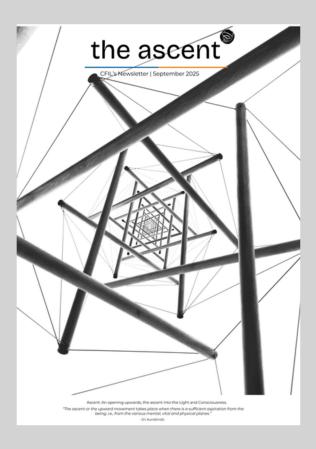


"The ascent or the upward movement takes place when there is a sufficient aspiration from the being, i.e., from the various mental, vital and physical planes."



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With

this second edition of *The Ascent,* our monthly newsletter, we continue

building on the conversations we began last month - bringing you perspectives and updates to engage and inspire.

The month of September has been a happening month for all of us. September of 2025 will be remembered as an inflection point in our journey. Firstly, we had to vacate our old premises and secondly, we got a new home in the Centre for Integral Learning (CFIL) campus. This transition cannot be termed easy in any stretch of imagination. The old held its grip even as the new was waiting to be embraced.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we had to delay our occupancy in the new campus and therefore had to think differently to ensure learning would continue uninterrupted. To address this, we arranged some trips for our children to places that resembled our new campus. This was a deliberate effort to help our children get accustomed to a natural landscape—spaces with open areas and greenery all around. In the The Integral School section of this newsletter, we will share what all we did during these trips.

Deconstructing Work is an article on what goes behind constructing spaces and, essentially, behind our actions—how various elements and parts come together to create a whole.

Getting the new campus built was no mean task, a tall order, we indeed had to move a mountain. We may not have created an ideal space, however, as we begin to experience more of this campus, we are surely going to create this space into a beautiful learnscape. When we reflect on the work done and the work in progress, we realize that we work in constraints, whether financial, time or resources. The challenge is to get the best that you possibly can in those circumstances and then build from there.

In our ongoing series on Sri Aurobindo's writing on India, that is Bharat, Sri Aurobindo writes about the outer and the inner body of a nation, i.e., in the Indian context, how we look at a nation as a shakti (force) and then he writes on the Individual. We see an individual as a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature.

The article on Inflection Point essentially points out towards an inevitable disruption that is bound to change the course of the future. The article examines how technology, social media and algorithms have shaped our personality and its impact on our mind and emotions—it essentially questions who we are and what kind of a personality we are being shaped into.

We hope you will reflect upon the content of this edition. We will continue to come up with more editions month by month, reflecting upon topics and issues that we face or topics worth sharing and writing upon.

-Editor

Inflection Point

We are at an inflection point. But what is an inflection point? In differential geometry, it is a point on a plane curve at which the curvature changes. In other words, one can infer that it is a directional change. We are at a civilizational disruption point, and it is going to be an irreversible directional change in terms of how life will be lived in the years to come.

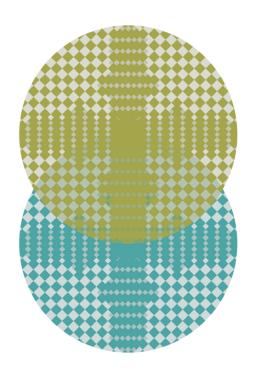
We can vividly see this metamorphosis happening right before our eyes: an old way of being is rapidly giving way to another. This disruption is taking place in every aspect of our lives and transforming us from within.

The way we consume social media, what we eat, our health, demography, social and cultural beliefs—all of these are changing, or perhaps being nudged toward a particular way of being and becoming. Of all these shifts, the most fundamental is in what it means to be human, for that too will change.

Our deepest concern is with the human being. How will our children be ten or twenty years from now? Let us quickly revisit some timelines to see how we have been, where we are, and what is likely to follow.

In 2004, Facebook came into existence, followed by Twitter in 2006. That was the beginning of social media, a world in itself. Until then, we had no idea how we would engage with such a world. Today, not only do we engage with it, it has become our world—a world radically different from the pre-2004 era, or what we might call B.FB (Before Facebook, if you will).

It was not the launch of Facebook or Twitter alone that was disruptive. It was the technological interface that made the difference: an extraordinary, groundbreaking, life-altering, and unprecedented innovation in mobile phones—the launch of the iPhone in 2007, introducing the 'touch screen.' Post this, we saw the emergence of many social media platforms.



In 2009, Facebook introduced the "like" button—our reward system. Your post or picture would attract likes; the more likes you had, the greater the reward, and the higher the reward, the stronger the boost to your self-esteem. In 2010 came Instagram, followed by Snapchat in 2011.

It is interesting to recall what Facebook's first president, Sean Parker, admitted in 2017: "How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible? We need to give you a dopamine hit every now and then."

The consequences soon followed. Since 2011, mental health among school and college students began to suffer. Data from 2019 showed rising suicide rates in Finland, Austria, and Norway, while depression and anxiety worldwide increased to affect 3–4% of the global population.

Human attention span has also declined. In 2000, it was 12 seconds; by 2013–14, it had dropped to 8.25 seconds. By comparison, the attention span of a jellyfish is 9 seconds.

