

Chapter 4th

SCHOOLING: SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL ASPECTS

Sibia(2010) in her study of *Mirambika*, an Integral Education School in Delhi, reported the unique design of the school's physical space and 'consciousness' the participants held for it. The spatial organization of school is known as 'school plant'. The school's space has been understood for its purpose, scope and the programs it has to carry out. Opinion of an educator is important in designing the same (Theodore et al, 2010). Table 4.1 in this chapter gives comprehensive view of relevant factors of school plants observed in the field.

For this research schooling space is not merely a plant but is a place where individuals act in order to, organize various learning opportunities and slot it in time. This chapter first explains about buildings of the three schools with special mention of aesthetics and multipurpose use of the spaces. There was significant interaction of participants with the objects arranged for learning. The chapter then explains organization of time with reference to areas of knowledge and individual action in various spaces. The factors of Individual, Space and Time portrayed in the fig 4.1 interact together to form the physical manifestation of schooling.

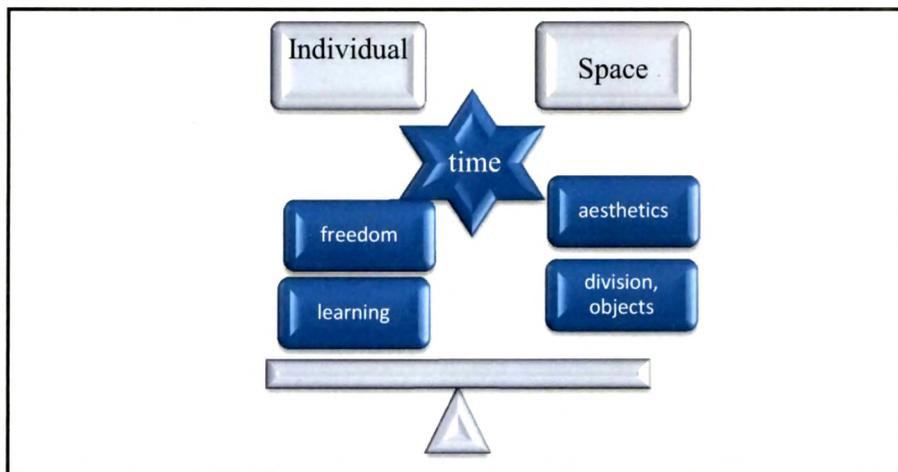


Fig 4.1 The Individual Space Interaction at the Schools: Key Themes

The Ashram Schooling Spaces- Crossing the Boundaries

The distribution of space at SAICE is over a few kilometers with different buildings at different locations. These school areas are distributed over a few kilometers, situated in and around Eastern Pondicherry referred as 'white town' since the time it was a French colony.

The school areas has expanded with more number of buildings, that the Ashram bought, as and when the finances were available. The buildings and property were bought mainly in Eastern Pondichéry but in other parts as well. The school could be divided into four main buildings where classes from kindergarten level to the college (graduation level) were held [view page no table no 4.2 for class, building and age organization]. Mostly school buildings of SAICE were in French designs because earlier these were French houses with huge rooms and windows most likely for families to stay. The changes had been made in the buildings to make them more suitable for the schools. School buildings mainly held teaching learning activities of different sections of classes. The building held enough space for teaching learning material to be stored and children to move around.

The Kindergarten section of SAICE was situated on the ground floor of an old building. It also housed a family of the Ashram inmatesⁱ on the first floor; the entrance for the latter was separate. The section had a small door to enter; upon entering, it opened into a small courtyard, which was concrete floor, after that rest of the area was the garden. On the left side of the main entrance was a shoe rack that had been cut into the wall. On the right was a room where classes were held for the first year kids, from there as one moved towards left, one room opens into another. There was a kitchen, toilet and a washing area. There were few more rooms (with one opening into another). At the end of the rooms towards the westernⁱⁱ side, there was a courtyard, which is covered from three sides. Redesigning of the building had been done for the utilization of it for school's purpose. In the open area under the huge old trees there was a sand pit and swings for children to play.

