that transcends individual egoism. Both are essential to the formation of an ideal collectivity.

We thus have, on the one hand, the ideal city descending from a transcendent vision and, on the other, a collectivity working towards a common ideal through interaction and mutual collaboration. It does not take long to see that each contains what is missing in the other, and that they need one another to achieve their full potential.

FOR ALL
PROBLEMS OF
EXISTENCE ARE
ESSENTIALLY
PROBLEMS OF
HARMONY.

THEY ARISE
FROM THE
PERCEPTION OF
AN UNSOLVED
DISCORD AND
THE INSTINCT
OF AN
UNDISCOVERED
AGREEMENT OR
UNITY.



Without the Platonic dimension, a community may lack a sufficiently clear vision of what it is trying to realise. Without the Aristotelian dimension, an ideal can become abstract and detached from the actual people who must embody it. A synthesis would require a reciprocal relationship between the discovery of a common ideal and the living process through which a collectivity understands, tests and embodies it.

This brings to mind the two triangles in Sri Aurobindo's symbol. At first sight, they appear to point in opposite directions and might therefore seem to exclude one another. Yet only when the two triangles intersect and include one another do they become effective and give rise to something more: a new form, the square of manifestation.

The task, then, is to bring the ideal city to life by embodying it in the living relationships of a collectivity working towards a common ideal. This seems to offer the most promising way forward,

*TOWARDS A MUTUAL
KNOWLEDGE AND THE SENSE
OF THEIR MUTUAL NECESSITY
AND TOWARDS A
PROGRESSIVELY RIGHT
RELATION AND SYNTHESIS OF
THEIR POTENTIALITIES...*

Sri Aurobindo

The Ideal of Human Unity

Chapter XVII



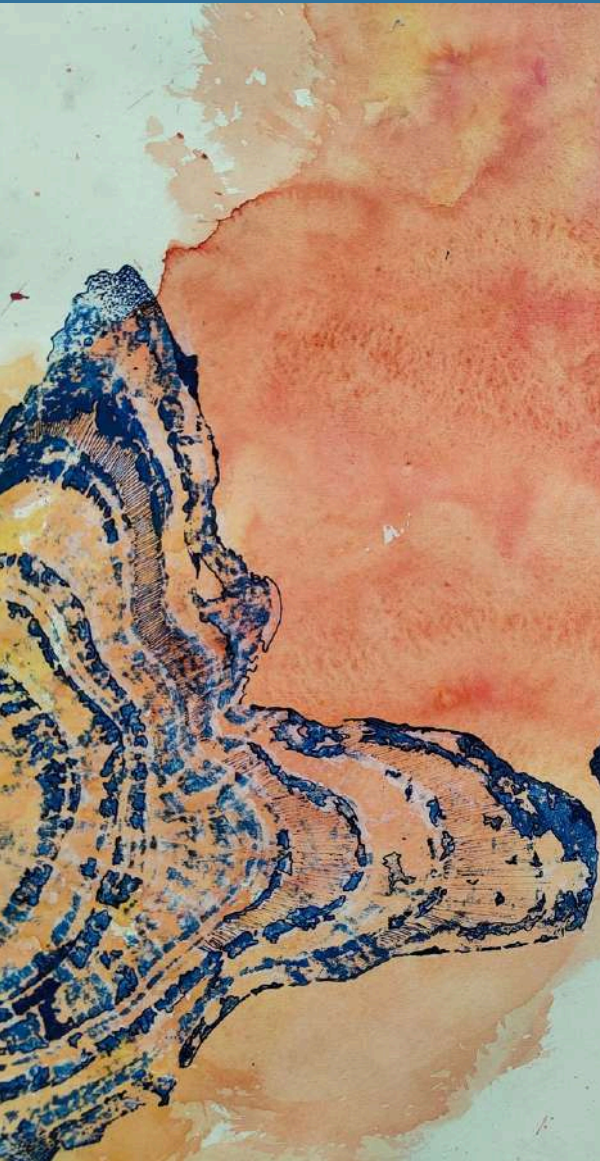
THE STEP FORWARD HUMANITY MUST TAKE IMMEDIATELY IS A DEFINITIVE CURE OF EXCLUSIVISM.