Fast forward to 2023: OpenAl's ChatGPT-4 achieved SAT scores better than 90% of test takers. More striking is the rate of adoption of algorithm-driven applications. ChatGPT reached 1 million users in just five days of its launch, and 100 million users within two months. This is unprecedented. It shows that we are adopting disruptive technologies at lightning speed.

The case of identity:

How do we then identify ourselves today? What is our digital identity?

What follows large language model (LLM) applications is the adoption of material hacking—the Internet of Bodies (IoB).

For example, Ray-Ban Meta Glasses, followed by body-hacking gadgets that enhance physical and cognitive abilities (e.g., RFID implants). Then comes bio-hacking: genetic manipulation via the CRISPR-Cas9 technique.

We are in transition—from being Homo sapiens to cyborgs, people who use machines to enhance intelligence. We are becoming connected faster than ever before. While 4G can support 4,000 devices per square kilometer, 5G can now support 1 million devices per square kilometer. We are surely on our way toward transhumanism and technological singularity.

The choice will be ours

A non-biological human intelligence merging with our biology, or a conscious human being, sourcing higher intelligence—an intelligence born of consciousness.?

A technology-driven future or a consciousness-driven future? A smart human being—clever but not wise—or a conscious, wise human being?

The capacity to recreate and renew in the human species is evolutionary. It is this evolutionary potential that the human race possesses. Education must endeavour to awaken this—enabling us to realize the evolutionary impetus within.



India, that is Bharat - The Outer and the Inner Body of a Nation

The country, the land is only the outward body of the nation, its annamaya kosh, or gross physical body; the mass of people, the life of millions who occupy and vivify the body of the nation with their presence, is the pranamaya kosh, the life-body of the nation. These two are the gross body, the physical manifestation of the Mother. Within the gross body is a subtler literature, body, the thoughts, the philosophy, the mental and emotional activities, the sum of hopes, pleasures, aspirations, fulfilments, the civilization and culture, which make up the sukshama sharir of the nation. This is as much a part of the Mother's life as the outward existence which is visible to the physical eyes. This subtle life of the nation again springs from a deeper existence in the causal body of the nation, the peculiar temperament which it has developed out of its ages of experience and which makes it distinct from others. These three are the bodies of the Mother, but within them all is the Source of her life, immortal and unchanging, of which every nation merely manifestation, the universal Narayan, One in the many of whom we are all the children.

Nation as Shakti

Each nation is a Shakti or power of the evolving spirit in humanity and lives by the principle which it embodies. India is the Bharata Shakti, the living energy of a great spiritual conception, and fidelity to it is the very principle of her existence. For by its virtue alone she has been one of the immortal nations; this alone has been the secret of her amazing persistence and perpetual force of survival and revival.

Mother India is not a piece of earth, she is a Power, a Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being



The Individual

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

Deconstructing Work

We have just constructed a physical space for ourselves—to study, to play, to eat, and to do various other activities and tasks. We constructed, i.e., we brought various pieces together to form one whole. The experience has been no less than profoundly reflective of how things come together—of various forces, of how the mind can think and visualize, the gaps that exist, etc.

The Sanskrit equivalent to the word 'work' is *Kriyā*. *Kriyā* is a Sanskrit term, derived from the Sanskrit root *kri*, meaning "to do." *Kriyā* means "action, deed, effort." Creating something out of nothing requires thinking, visualizing, bringing material and people together. Just like in this case, it is about a built space, the work could simply mean a meeting or a dialogue on a topic or just being with children.

So, what really is work, where does it start and where does it end? Does it really end, or is it a continuous movement?

Here are some of the reflections:

The work comes as an end in the mind first—the utility and the design of the space, how things will happen, how the space will be occupied, what all can possibly be done, etc. The idea in the mind then seeks an expression in visualization, and then the design is worked out on paper. Based on what we see on the paper, it gets translated using the material, and in all this, the human being comes into the picture. The perfect expression of thought has to be indivisible—the design, the material, and the execution as one coherent manifestation in work.

The mind thinks, it ideates, it visualizes. The utility of the space precedes the design. The design is then worked out as one expression of what came into the mind first. Should the design guide utility, or should the utility of the space guide the design? It must remain one throughout and till the end.

Then comes material. We are blessed to have different shades, variety, and texture in material. Each material has its own beauty, its own nature. What material will fit best with the design that we have worked out? This is the next level of harmony—the design wedded to the material.

Once the material is worked out, then come the human hands and legs and the machinery—putting the design and the material together. There comes the human consciousness: how much are we putting ourselves into the work, the movement of hands, the eyes that see the curves and the lines, the alignment of material things and objects.

Our skill is directly proportionate to how well we have learnt the art, how consciously we are doing our work, our whole attitude towards the work—whether it is just work or perfection in work. This establishes the next level of harmony with design, material, and human effort.



Then come the unforeseen forces and circumstances which the human mind could not possibly have thought of, and this is weather—the fall of rain, the beating of sun, the wind, and the rest. Every spell of rain impacts work—it impacts how material will behave, how the land will get impacted, and eventually impacts the work that is scheduled. One change, and the whole schedule gets impacted. It's like a domino effect. This is like when one event sets off a sequence of related events. This sets another level of harmony with nature, where everything is allowed its own time of completion and settlement.

