



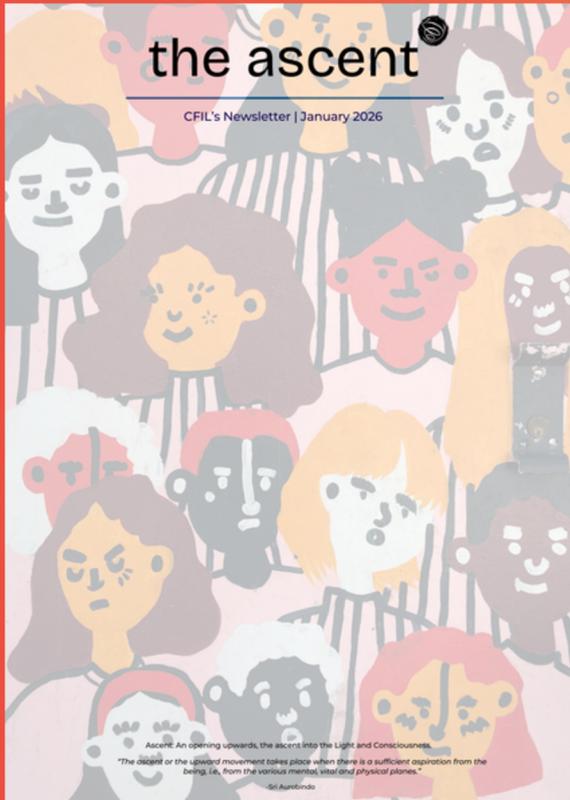
# the ascent<sup>®</sup>

CFIL's Newsletter | January 2026

Ascent: An opening upwards, the ascent into the Light and Consciousness.

*"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."*

-Sri Aurobindo



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**Here** we are with the sixth edition of *The Ascent* for the month of January 2026.

January onwards, after an eventful December with the conclusion of Sports Day, we bring our focus back to the "rigour of study," i.e., we are back to our projects and other themes of study planned for each group. We are looking forward to our farm, known as "The Integral Commune Farm," as our children have already started laying seeds in what is called raised-bed farming. This is going to be an organic way of learning farming as we move from one bed to another while our children figure out how each seed grows, how much water and sunlight are needed, etc.

From this edition onwards, we will have an article series on "The Mother's Symbol," along with a new article in every edition. The first article, "Why We Can't Think About the Future and Why It Matters," explores the challenge in thinking about the future, why we are not able to place ourselves in the future, and the impact this has on the brain. It looks at certain trends that we see emerging in the world right in front of us and how they will collectively influence our future.

The Mother's Symbol series will explore what the Mother's Symbol is, along with its various powers and attributes. This will signify the importance of symbolism in our lives and will help navigate a life that is especially dedicated towards creating a conscious future and towards the work of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

In the "India that is Bharat" series, we explore what Sri Aurobindo tells us about the need to reconcile with our own cultural, intellectual, and spiritual heritage. This article also talks about the new and greater ideals that we must create for ourselves.

There is an update on The Integral Dialogues event held on campus on 25th January. This is a summary of what transpired at the event.

"At the Integral School" is a summary of what our children were up to in the month of January. This is a good way to know what children do at school. Even though it is a summary, it gives an insight into what, why, and how we do things at school.

In the "Invitation to Notice" section, we bring an interesting data point that talks about how challenging it is for people to accept ideas and cultures that are outside of their own experiences and beliefs.

From this edition onwards, we have a new addition to our newsletter: "Reflection and Trends." We will be bringing studies from across the globe that are worth exploring. The first of the research trends we present is how it is becoming almost impossible for the new generation to read sentences and paragraphs. As the world is becoming more visual, there is a decline in our reading capacities.

It is our constant effort to bring new additions to the newsletter, and we shall continue to do so in subsequent issues

-Editor

# Why we can't think about the future and why it matters

## Thinking about the future?

Well, the brain does something unusual. It is not able to place 'yourself' into the future; on the contrary, it 'thinks' about a completely different person — that is not 'you'. This is confirmed by many fMRI studies. The further in time we try to imagine our own life, the medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC) shows less activation. In simple terms, it is harder to 'imagine' and think what kind of person we would be in the future and what lies ahead of ourselves in the world we would be living in.

Future is either a distant 'time' scripted for us in terms of technological situations, environmental, social and cultural, economic, and political situations, or a distant 'time' that is impregnated with possibilities and attitudes we hold 'now' — that which is born out of our current state of mind, that which we consciously choose, and not that which we unconsciously adopt and are coerced to adapt.