THAT'S WHAT IS, IN ACTION, NOT ONLY THE SYMBOL BUT ALSO THE EFFECT OF DIVISION AND SEPARATION. THEY ALL SAY, "THIS AND NOT THAT" - NO, THIS AND THAT, AND THIS TOO AND THAT TOO, AND EVERYTHING AT THE SAME TIME. TO BE SUPPLE ENOUGH AND WIDE ENOUGH FOR EVERYTHING TO BE TOGETHER.

THAT'S WHAT I KEEP KNOCKING MYSELF AGAINST AT PRESENT, IN EVERY FIELD - EVERY FIELD.... IN THE BODY TOO. THE BODY IS USED TO, "THIS AND NOT THAT; THIS OR THAT, THIS OR THAT ..." - NO, NO, NO: THIS AND THAT.



LAST SCHOOL WORKSHOPS



WHAT I ENJOY ABOUT THIS IS IT'S
RATHER INTUITIVE. I TAKE MY STICKS, I
CREATE SOMETHING THAT I FIND
INTERESTING, KIND OF INTUITIVE, AND
PLACE MY PAPER ON TOP WITH A
PENCIL, HOLD IT STILL. THIS TECHNIQUE
IS IN FRENCH CALLED FROTTAGE.

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT IS IN ENGLISH.
AND I AM SEARCHING FOR THOSE LINES.

AND TERMITES INSPIRE RELIEF

SHONA

Each new term Last School begins with a new exhibition and weeklong workshop. This term we approached mixed media printing with sticks, then leaves, then slices of wood on paper. To invite the reader into the workshop, this issue's article has been directly extracted from transcripts of instructions and conversations during the workshop.

The invitation

Remember, you're trying to build a pattern, a composition, something that works throughout the whole paper. When you search for a printing, you need the time to rub and then surprise and review. Or with a different shape.

You repeat, you find it. This is a little easier for you because you can select more accurately where you want it.

You hold it in place and you use the spoon carefully, rub and push that through.

KEEP CHANGING THE
POSITION. CHOOSE ONE,
SEE HOW IT WORKS.
CHOOSE ANOTHER,
SEE HOW IT
WORKS.

Feel free to continue to rework until you are having a bold picture that you're somewhat confident and pleased with the composition. How does it feel? What are the full areas, what are the empty areas?

These are all experiments that will be leading you to using different things.



Exploring interactions

You may discover,

"Oh, I really don't like the pencil."

You may discover that,

"Oh, if I print something with wall paint and then go with watercolor over, the wall paint pushes or repels the watercolor, so I still see my print underneath and the watercolor just fills in around."

You may discover if you use oil pastel, oil pastel and water push each other away.

You will have some interesting interactions between the mediums there as well.

Elements or patterns?

If you're somebody who's like,

"Oh, what I want is a fixed pattern."

I don't want the printing of individual leaves."

You may collect wood and cardboard on the material table and create a fixed pattern using glue.

So, it begins

Now we're going to have fun.

You have the instructions. Yes. Find your label and your name tag. Go and collect paper from the paper table. If you need water, go and get a jar of water. Collect your sticks and then you sit down with your paper.

I invite everybody to do this.

You can use as many as you want.

SO GO AHEAD, GO AHEAD.

IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE TABLE IS WELL KEPT, CLEAN, BEFORE LUNCH AND AT THE END OF THE DAY. AND AN ADDITIONAL PERSON IN EACH AREA WHO WILL BE A HELPING HAND IN THE PRINTING TABLE.

THIS IS A WAY TO SHOW YOU HOW TO BECOME RESPONSIBLE AS A COLLECTIVE FOR THE SCHOOL.

“WE ARE BOUND
IN OUR
THOUGHTS
WHERE WE
HOLD
OURSELVES
FREE”



HOW IT BEGAN?

I'll tell a little story. I work in the forest. For some 10 to 12 years, I did a lot of tree cutting and selling wood. And if the centre of the tree had some rot, which we call in local Tamil *panji*, the people buying the timber wouldn't be happy. They would want a discount.