*Delafon*ⁱⁱⁱ is the name of a huge building meant for six to nine year old children studying at SAICE. It also nested many other important work areas and is also a residential area. As one entered through the huge door, the staircase on left were prominent, an *amma*-lingo for maid or help at school was often employed to survey people who were entering the school. The left side from entrance on the ground floor had a toilet at the entrance, followed by a carpentry lab, a classroom, a computer lab, then another classroom and then a covered verandah, which had two sections, and then two more rooms towards the end. The ground floor housed students of second year of *Delafon* and first floor housed first and third years. There were three rooms for the third year students and two rooms for the second year students; first and third years shared one room for remedial teaching of the students or similar activities; there

was a covered terrace area which had provision to hang the bags students carried and also facility for water to drink. After crossing the small terrace, there was another room on the right that was used for dance, music or theater. The ground floor had arrangement of fresh flower distribution for the Ashram inmates and departments; therefore, the entire building complex was popularly known as 'Flower Room'. Often children were known as 'flower room kids'. On the left side where flower distribution room was, there were two more rooms: one for clay work and another for music, there was also video room for the children.

The building also had residential area for the Ashram inmates on first floor, a studio of an artist below the rooms and a stock room of old items to be reused. A teacher (an ashram inmate) managed it. There was a small garden, with a small pond. The space was enough for children to play during the recess.

The participants put *Delafon* and Kindergarten to the 'multipurpose' usage. The building was open very early morning for flower distribution. In the evening senior women of Ashram used one of the rooms to do their routine exercise. Classes were also held in the artists' studio for the students and later in evening for adults. The storeroom had visitors who came there to take or to donate something. The Kindergarten was used for the physical education program of 3-6 years in the evening and after that on some days the participants in the late adulthood used it for their exercises other than the stipulated one (chapter 7 describes this component)

The main school building had the main school office, where the Registrar and other office staff functioned. The staff took care of fees, admissions and all other formalities. The school had a big courtyard with an open stage and a small garden. Students aging from ten year olds to eighteen year olds had most of their classes in this building. Appropriately, this building had the maximum number of rooms. The Indian cork tree, known as the *Aspiration* tree in the Ashram's 'lingua franca' (since this name is the spiritual significance of the flower given by the Mother who also gave spiritual significances to other trees and flowers^{iv}) was uprooted in the cyclone in December 2011. Other prominent trees in the main school building were Indian laburnum, known as the 'Imagination' tree and another *Mimusopselengi* known as the '*Patience*' tree.

There was a beautiful pond in the school. Lilies grew in it; and beautiful creepers of Buttercup flowers (*Victory*) grew around it. There was a prominent lotus sculpture in the pond, which one of the Ashram inmates and a teacher had designed. There was a place to sit

around the pond. One could see children around during their recreation enjoying the lilies or guppy, or with their teacher studying the pond eco system. The Main Building also housed the 'Aquarium Section', one of the sections that was open for display for the visitors^v. The school had a 'video room' on the northern side, a large hall called the 'Hall of Harmony' on the southern side, which was used for programs, talks and presentations.

The building of Higher Course known as 'Knowledge' was close to the Kindergarten building. It was a three-storied building facing the sea. The main hall on the third floor held classes of students' talks by the visitors and the students on regular days as well as cultural programs at the end of the academic year. The cupboards were aligned against the walls; it also had the pictures of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The furniture was arranged for classes in groups and after the classes, the chairs were stacked on the table and put aside.

SAICE had lab section for subjects like Chemistry and Biology lab housed in a separate building, where children went for their classes and lab work. Prominent and senior *Sadhaks* of the Ashram made the lab, under the guidance of the Mother. There were objects from the initial days in the lab, which symbolized reminiscences of the past. One of them was a huge skull of an elephant that really stood out, when one entered the building^{vi}. The chemistry lab was on the first floor of the building.