It is imperative to understand our current and past to see how life is unfolding right under our nose and eyes. What are the patterns and the meta-patterns hidden behind these patterns is something that must become clear to us.

How do ChatGPT and internet browsing impact our brain and cognitive functioning, and how, at the given rate, is it going to impact us even more going into the future? What 'kind' of jobs would be available in the future, and how is one likely to earn money? What would health mean? Would I be plagued under fear of the so-called newly invented 'risk' and new biochemistry ranges insistently promoted by Big Pharma and the medical profession? What would be the future of schooling? If mugging up textbooks is all that schooling and education are, then that can be done better by open-source, richly curated multimedia courses and AI-enabled ecosystems. How will relationships be impacted in the future — as it is, I have a more 'real' relationship with my phone than any other human ecosystem that I am supposedly a part of.



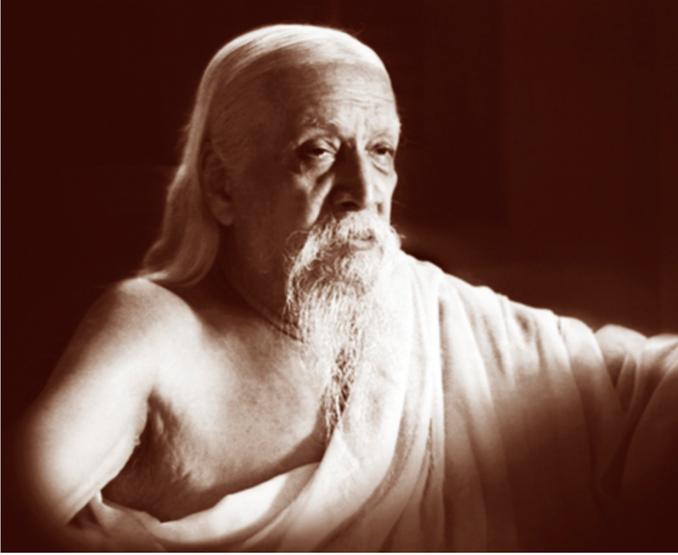
Fundamentally, am I aware of how I think? Are 'my thoughts' my 'own'? What I call my thoughts — are they not 'suggestions' coming from outside and darting into my mental consciousness? Is my mind empty or full all the time? Do I sense that I am still in control of myself — capable of fully exercising the capacities of my mind to think, to reason, to imagine? Thinking about the future would mean: what is it that I need to do now? What is it that my children should do now, lest we are smartly and subtly pushed into a scripted future which promises the 'human' takeover by technology, Big Pharma, the military-industrial complex, amongst other 'hidden' agendas. We do not wish a proxy of ourselves, do we?

Is the world changing or being changed?  
Think.

-Editor

# India, that is Bharat - It's Spirit and Mission

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On our past and present ideals we have to turn the searchlight of the spirit and see whether they have not to be surpassed or enlarged or brought into consonance with new wider ideals. All we do or create must be consistent with the abiding spirit of India, but framed to fit into a greater harmonized rhythm and plastic to the call of a more luminous future. If faith in ourselves and fidelity to the spirit of our culture are the first requisites of a continued and vigorous life, a recognition of greater possibilities is a condition not less indispensable. There cannot be a healthy and victorious survival if we make of the past a fetish instead of an inspiring impulse."

## The challenge of Spiritual & Intellectual rectitude

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"An original truth-seeking thought is needed if we are to take this stand and make this movement, a strong and courageous intuition, an unfailing spiritual and intellectual rectitude. The courage to defend our culture against ignorant occidental criticism and to maintain it against the gigantic modern pressure comes first, but with it there must be the courage to admit not from any European standpoint but from our own outlook the errors of our own culture. Apart from all phenomena of decline or deterioration, we should recognise without any sophisticated denial those things in our creeds of life and social institutions which are in themselves mistaken some of them indefensible, things weakening too our national life, degrading to our civilisation, dishonouring to our culture."