I didn't like to give discount. So I would cut off half a foot or a foot, depending on how much rot there was. And if it wasn't good, I would cut off another slice. And so in my wood yard and in my garden and around my trees, I have a big collection of what I call "biscuits", which are these slices of wood. And I put them around fruit trees as mulch.

AND OVER TIME, THE TERMITES HAVE EATEN THAT ROT AND IT HAS LEFT THESE WOOD GRAIN PATTERNS WHICH YOU SEE. I FIND THEM SO BEAUTIFUL. AND I THOUGHT, 'WHAT CAN I DO WITH THAT?'

So I did some research and I found this technique of artists sandpapering wood slices, burning them, brushing them with wire brushes to reveal the wood circles. Because each circle ring, as it were, burns — some are softer and some are harder, so some will burn more in and others will retain their shape. So by burning them, you create the relief which you see.

That was the starting point of the workshop. So in fact, it's from the termites, the inspiration. And I'm very grateful.

Thank you.

“A FINE DEGREE IN
WONDER'S HIERARCHY,
THE KINGDOM OF
SUBTLE MATTER'S
FAERY CRAFT

OUTLINED
AGAINST A SKY
OF VIVID HUES,
LEAPING OUT OF A
SPLENDOURTRANCE AND
HAZE,
THE WIZARD
REVELATION OF ITS
FRONT
A KINDLING
RAPTURE JOINS
THE SEER AND SEEN:
THE CRAFTSMAN AND THE
CRAFT GROWN INLY ONE
ACHIEVE PERFECTION BY
THE MAGIC THROB
AND PASSION OF THEIR
CLOSE IDENTITY.



Words of a student...

"I feel like my first word would be roots, because the first few days felt like just like everywhere, it's like working under the ground and kind of exploring and seeing what works, what doesn't work, what's really bad, what kind of works."

And another...

"The workshop itself mostly for me was really seeing that there really is a way. And I think that even all the pains and everything, it was mostly just an absence of will. And I'm very grateful that at least over the course of the five days, by the end, there was a will. It was very interesting to see that in myself, how much of a difference that makes."

And another....

"NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TRY TO DRAW SOMETHING, NATURE DOESN'T CARE."



And another....

"A LOT, A LOT OF GRATITUDE TO SHONA. NOT JUST FOR ORGANIZING THE WORKSHOP, WHICH IN ITSELF, ORGANIZATION IS SUCH A TOUGH THING, BUT THE JOYFULNESS WITH WHICH SHE'S HAD THIS WORK THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER. THIS HAS BEEN JUST SO, SO WONDERFUL TO LOOK AT."



Concluding the workshop

You made it to the end, stuck to it, got through, even if it was difficult or you lost concentration or you had a disaster and you messed up your piece, which there seemed to be a lot of yesterday afternoon. Our final pieces were getting ruined at the last moment, but somehow we found solutions and it all came together really well.

I have to say that I really appreciate the harmony that I find throughout the works, the same elements are appearing everywhere, and yet each one is so different.

It's kind of like a reflection of society, of people. We all have things that are the same and things that are so different. And the unique combination of our elements is what makes us us.

But when we make these exercises, a set assignment like this, in which you're only allowed to use this, this or this, and yet everybody finds a totally different way to approach it, that's really nice to see.

And there's a wonderful harmony both in shape as well as in colour.

I'm very positively surprised by all of you.

So thank you for this week.



INTEGRATING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS DISCIPLINES



AND IF ANYTHING WERE POSSIBLE?

EILEEN

Student of Last School

Schedule making in an learning space which aspires towards Free Progress can be challenging. We wish for each to pave their own path, and yet have found that collective explorations as well as a sense of structure aids most students in their growth. This year, the students' number is a little reduced, and the group wonderfully dynamic and motivated... thus an experiment we had not done in over a decade was taken up again:

Surprise!?

We started an experimental week right after the art workshop. It was to add some diversity to our usual schedules. We did common sports activities followed by self driven hours and group classes.