Mess for the students was in a separate building, where many students and teachers had their food. The SAICE main school building covered one 'block' (as the participants referred to a rectangular portion of the street which was 50 m or so; a street had crossing after that). The pottery and carpentry sections and the boarding for students were situated in one building. It was known as '*Amba Bhikshu*' and was located within the distance of 700m from the main building of the school.

'Multipurpose' use of space was prominent especially at the 'main building'. The parents, the Ashramites and various visitors were invited for the shows, talks, screening of video or occasional events like special performances by the artists from the 'outside' world in its premises after and during the schooling hours. Schooling spaces became open to the visitors, the Ashram inmates who otherwise did not throng these places. The physical education program also invited the visitors and audience was a special and regular group in my view other than the children and the teachers.

Linking the several boundaries

The lifeline of these separated building sections was 'movement' of students and teachers, and the spirits these 'movements' held. It added to the life of school at SAICE and to life of Pondichéry in this part of the town around the Ashram. Whether it was parents moving with children, or children moving alone or children moving with teachers, the movement acted as 'lifeline' connecting the various buildings. It gave children leeway to interact with adults that is, Ashram inmates, visitors who thronged the Ashram.

Several relevant phenomenon occurred during these movements such as, exchanging pleasantries, meeting people who would pass at particular time, exchange information or gossip, sharing of news to name a few. Separation in the spaces allowed a form of commuting like, cycle, scooters or walking. One of the favorite activities among the children of the schools was to ask for a lift from cycles or scooters from teachers to reach at their next destination. While movements and interactions linked these buildings (or islands) while the outside life traversed in between. The participants, who were part of a 'protected world' both physically and spiritually, also came across issues like eve-teasing, police, traffic nuisance and meeting strangers during their movement from one space to another. There were both pleasant and unpleasant aspects associated as the participants negotiated their movements from one space to another.

Expanding School Structures at Auroville

SAICE space structure stand in several buildings many of them were heritage and linking with each other. Aurovillians on the other hand have afforested the land. Therefore, rich vegetation surrounded it. Paths paved way through the trees, which are mainly acacias, palms, cashews and other local varieties as well. These paths were not tarred; at the most these were cobbled or left naturally. In the latter case sometimes, the mud hardened or was mostly soft due to red sand. Participants referred to the paths as 'mud roads' or 'cobbled roads'^{vii}. There was only one tar road or 'crown road' that circled around Auroville (see: Annexure 3.1a) and was means to enter it through the outside town.

Auroville is a place to experiment and innovate in ideas, which also includes civil structures. The buildings and architecture at the schools has been made with special consideration about the needs of children (height of furniture, building, open spaces to name a few) and special focus has been on aesthetics. The buildings of LB and the AID had been growing, expanding

and tried to address the feedback of the participants. For example, geese at LB used to roam freely in the school campus. Few children and visitors were scared of them; therefore, there was a debate, “whether the geese should be left free or put in an enclosure?” It was decided it would be better if they could be given a space. The children decided to make a boundary for them where the geese could be put in a safe and spacious enclosure. The teachers and children designed the space and helped to dig and cut the material like wired mesh for the boundary wall with other adults (See: Annexure 4.1)

Participants also adjusted with the challenges or flaws if structure had any. For example, the amphitheater at LB developed a crack in the floor, which was likely to interfere in walking or dancing as someone could trip due to the crack. It also echoed leading to the interference in acoustics during the performances.