## The challenge of going beyond the past

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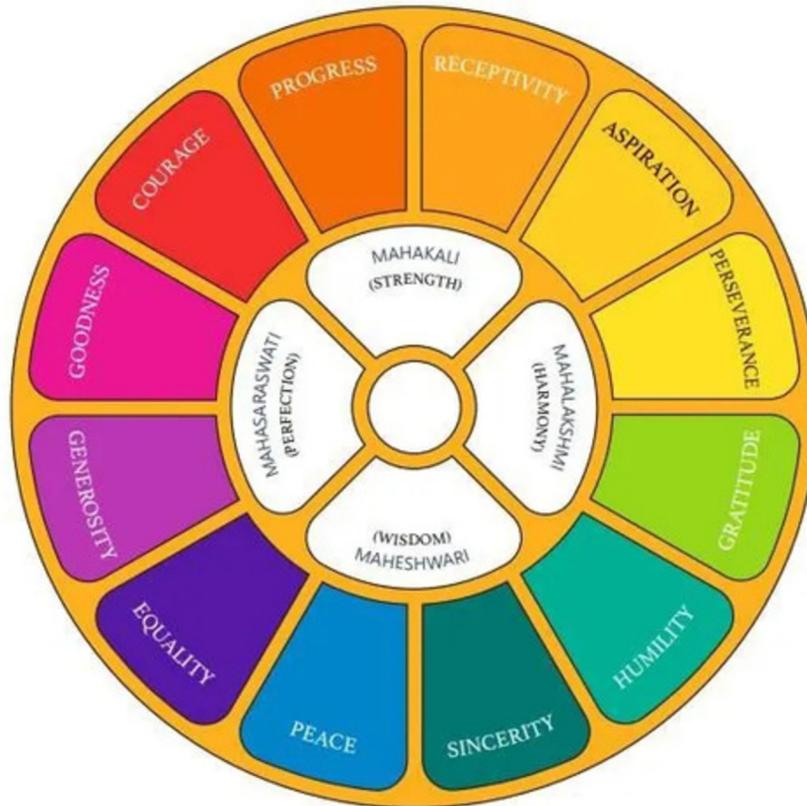
The new dynamic truths we have to discover need to be parked within the limited truth of a past ideal.

## The challenge of universal application

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"The point to be pressed is that Indian spirituality in its greatest eras and in its inmost significance has not been a tired quietism or a conventional monasticism, but a high effort of the human spirit to rise beyond the life of desire and vital satisfaction and arrive at an acme of spiritual calm, greatness, strength, illumination, divine realisation, settled peace and bliss. The question between the culture of India and the vehement secular activism of the modern mind is whether such an endeavour is or is not essential to man's highest perfection. And if it is, then the other question arises whether it is to be only an exceptional force confined to a few rare spirits or can be made the main inspiring motive-power of a great and complete human civilization."

# Symbolism



In the *Symbolism series*, we will be expanding on The Mother's symbol, its meaning and significance for our work at The Centre for Integral Learning (CFIL).

A Symbol is a representation of a higher truth. It attracts the forces and power it represents. Centre for Integral Learning logo is a symbol – representing a spiral movement upwards towards the Divine.

A symbol can guide us in our work, it is inspiration for work that we do. For us at The Centre for Integral Learning (CFIL) – we have a deeper aspiration to organize our work around the Symbol, to organize our personality around it and in future, to have a new campus with The Mother's symbol as the architectural design.

Centre for Integral Learning (CFIL) symbolizes physical manifestation of divine consciousness. Centre here implies 'that which will hold the descending consciousness'.

It is the psychic centre and therefore a psychic representation in its physical form.

CFIL is a conscious invocation of the highest Truth-Force. A place for a collective yajna for all those who would give themselves to the realization of the highest truth, a place for the little ones who would grow up in the guiding light of the psychic being and an enabling and sustainable physical environment.

*"The Central circle represents the Supreme Mother, the Mahashakti.*

*The four central petals are the four aspects of the Mother-and her twelve petals, Her twelve attributes.*

*It is the symbolic design of the white lotus of Supreme Consciousness, with the Mahashakti (the form of the Mother as universal creation) at the centre in her four aspects and twelve attributes."*

The Mother

-Editor



# The Integral Dialogues Update



## Why we don't think about the future ?

25<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Venue: Centre for Integral Learning (CFIL)

A dialogue on why we don't think about the future. Parents came together to discuss why we don't think about the future in terms of how the world is evolving and the future of our children.

The discussion then evolved around our questions and certain do's and don'ts for us and our children.

## Questions

- Why do we not think about future ?
- What efforts/ direction/ contemplation have you done about the future?
- Do you have time for contemplation, research etc.? Or you don't? - if you don't then what do you want to do about it?
- What is freedom we are talking about? - what does that really mean here to us and our children?
- What is your first reaction when your child comes home and tells you someone hit them or told them something?
- When your child does something which is not good a per your point of view-what do you do?
- How have you moulded yourself to bring up your child? Are you conscious of your dealings with the child?
- How do you want to use the campus space for your overall growth and progress?
- What is the next progressive step we take as a commune?
- When schools take decision for children, how comfortable do you feel trusting the school & what helps build that trust?
- If you disagree with a school rule, how should parents and schools work together without confusing the child?
- Have you ever compared your child with another child? How did it affect your child's confidence or motivation?
- What challenges do you face in controlling screen time at home, and what rules have actually worked for your child?