It was supposed to last the school week; but at the end of the first day, Aurevan and Fanny announced that there was a change of plan.

They had found a better way for us to experience a new schedule: we were, for the next four days, to recreate the schedules from scratch! We could modify everything about them—at least in theory. We were to do that all together, twenty students. And I won't lie, I got scared.

I had heard about the complexity of schedule making.

But the excitement of a new challenge won against dread; we were diving in uncharted waters. I saw an invitation to step out of my comfort zone and progress.

Over that week I witnessed for the first time the student body behaving like an actual collective; there was a real bridge between the older students and the newer ones. We were previously acting as separate groups that had little interaction with one another, but this exercise taught us the strength of a whole.

As we slowly found our footing, we started to understand what our role was in that new collective and what type of organization it needed.



Organising a collective

Some of us were drawn towards leading and came up with different ways to go forward, as well as learnt how to communicate them with others. I was part of that group. We understood that we didn't want to impose our approach on the school.

We wanted to have a safe space where we all listened and took care of one another, and at the same time moved the exercise forward.

We created a small-scale democracy, and we saw how it crumbled as well. The effort that was put into making all major decisions together with the school, discussing them until we could all find an agreement, fell apart when one student made a decision on their own, which overnight, changed the whole course of the exercise.

Suddenly we didn't have to figure out the puzzle of schedule-making, it had been solved for us.

*I FIND THE REACTION THIS
CREATED MOST INTERESTING;*

a majority of the students were relieved that it was done, that we didn't need to break our heads over it anymore.

Another small part of the student body, mainly the one that was leading, felt otherwise.

I was one of those, I had thought that we had all agreed on certain values for our collective, but when they got disregarded, when I realized that an individual had made a decision for me, my ego threw a tantrum.

*ONCE THE STORM HAD
PASSED, I RESOLVED TO
ACCEPT THE SITUATION, TAKE
A STEP BACK, AND OBSERVE
THE LINKS BETWEEN OUR
EXERCISE AND THE WIDER
WORLD.*

Zooming out

Let's take a general case: in a place where the present is uncomfortable, the future uncertain, and new leadership unstable, an individual—whether intentionally or not—takes all the power through a single action, solving the issue of uncertainty.

Humans hate being stripped of their freedom, but they also flee uncertainty.

So, will the people be relieved, or will they object?

As I looked further into social psychology, I found that this dilemma appeared in different forms throughout history. I began to think of it as the 'Authoritarian Savior Paradox': when uncertainty becomes uncomfortable enough, people may accept an autocratic leadership and be relieved at the stability it provides. But at the same time, people may oppose and fight to get their freedom back.

In the four days that this exercise lasted we seem to have involuntarily recreated this paradox, but my observations didn't stop here: This week still had so much to teach me.

Paths we took

From the old leading group, not everybody decided to stay active in the collective; some fully stepped back, and decided their role was done.

I enjoyed being part of the leadership and what it taught me, so I continued to help finish the timetables. I could still play a part in the collective.

*IF PREVIOUSLY THINGS HADN'T GONE THE
WAY I WANTED THEM TO GO,*

*I WAS READY TO THROW MYSELF
BACK INTO THAT ROLE WITH NEW
QUESTIONS.*

*QUESTIONS THAT CHALLENGED
THE CORE OF OUR
APPROACH.*

NEW FORMS ARE
NEEDED FOR THE
MANIFESTATION
OF A NEW FORCE.





Patterns or missing the point?

Jean raised the first one; he underlined that even though we had total freedom over what the schedule could become, we still settled for the same type of timetable as before.

This intrigued me.

Were we stuck in our old patterns? Once that task was given to us we completed it the way we knew Fanny did it.

I began to wonder how the schedule could be recreated with a different approach.

Jean-Yves happened to give the answer away; he too had noticed something: it seemed that we had forgotten about progress in our schedules.

Indeed, we hadn't set the intention of progress before we started the exercise. We were more focused on how we got it. But progress was the very core of Last School.

So how could we create a schedule that helped us progress the most?

And Progress?