A professional architect has designed LB and as explained during the fieldwork the school underwent expansion as and when the needs arose. There were permanent architectural structures like classrooms made with concrete and roofs of different materials. There were temporary structures like a tree house made with bamboo and other materials than concrete. The building at LB had rooms spread in two sections that is, set of three classrooms in a continuation but not in a row. The central area, which connected these two sets of three rooms each, was open with no walls around. The area had pillars, tiled floor, and it was used for morning assembly and then for several other activities during the day. Above the central tiled floor was the library, which had few computers for children’s activities. The school also had an amphitheater and partly covered stage. The seats were in ‘triangular prism’ arranged in steps for the audience to climb on them and to sit. LB also had two rooms and kitchen for the caretaker of the school, who stayed there with the family.

‘Multipurpose’ usage of schooling space was observed here as well. For example, at the same time in the library there could be children usually reading a book during their free time and other group of children doing activities on computer, which was usually with the teacher. There could also be a child undergoing individual reading session with another teacher. The AID has huge campus. The school building roughly divided in three sections that is, classes for lower primary were held in one set of rooms, class three to fifth in the ‘new building’ and rest of the classes in set of double story rooms. Some new set of rooms were

also under construction. It also had an amphitheater, open area for sports and couple of rooms for the staff members of the school.

The schools followed an organization of classes as per the level of age. Structurally also classes were spread with respect to division of age groups. As one entered the school premise through the main gate, the youngest children were in a hall, as classes for them were not made during initial time of the fieldwork. Near the stage there were classes for older age groups then a distance of 100 meters to walk, there was the 'new building' where classes for four to six years old were being held. The AID had open field area with arrangement of sports activity for students within the school premises. There was room of caretaker of the school and few more rooms for the teachers or volunteers to reside. Two of the teachers along with the caretaker were living in the school premises. There was a common kitchen to make food for them.

Most of the observations at the AID in Auroville were made at the upper primary school building which we all addressed as the 'new school building' because of its recent construction and alternative architecture. It had three rooms, one hall for morning concentration or other free time activities and for individual instruction if to be given by volunteers for the students. The architecture was unique and attracted many visitors. It was made out of red bricks and plastered at some places but rest of it was bricked wall. The classrooms had windows with shutters (that could be opened) and had natural light and ventilation. The building had a pond and one of the classrooms had passage through the stones in the pond. There were washing area, drinking water and a library as well.

These two schools had instances of students' involvement in the school buildings. The AID underwent major expansion of classrooms and came up with two floors of classrooms so that children could have their classrooms. The LB on the other hand came up with two main additions: a teacher's room, Life Sciences room, two small structures that is, one snake pit and another enclosure with pond for geese the students suggested and even helped to make. Another major instance of students' involvement (at LB and SAICE) with the physical space of school was the cyclone of 2011. It damaged some of the rooms like crafts and pottery section at LB; and the Tree House, the space under which mainly a shade was used for various Construction or carpentry. The students and teachers decided to redo the tree house. Subsequently, among other relevant developments at LB were installation of solar lamps at

the path, moving out of horse stable (and horses), and a new dish washing area in dining room for children and teachers. LB also has new fence on the backside of the land, since a new path was made from there to reach another place at Auroville. In order to navigate the visitors to the new venue fence would help them not to get astray in the school premises. One can conclude that the self-fulfilling structures of all the three schools were maintained neatly and were ecologically balanced. As were the buildings, so were the arrangement of classrooms with different materials and role of materials in teaching learning activity.

Spatial Organization of Sports Program

Sports program requires spaces: mainly grounds, open fields or tracks with 'standard' measurements. LB and SAICE have the standardized spaces for physical education program which are separate from the school campus. The schools symbolized spaces where classes were held and was a part of the school campus at LB and the AID or several buildings in case of SAICE. Spaces for sports activities were extension of schooling in case of SAICE and LB. At LB the program was carried out at *Dehashakti* and at SAICE it was carried out mainly at three different places that is, 'Sports ground' 'Play Ground' and 'Tennis Ground'. At the AID open fields, which were within the campus were used for sports. Therefore most of the sports activities happened within the school but students (classes III, IV and V) went to '*La piscine*' (the swimming pool at Auroville) for swimming (Ashram and Auroville have one swimming pool each).

Other than the specified spaces as mentioned above, different places around the town/state were also used to organize sports' activities or recreational events. For example, students at all the three schools also used the opportunity to go for camping or picnics around Pondichéry. In case of the Ashram school, the longer races for Athletics, referred as 'road-races', were organized at the 'Lake' property of the Ashram or around Auroville.

Spatial arrangement of the sports at SAICE

It was held mainly into three places a) Playground, b) Sports ground and c) Tennis ground. However, for the children of 'Kindergarten', the physical activities were not organized 'sports' at these three grounds. There were only some activities for body awareness and control, which were held in the Kindergarten itself.

The Playground

The Playground is located at *Rue Law de Lauriston*, it's a building in the corner and two 'blocks' (a distance measure often used in Pondichéry's *white town* apart from the streets' names or house number) away from sea shore. The Playground has its entrance from two sides. One is referred as the main entrance, which is from the *Rue Law de Lauriston* towards the sea shore and another in front of the PED office known as the 'Guest House' side in the Ashram's nomenclature (it was mentioned so in the notices while directing the entry of the Ashram inmates and visitors on important days.) One big wooden door at main entrance leads to the ground; this huge door had polish falling off at some places mostly due to excessive usage and two huge brass handles somewhat hexagonal. The high walls completely hide from the eyes of passersby 'what happens inside!' Like most of the Ashram complexes, this structure also had 'multipurpose' usage apart from being used for physical education program. There was an office, which looked into the management of the Playground. This ground is also used for movies on Saturday evenings, and for collective meditations on Thursdays and Sundays in the evenings.

There was always a gatekeeper at the door as the entry was highly restricted. Individuals other than Ashram inmates require pass to enter the gate. As one entered the gate, one could see the wide stairs in front. On the right side was office, which had with wooden benches aligned against the wall of the office. Old people often used the benches to sit and watch if something was happening in the ground.

The Playground also has a gymnasium for gymnastics and equipment for gymnastics' exercises. It has two sets of parallel bars (one of which was also used as uneven bars), one pommel horse, one high bar and one low bar, one uneven bars, three beams, three rings, and lots of bags for agility-floor exercise. Along the western wall there are wooden bars, and ropes for exercises. The Gymnasium has a high roof and windows for ventilation. On the first floor there is a rhythmic hall, on the second floor there is a covered terrace, which was used for marching by few members and for doing *asanas*. The third floor is only an open terrace. Continuing on the western side there are a few rooms for residential purpose and a room on the first floor in which Sri Aurobindo had stayed before this space became a Playground. Wooden stairs (few places had these) led to this small room, I visited the room once after the

meditation on a Darshan days, I found people bowing down in front of the picture of Sri Aurobindo, decorated with simple vases and flowers.

On the eastern side, there is a Body building gymnasium. A Projector room is also on the eastern side, to project movies from there on to the eastern wall. Above the 'Body Building Gymnasium', there is a covered terrace used for various purposes. Next to Body Building Gym there is a small room, decorated with flowers, outside which people usually stood or peeped after the meditation (Thursdays and Sundays) to look at the water color drawing on the floor, made by a very senior Ashram inmates^{viii}. The room has big metal vases and flowers in those. Outside the room on the wall that faced the north is India's map, the undivided unified India (See: Annexure 4.2). The physical map is on a white wall and was painted green, while the paint peels off from the wall at some places. The presence of the map is not fundamentalist but invoked an eschatological feeling in one's being, of certain mysticism of existence of India's unity and being an Indian (Being Indian is not political feeling but more to do with feeling of oneness in several variations and vice-versa). On the occasion of the event of 'the March Past', and the 'collective meditations' in the evening on (Thursdays and Sundays) the Mother's chair is brought and put in front of the map. Next to the wall with the map was small door, which opens into small corridor, which led to an area where toilets and drinking water facilities was available. There is an open terrace, on which 'the Ashram band' played during the March Past on the special Darshan days.