# At The Integral School

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

## Progress



In January, **Group Progress** thoroughly enjoyed exploring the school environment, appreciating the vast open spaces that allow them to move freely from one area to another. Growing more comfortable with their surroundings, they identified their favourite nooks and corners, with the sandpit emerging as a clear favorite! Making full use of the sprawling field, children immersed themselves in physical activities and sports, challenging their stamina and coordination through races and games such as hurdles, lemon and spoon, blindfold activities, sack jumping, catch ball, and running over ten rounds with diligence and great enthusiasm.

In the classroom, our children learned basic shapes—circle, square, triangle, and rectangle—through engaging, hands-on activities. Language development was thoughtfully integrated with mathematics using shapes to explore size, position, and opposite words. Art and craft sessions included shape collages, egg tray painting, handmade kites, rangoli for *Sankranti* and creative handprint artwork, encouraging self-expression and joyful learning through play.

After the winter break, **Group Courage** began the month with the theme *Shapes, Sizes, and Patterns*. Children explored shapes by relating them to objects found in nature and their everyday surroundings. They understood the concept of size through hands-on activities, such as creating shapes on the floor using sticks of different lengths and comparing them. Working in teams, the children built a castle using blocks and identified the shapes and sizes used in the structure. To develop an understanding of quantity, sorting, and grouping, they explored the school campus, counting small and big plants, pots, tiles, and other objects.

In language development, children revisited English phonics, contributing one word for each alphabet and forming simple sentences. They also explored rhyming words by identifying words with similar ending sounds and using them in sentences. Daily storytime after lunch kept children immersed in stories and nurtured their listening skills and imagination.

*Sankranti* celebrations added joy to the month. Children created rakhis using wool and sticks and enthusiastically participated in rangoli making and discussions about the festival, making January a joyful and enriching learning experience.



## Courage

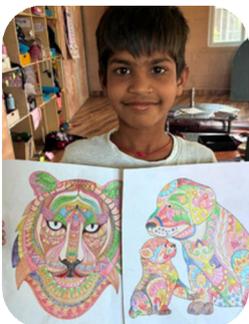


January began on a reflective and disciplined note for **Aspiration**. Circle time discussions focused on values such as punctuality, honesty, cleanliness, and responsibility. Children practiced personal care habits, material organization, mindful food practices, and respectful language. Daily journaling was introduced to encourage reflection, and each child set three personal goals for the coming months.

In English, children strengthened grammar and vocabulary through topics such as nouns and their types, singular and plural forms, pronouns, and verbs. Reading in pairs, they learned "Word of the Day," homophones, synonyms, anagrams, and sentence formation. Mathematics included two-digit subtraction, missing numbers, bill preparation, and a shopkeeper game using pretend money. Multiplication was introduced through repeated addition.

Language learning expanded with Tamil alphabets for native speakers and an introduction to Hindi for interested students. A project on *Sankranti* included research, map tracing, crafts, rangoli, and celebrations in vibrant ethnic attire. The Human Body project began, focusing on body parts, senses, and care. Craft activities included Republic Day origami, mandala colouring, and learning traditional basket weaving, making January a month of growth, creativity, and values-based learning.

## Aspiration



January was an active and engaging month for **Group Gratitude**, as the children continued the rigor of Sports Day activities alongside the start of three exciting group projects. In Mathematics, children explored a **Money Project**, learning about the evolution of money from barter system to modern currency. This learning came alive through mock shops and real-life problem-solving activities, where children planned purchases within a fixed budget, such as managing ₹500 while buying fruits and vegetables by adjusting quantities and weights.

Continuing from December's Plants Project, they began a **Farming Activity**. Children planted seeds to grow saplings and prepared a small plot by clearing stones and loosening the soil, creating a suitable space for growing vegetables. Craft sessions included glass bottle decoration, decoupage, and glass painting, encouraging creativity and fine motor skills.

The much-awaited **Solar System Project** was introduced with discussions and planning, sparking great curiosity and enthusiasm. In Telugu, children thoughtfully created and tied name tags for plants across the campus, strengthening language skills and environmental awareness.



Gratitude

Humility



January began with a sense of freshness, joy, and festivity as **Humility** welcomed the New Year by celebrating Makar Sankranti. They enthusiastically participated in activities such as making lanterns, creating rangoli, and dressing up for the occasion, making it a cheerful and positive start to the year.