A group of students was formed. We were interested in finding new ways, ways to make progress intentional. We discussed what progress meant, how we could create a schedule which would foster it more.

We had many ideas at first; we wanted to create team sports hours, as well as club timings for us to help each other with diverse skills, a movie club to watch and discuss the topics raised by those movies...

WE WANTED TO BRING THE SCHOOL TOGETHER AS WE HAD SEEN DURING THE LAST WEEK HOW MUCH POTENTIAL A COLLECTIVE HAD TO HELP US GROW.

BUT THOSE IDEAS WERE ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR OUR UNCHANGED SCHEDULE, WE HADN'T MANAGED TO QUESTION THE ESSENCE OF IT.

For that we needed a more diverse group, the current one consisted mostly of newer students, we needed people with a better understanding of the school and its values.

Intensity or diversity?

As the exercise neared its end, I sat down with Aurevan, and she was full of ideas which modified the core of our current schedules.

Ideas of growth through intensity rather than diversity of subjects. Yet, the week was drawing to an end and the schedules were almost done, so we decided to keep those ideas for a next term to experiment with.

Looking back at the term...

Overall during the three months that followed students didn't want to drop out of classes mid term as much.

WE HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE DECISIONS AND NOW TOOK RESPONSIBILITY WHEN WE WEREN'T HAPPY WITH OUR CLASSES.

I personally found the week of immense interest and I learned various skills and a lot about myself.

But most importantly I found a voice, which was loud enough to be heard but that didn't drown everything else.

LET US ADVANCE ALWAYS, WITHOUT STOPPING, TOWARDS AN ALWAYS MORE COMPLETE MANIFESTATION, AN ALWAYS MORE COMPLETE AND HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS.

CONSCIOUSNESS BASED PSYCHOLOGY

DEEPTI TEWARI

This semester a group of teenager chose to be a part of a class that explored questions such as:

What is Consciousness?

How does it express itself in human psychology?

What makes us human?

Why are humans the most dissatisfied of living beings upon earth?

Is this dissatisfaction a secret power or a great handicap?

In this freewheeling exploration every field of human endeavour, of society, culture, of religion, of science can offer up insights. At the very start, and to deepen the quest, the students were asked to write essays upon two core questions:

Who Am I?

What is my purpose?



“PSYCHOLOGY IS THE SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS; IT IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF ITS NATURE, ITS PROCESSES AND THE AIM OR RESULTS OF ITS PROCESSES, ITS LAW OR LAWS OF BEING, ITS HABITAT AND INSTRUMENTS, ITS WHAT, WHY, WHERE, WHENCE AND WHITHER.”

“DROP ALL
FEAR, ALL
STRIFE, ALL
QUARRELS,
OPEN YOUR
EYES AND YOUR
HEARTS—THE
SUPRAMENTAL
FORCE IS
THERE.”

WHAT IS MY PURPOSE?

THE ELEMENT OF CHOICE

KASHVI

What is my purpose? It's a question that brings out an endless river of follow up questions. What is purpose? How can we know we have one? Do we have one or multiple? There can be my purpose and then The Purpose.

The Purpose

The purpose is something that comes from a higher power, something from the beyond. Which can have multiple roles and can be complex. I don't know what The purpose is. I believe it has not revealed itself to me. Not clearly at least. Can I even know in my lifetime what The purpose is?

IT'S SAID THAT WE ARE ALL SOULS.

We come to earth and take these bodies to evolve. It is in our nature to evolve. That idea has never quite sat right with me. There is a good chance it's my ego saying what it says best.

The I, me and myself. But I can not say authentically that my purpose is to evolve because my soul came to this body to do so. I have not come to that realization on my own and if I say it, it will be untrue for me. I do not know what I am meant to do in this world that was already written.

On the other hand, My purpose is the purpose I give myself.

I can choose what I want it to be, keeping in mind that choice, may be all maya (illusion). The purpose I will have will be stale. Don't need to bring a storm but just a rain drop in the right place is enough.

It's to love, It's to create intentionally, It's to nurture relationships, cook good food and take care of the world and its beings, to express myself.