We see this work as one whole, the whole being the built space and the utilities functioning and operational within this built space. Within this whole, we can see parts, and within each part we can see an infinite number of subparts or sub-units. In all of this, we see how human skills and attitude are instrumental in making these parts work to form the whole. Delay in one part disrupts the entire scheme of work. We realise that each work is a quantum event consisting of an infinite number of sub-events.

It is fascinating to see how work, i.e., kriyā, cannot be seen or understood as a simple action. There is a universe that exists between two actions, between two thoughts. What we build, or whatever we do, should be a constant reflection of the gaps that exist, of our own consciousness of harmony. A perfect expression, therefore, would be the one where all come together as a conscious collective and in harmony.

Now, how difficult is this?

The Centre for Integral Learning is that space which allows for this working in ourselves towards being a conscious human being and creating conscious futures.

-Editor

At The Integral School

Here's a glimpse of what our children at The Integral School explored, learned and loved in the month of September.



Utilizing the outdoors as an immersive backdrop, the children of **Courage** literally jumped at every opportunity to learn, create and integrate.

Interweaving story-telling whilst feeding cows at the Gaushala at Ananda Kshetram, learning addition and subtraction on different modes of transports such as train, bus and bullock-cart, to embracing blended learning with hands-on activities using leaves, cow dung and potter's clay to online classes; the month of September let the children widen their learning expanse and explore natural environments that nurtured their curiosity. They eased into their new campus through song and play at circle time, morning exercise, regular classes and eating familiar food cooked in their brand new kitchen.



School took a brand new turn for **Progress** as they adapted and explored beyond the four walls of their learning space in the month of September.

Farm life and learning at Anandha Kshetram and Akshaykalpa farms gently ushered the children into the way forward by planting seeds and saplings, making Gir cow-dung cakes and pottery on the wheel. A visit to Botanical Garden and Kanha Shanti Vanam opened up a world of nature that let them explore with hands-on activities using different materials such as leaves, petals, jute etc. Interspersed with online classes and visits to their new campus, the children seamlessly adjusted to their many environments, established a sense of innate belonging and organically became a part of them.



Aspiration went from farm to table and beyond with excursions, adventure and exploration in the month of September.

While a visit to Akshaykalpa Farm introduced the children to indigenous and exotic trees, a kitchen garden, free-range poultry farming, rabbits and bees; Ananda Kshetram initiated them into active farming with planting of papaya saplings, coriander seeds and a visit to the fields. From listening to stories and puzzles shared at the potters wheel to introduction to word problems in math's during online sessions, the children opened up to various forms of learning, which was not limited to the four walls of a traditional school.

Making the space their own at the new campus, they climbed the "Mud Mountain" to establish affinity to their new campus amongst other things.



September turned out to be "A month of churning" for the children of **Gratitude** as they embarked on a learning expedition on the road and via online classes.

From project work on trees, the *Musi* river and its many tributaries; the children gathered extensive information through their farm visits that introduced them into the rare flora of the region. From *Rudraksha*, Cherry and Cashew trees to a Cactus Garden, the children immersed themselves in the farming process where they learned about tilling the soil, harvesting the crops to eating food prepared using organic vegetables from the farm itself. They sowed coriander seeds, fed cows, made cow dung diyas and cakes albeit hesitantly, worked on the potters wheel and brought it all together by climbing, digging and exploring the *Mud Mountain* in their new campus and acclimating to their new surroundings.

Humility had their hands full with online classes and outdoor activities in equal measure in the month of September.

From learning about tilling the soil to sowing seeds and planting saplings, the children thoroughly enjoyed the informative sessions that let them apply their knowledge with active farming, working with potters clay, jute, leaves and other natural materials.

Intermittent online classes let them resume their learning through worksheets ranging from fractions to the evolution of communication and transportation. From decorating their new space with flower rangoli wearing traditional clothes for a *Puja*, singing and celebrating let them connect and harmonize with their environment in their own inimitable ways.





Goodness got to delve deeper into their farming experience as they learned about harvesting honey, poultry-farming, cattle-care and more in addition to planting seeds and saplings. From visiting a man-made forest at Anand Kshetram, working the potters wheel in the rain to braving the downpour and not letting it dampen their spirits, the children embraced each experience along with their new learning space by exploring every nook and corner of their new school.

Commencing regular classes with discussions ranging from *Rumi*, cannibalism to construction; taking measurements and building the pond to climbing the *Mud Mountain* let them naturally settle in and create a sense of affinity to their new environment.

A Parable



Four monks decided to meditate silently without speaking for two weeks.

By nightfall on the first day, the candle began to flicker and then went out.

The first monk said, "Oh, no! The candle is out."

The second monk said, "Aren't we not supposed to talk?"

The third monk said, "Why must you two break the silence?"

The fourth monk laughed and said, "Ha! I'm the only one who didn't speak."



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CFIL's Expressions:







