Orientation to Auroville workshop (2016-17)

A project by Grace

Introduction

The aim of this workshop is for participants (Tamil women who are Aurovilians and Newcomers) to learn about the values and aims of Auroville. This includes getting to know Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and studying how karma yoga can be used in our daily life of participation in Auroville’s development. Each one here in Auroville is called to learn and do service collectively as well as to develop individually.

Description of project

Aurovilian and Newcomer women attended this orientation to Auroville workshop, given once monthly on Saturdays at SAWCHU (Bharat Nivas) or Mitra Youth Hostel. The classes were conducted in Tamil only; participants could easily understand and keep it in their memory because it is our mother tongue.

The workshop starts with a concentration for a few minutes. Then we go through the different kinds of books of The Mother, Sri Aurobindo and on Auroville. Our teacher Ramalingam tells us many small stories of The Mother when she was at the Ashram. We go through some of the flowers that The Mother gave significance to: the flower’s name and the meaning of the flower.

Gratitude

“There is nothing which gives you a joy equal to that of gratitude. One hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, observes an act of generosity, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at a setting sun – no matter what – suddenly, this kind of emotion comes upon you so deep, so intense, that the world manifests the Divine, that there is something behind the world which is the Divine.” (Questions and Answers 1956, p.40)

Each one read one line of this paragraph and the teacher explained it to us in Tamil. Then the teacher told us stories of The Mother related to ‘Gratitude’. Then everyone in the group told about when they experienced Gratitude, and some time that they didn’t feel Gratitude – how people forgot the Gratitude.

Also to the flower which The Mother called ‘Gratitude’ (Ipomoea carnea) we never give enough attention because it grows easily in wasteland. It’s a surprise how important this flower is for Mother to give it the name Gratitude.

Aspiration

“One must have a fixed and unfailing aspiration, vigilant and constant – an aspiration of the entire being – an aspiration that takes hold of you completely, an aspiration to unite with the Divine... to give oneself totally to the Divine, not to live outside the Divine Consciousness, so that the Divine may be all in all. (paraphrased)

The flower ‘Aspiration’ (Nyctanthes arbor-tristis) Indians offer normally to the God Shiva. Now everybody in the group understands the meaning which Mother has given.

Progress

“The very first condition of inner progress is to recognise whatever is or has been a wrong movement in any part of our nature – wrong idea, wrong feeling, wrong speech, wrong action – and by wrong is meant what departs from the truth, from the higher Consciousness and the
higher Self, from the way of the Divine. Once recognised, it is offered to the Divine for the Light and Grace to descend and substitute for it the right movement of the true Consciousness. (paraphrased)

‘Progress’ flower (Catharanthus roseus) in Tamil is ‘savu poo’, meaning ‘death flower’. Nobody gives importance to this flower, but after learning that Mother named it everybody respects it! After all, death is a step in the eternal progression towards the Divine!

**Courage**

As Sri Aurobindo says: “The forces that stand in the way of sadhana [the spiritual discipline] are the forces of the lower mental, vital and physical nature. Behind them are adverse powers of the mental, vital and subtle physical worlds.” (Letters on Yoga - II, p.150). “The one thing to do is to keep the mantra of success, the determination of victory, the fixed resolve... and go bravely on with [...] your Yoga. [...] [T]he inner doors too will open.” (Letters on Yoga - II, p.116)

The wasteland flower which The Mother named ‘Courage’ (Calotropis gigantea) is used for devotions to Lord Ganesh on his birthday; otherwise it is just ignored. It grows naturally and doesn’t need water.

**Outcomes**

We are conducting these classes once a month and it gives us quite some experiences and knowledge of Auroville. Many of us are benefitted by these classes.

The participants acquire a working and loving knowledge of the lives and teachings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, including the aims and meaning of Auroville. This love will grow into a better appreciation and identification with our true self, our learning and working in Auroville.