Today the purpose I give myself means more to me than The purpose that is meant for me. Which will reveal itself when the time comes. I see my role is to be open to The purpose. When I say my purpose is this, it may be the two different kinds of purpose calling for each other. It may be that The purpose has been told to me and I forgot. It has been shown to me and I don't remember.

ALL
OUR LIFE,
ALL OUR WORK
MUST BE A
CONSTANT
ASPIRATION
TOWARDS THE
SUPRAMENTAL
PERFECTION.

EACH NEW
PROGRESS IN
THE UNIVERSAL
EXPRESSION
MEANS THE
POSSIBILITY
OF A NEW
MANIFESTATION.

WHEN THE
SUPRAMENTAL
MANIFESTS, AN
UNEQUALLED
JOY SPREADS
OVER THE
EARTH.





Now it lives within me as intuition. That is what comes out in the purpose I give myself.

One of the words for human beings in Hindi is *vyakti*. I see it as the one expressing or acting as the manifestation of life. It can seem like it talks about reprobating. Keeping the human race alive.

I, as a child, am an expression of my parents. Parenthood is not the only way this works. I am expressing myself in the way I talk, walk, create and in the very embodiment of being. That is my purpose. To express myself in this life. I myself am an expression and perhaps something higher expresses through me too as I am also a vessel.

What I have thought is my purpose has evolved throughout my life and will keep outgrowing my idea of purpose. I will stay open to it and let it reach me and welcome it with open arms.

If the purpose is a musical piece. That means I need to go within and fine-tune the extraordinary instrument and the song of purpose will be played clearly to myself.

FOUR TYPES OF PURPOSE

What is my purpose in life? After some reflection on the question, I came to the conclusion that there are four different types of purposes. They became very clear to me and made it a lot easier to answer the question. It is an understanding that will shift and grow with me, I am sure.

The most encompassing purpose I found is the Divine Purpose. It is the reason why all things exist—a purpose so great that my mind could probably never grasp it. I doubt it is even knowable, even though humanity has come up with theories. This is the purpose of everything's existence.

In the world of matter, beings such as plants, animals, and humans have a biological purpose conveyed by Nature. It is to evolve and be as adapted as possible to our environment. (This is exactly where my grandpa's answer to the question of purpose lies: procreation is how beings evolve. He only had a sense of biological purpose.)

I find that in human beings, the need to progress and grow is strongly related to that biological purpose.

And I very much do relate to it: the first answer that came to my mind when the question was asked was progress. But after some contemplation, it seemed too broad and general—not the full purpose of my life.

The next purpose is what I call our soul purpose. It is the reason why our particular soul is in the manifested world—what work it is here to undertake.

If I were to give a metaphor to understand this purpose better, it would be the direction of our life—not the paths we choose to walk, but where all those paths will inevitably lead us.

In my life, it is guiding me subtly and will continue to do so until I have built a stronger connection with my psychic center.

I AM QUITE CERTAIN IT IS WHAT DIRECTED ME TO AUROVILLE.

And although I can feel its presence, I have not yet deciphered it.



The last purpose I see is the individual purpose. In my metaphor, it is the paths each of us chooses to follow. A great tool for choosing those paths is the mind, especially the ego.

As the Mother said, the more malleable the mind is, the less this individual purpose will be superficial. I think this purpose can be in great resonance with our soul purpose and take us straight to it without divergences. I find the individual purpose both the least and the most important of them all. We are such small and seemingly unimportant creatures in the face of all the universes, but without an individual purpose, humanity would not exist—our capacity for individuality makes us human. Yet it is that same individuality that created the world we live in, quite a cruel world.

In conclusion, if I am asked what my life's purpose is, for me it means: what is my soul purpose and my individual purpose? (Since the other two are givens.) To answer that question, I find it particularly important to work in tandem with that soul purpose. I do not fully know what either my individual or soul purpose is, and I feel it will come with time. So for the moment, I focus on the things that bring meaning to my life, and eventually, that will bring me a sense of a higher purpose.

Those things are to paint, learn, discover, solve geometry problems, build relationships, and so on. But the most important thing for me now is to progress.