The Indus Valley project was resumed, during which children created seals and jewellery using air-dried clay. Self-expression was encouraged through activities where children identified their likes and dislikes and shared their thoughts through abstract canvas art using gold leaf, papier-mâché crafts, and wall hangings. To prepare for the upcoming farming project, children explored different types of soil found in India and discussed soil fertility.

The Food and Nutrients unit began with an introduction to the seven essential nutrients, their functions, and examples. Food wrappers were used to identify nutrients and quantities, leading to discussions on balanced diets, vitamins, minerals, and deficiencies. Learning was reinforced through crossword puzzles and worksheets. Science was integrated with Mathematics as children plotted bar graphs using nutrient data, learning to mark axes and interpret pictographs. Hindi learning was embraced enthusiastically, while English focused on report writing, structure, and descriptive vocabulary through peer descriptions.

This month marked significant academic and experiential progress for **Goodness**. The final leg of the Digestive System was completed with a clear understanding of the digestion process from start to finish. Children then began learning about Forces—types of forces, their effects, measurement of force, and an introduction to Newton's three laws of motion. As part of a hands-on electricity project, children enthusiastically assembled simple circuits using an electricity kit. They successfully lit bulbs, operated buzzers, and explored series and parallel connections.

Art sessions were deeply engaging as children continued Warli illustrations inspired by scenes from the Mahabharata. They primed the wall with a brown base and added intricate details, including representations of *Divyastras*, using acrylic pens and blue-toned canvas work. Mental skill-building activities and Mathematics question paper practice strengthened focus and problem-solving. The physical regime included ground levelling with a roller, running, games, Kabaddi and long jump in the new sandpit. In languages, Hindi focused on strengthening grammar, while English explored mindfulness through stories, comprehension, reflection, and creative expression.



Goodness

## A Parable



A little bear cub was confused about how to walk.

"What do I do first?" he asked his mother.

"Do I start with my right foot or my left? Or both front feet and then my back feet? Or do I move both feet on one side and then both feet on the other?"

His mother answered, "Just quit thinking and start walking."

# Invitations to notice

## Worldwide, 7 in 10 have an insular mindset

Seventy percent are unwilling or hesitant to trust someone who has different values, facts, problem-solving approaches, or cultural background.

On average, percent who say  
I am generally ...



source credit: <https://www.edelman.com/newsroom/richard-edelmans-6am-blog/insularity-next-crisis-trust>

**Insularity:** Ignorance of or lack of interest in cultures, ideas or people outside one’s own experience.

The 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer finds that seventy percent of 33,938 respondents across 28 nations now are hesitant or unwilling to trust someone who has different values, information sources, approaches to societal problems, or backgrounds than them. This majority holds across income levels, gender, age groups, developing and developed markets.

# Reflections and Trends

## Gen Z Arriving at College Unable to Read

"It's not even an inability to critically think. It's an inability to read sentences."

By [Joe Wilkins](#) / Published Jan 13, 2026 11:27 AM EST

source credit: <https://futurism.com/future-society/gen-z-literacy-reading>



Getty Images / Maica

Knowledge consumption today has two distinct characteristics. *First*, the content should be less, and *second*, it should be more visual than text. The reasons are simple: *one*, attention spans are less, so long-duration content is not desirable. The human attention span now is just eight seconds, a second less than that of a goldfish. And *two*, we just can't read long sentences, leave alone a paragraph or a full chapter.

The inability to read sentences is now vividly seen and observed in Gen-Z. As Pepperdine University literature professor Jessica Hooten Wilson told Fortune in a recent interview, "It's not even an inability to critically think. It's an inability to read sentences." Most of Gen-Z and adults are skimming through AI-generated summaries, and this is even true across generations and ages. We want it fast, quick, and easy. It is as if the brain is losing its capacities or is becoming addicted to quick and fast.

There seems to be a definite impact that ChatGPT is having on us. There are signs of cognitive off-loading, i.e., we want a proxy to process information for us even as the brain is left with a lot of information unprocessed, since the stimulus is too much for the brain to handle.

This serious inability to read is a grave sign of what is coming for us in the future. What would it mean to live in a world where we can't hold attention even for a second? Are we slowly moving towards that? Are we moving towards a future that is fully visual? If reading a sentence is a challenge today, would reading a word be difficult in times to come?

Think.

Editor



# Centre for Integral Learning

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CFIL's Expressions:



The  
Integral School



The  
Integral Commune



# the ascent<sup>®</sup>

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