EILEEN

I AM ALIVE! I AM LIVING!

*AND TO LIVE IS TO BE GRANTED THE INVALUABLE
GIFT OF BEING ABLE TO FEEL, EXPERIENCE, AND
SAVOUR THE FLAVOURS OF EXISTENCE.*

*IT IS MY PURPOSE TO TOUCH THE EARTH AND FEED HER
RUGGEDNESS, TO LOOK UP AT THE STARS AND BE FILLED
WITH AWE, TO GET HURT AND FEEL PAIN, TO TOUCH THE WIND
AND FEEL JOY, TO FEEL TIRED, TO FEEL EXCITED, TO FALL IN
LOVE, TO INDULGE, TO ENVY, TO SNARL, TO RAGE, TO FEAR, TO
BRAVE, TO CRY, TO LAUGH TO BREATHE, TO DIE.*

*MY PURPOSE IS TO RELISH THE DELIGHT
AND THE TASTINESS OF LIFE.*

*AND MAYBE,
JUST MAYBE,*

*IF I AM ABLE TO KEEP MY FEET FIRMLY PLANTED
ON THE GROUND, PERHAPS I COULD STRETCH
UPWARD AND REACH A HIGHER LIGHT,*

*OR GO INWARD TO FIND
MY OWN LIGHT,*

AND THAT WOULD BE MY TRUE PURPOSE.

ISHA MEENAKSHI



Is your purpose completely up to you, or do we all come with some kind of purpose? Maybe my purpose is to find my purpose, which in a way becomes a never ending loop, until the purpose is fulfilled.

I think part of my purpose is to make a positive difference in the life of others, though I'm sure that is not complete and there is more to it, so I will continue to look for my full purpose, and maybe, one day, I will get to know the full form of it.

MIRABELLE





The Sense of Completeness

Only recently I realised that as a child there was a sense of completeness which I feel less, as I grow, hence the realisation and the search for it.

Somewhere or the other some part of me is constantly in this search for completeness, to feel whole and not feel an itching emptiness.

At the start of this term's workshop I remember feeling that my final art piece had something missing, I would add more elements to it and yet I would feel something was missing. This reflected part of my life.

What is it that I am looking for?

*I AM LOOKING
FOR, CONSTANTLY,
SEARCHING.*

This longing pushes me to grow and become, while whatever this feeling may be, I wish in the search of it I don't find a completeness that stops me from growing.

ANANTINI

*A FEW MONTHS AGO, I STARTED
ASKING MYSELF MUCH MORE
WHY WE, AS HUMAN BEINGS,
ARE HERE ON EARTH. I ALSO
THOUGHT THE PLANET MIGHT
BE EVEN BETTER WITHOUT US.*

*AND BECAUSE OF THAT, I
DECIDED THAT, FOR AS LONG AS
I LIVE, I WANT TO BE AN
INSTRUMENT OF GOD AND
LEAVE THE WORLD JUST A
LITTLE BETTER THAN
I FOUND IT.*

GAIA

Last School
After School :!
Super School
No School

COLLECTIVE WORKS IN AUROVILLE

A big part of Last School has always been to find ways to bridge life at school with works in the wider collective of Auroville.

This term such an occasion came up as a new boundary wall had to be set up at the Auroville Health Centre for sacks of garbage had been regularly tossed over the fence into the compound...

Why paint a wall?

Why take up a community project?

Whose responsibility are common spaces? Nature, murals, buildings, parks, roads, the garbage everywhere...?

We are occupied with our own lives: our homes, our offices, our work, our friends...

there is often no time or energy left for more.

GROWING UP IN AUROVILLE AND LAST SCHOOL, BEAUTY IN COMMON SPACES IS A PART OF OUR EDUCATION.

It creates the environment, the atmosphere, the visual flux of art seasons on the walls, in the corridors, in the classrooms, in the garden, all around you... imbibing itself into people.



The importance of working in matter with one's own hands, from beginning to end is part of the challenge and the fun.

Offering to share that in other Auroville spaces in whatever way we can is just another step.

SMITI TEWARI ARPI
*Last School alumni
& project holder*

CERTITUDE THAT ALL WILL BE WELL

I JOINED THIS PROJECT BECAUSE I WANTED TO CREATE A MEANINGFUL ART PIECE, NOT JUST A PAINTING, BUT SOMETHING THAT WILL BE SEEN BY PEOPLE DAILY, AND GIVE THEM A SPARK OF JOY.

This project took over my life for almost a month, not because I was working on it constantly, but because I had no free time.

All of my appointments and commitments got squished together, in such a way that I was always running around during the week, and painting on weekends.

I think that might have been the biggest challenge for me. Finding how to balance my sanity with a completely full schedule.

I'm the kind of person who needs alone time to recharge, and really struggled with finding any during this time - which was actually remarkably interesting.

I found ways to not burn out: random short naps, 10 minutes of floor time between appointments, one chapter before bed.

It's one of the things I learnt about myself, that I don't need all that long to recharge, and that short bursts over the day whenever I've got time, work kind of well.

Joy in a collectivity?

The group, the atmosphere, and the laughter was amazing. The chemistry while working together, and the commitment we all had, really held this project together.

SOMETHING ELSE THAT REALLY WARMED MY HEART WAS HOW GENEROUS EVERYONE WAS.

The team, spending their weekends painting, friends of friends who would see us work, and bring us snacks.



We were given so much food, tea and drinks, which also gave me the confidence that while we didn't have the 'approval' of the community when starting, it definitely came.

I WOULD FOR SURE DO ANOTHER PROJECT LIKE THIS, THAT HAS SOME IMPACT, AND TAKES OVER MY LIFE FOR A WHILE.

Somehow, it feels bittersweet to look at this weekend, the first since completing the mural, and realise I don't have something to look forward to.

A sense of purpose

Projects like these give me a purpose, a good reason to wake up in the morning, and motivation in anything I do. The weekend is no longer a safety net for procrastinated projects.

I'm most proud of is how much we all committed. Isha, Smiti and I were a part of the project since the early stages, so we entered this with some knowledge of the plan, timeline, and amount of work. Maithli and Thomas simply showed up with a smile on their faces, and worked just as hard.

NITIMEY



I HAVE A TENDENCY TO MAKE MYSELF AT HOME WHEREVER I WORK OR STUDY.

THIS PLACE WAS NO DIFFERENT, EXCEPT IT WAS THE MIDDLE OF A BUSY STREET. WHAT TOUCHED ME THROUGH THE WHOLE PROCESS WAS THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY WE EXPERIENCED WHILE WORKING IN PUBLIC.

PASSERSBY'S COMMENTS—WHETHER, STRANGE, FUNNY, OR ENCOURAGING—AMUSED ME. IT WAS EARLY MORNINGS, FULL DAYS OUT IN THE SUN, AND NO FREE WEEKENDS: I WAS EXHAUSTED.

BUT WORKING WITH GOOD COMPANY BARELY FEELS LIKE WORK.

ISHA MEENAKSHI



*THUS WE DRAW NEAR TO
THE ALLWONDERFUL
FOLLOWING HIS RAPTURE IN
THINGS AS SIGN AND GUIDE;*

A SPLASH OF COLOUR

Reflecting on the mural painting done by Isha Meenakshi and Nitimey, I am left with the sensation of delight at how the two girls pressed on and took this project of tremendous scale to a well finished end which brings a splash of colour and beauty into the village street.

I observed that this act of communal giving brought with it an interaction with village street life as well as several moments of appreciation from various individuals in passing.

The planning, idea sketching and researching was thought. The actual painting work took hours of persistence. I was glad to see some volunteer their help. Smiti's guidance helped the two girls to really push to the best of their abilities.

This has given us a wonderful burst of blue with a flowing wave ordained with a plenitude of flowers carried as if on a gentle breeze with a deeper message of spiritual power of healing and that all will be well.



PHOTOGRAPHY: SARA BARDE & ANANTINI JOAN MOHANTI

SHONA



Last School
After School :-!
Super School
No School

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.



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