Area in the center, in between the western and the eastern walls, the floor is filled with sand. It was open that is, it had no roof and was meant for various sports activities mainly (but was also used for meditation and as an open-air theater).

The Sports ground

Sports ground is on the East Coast road, and is some 1.5 km away from SAICE. It's a huge piece of closed land divided in two portions, one towards the western side that is, the East Coast road and another on the eastern direction opening deeper into the town. There is a small lane, which divided the two grounds. On the western side, there is one small ground used for discus throws, just opposite to it, was a 360 m long tracks and the space in center is a football field, which is also used for javelin throws. Beside the football field, there are 2 pits for high jump, 2 pits for long jump (triple jump), shot put ring and a pole vault pit. There is also another shot put ring adjacent to which there was a room for storing sports'

equipment. Around it, there was a parking area for two wheelers and cycles. There are other storerooms in the ground as well.

Further down, there were two basketball synthetic courts and a sand court for basketball practice. The Sports ground also had a swimming pool and gallery to sit and watch the swimming or athletics. The huge clock tower stands above. There is a small room for sound system. There are the galleries for the audience facing the football field and tracks. Next to the swimming pool were two volleyball courts. A few rooms for residence of the Ashram inmates are adjacent to the volleyball courts.

Other part of the Sports ground is known as 'Annexe'. It is on the western side. It is a huge area used to play hockey and football. The same ground is also used for playing softball. There is another volleyball court. The latter is near the eastern side entrance of 'Annexe'.

The Tennis ground

The Tennis Ground was undergoing renovation during the fieldwork. It has a court for martial arts and a ring for boxing. There is wall practice area for tennis, two tennis synthetic courts, three basketball sand courts, one volleyball court, a wrestling pit, athletics and long jump track for children (6-8 years old) and a long sandy stretch for walking and running.

Spatial Arrangement at LB

LB's sports education program is part of sports education program for Auroville children known as *Dehashakti*. It is located near the forest area (see: Annexure 3.1a). One found the way through green trees on one's both the sides that opened into the community 'Dana'.

Outside the main grounds, there was a parking area. At the small entrance, there is a symbol of the Mother (see: Annexure 4.3) on a slab that welcomed the visitors. There was a small narrow path, which opened into a big ground surrounded by trees. There is a small room where all the sports equipment is kept and one could see the schedules for various sports activities displayed outside these rooms. There is a synthetic tennis court, basketball court and another court all in row on left side. The other side has the track little less than 400 m, which was not under use. There is room for floor exercises of gymnastics. Other equipment of gymnastics is also available.

Spatial arrangement at the AID

At the AID students used to play in the ground around new building, each day was kept for an activity like running, basketball, volleyball or martial arts. Most of the activities were

monitored by the teachers and not by separate coaches. However, (during the fieldwork) an expert for martial arts would visit once a week, which was discontinued later. The AID children did not go to *Dehashakti*. However, Auroville had one swimming pool that LB, *Dehashakti* and the AID used. Once a week the children would go in bus to the swimming pool as part of the scheduled sports activity.

Sports were compulsory somewhat like LB but not like SAICE. Many children at the AID went back in bus, which came around 5 pm, therefore sports was obvious choice to spend the time.

Classroom Setting, Objects and Usage

The classrooms most conspicuous objects were furniture and other teaching learning materials like puzzles, games, books, worksheets, toys, vases, objects to name a few that students or teachers used. Each object had a particular place and students were encouraged to respect that place; it was used carefully and put back in its appropriate place after it had been used. This was a regular phenomenon and was important part of the classes' routine. It implied that they devoted considerable time for seating arrangements and organization of objects in the classrooms. In classrooms participants also used various objects with responsibility and methodically.

The classrooms were flexible in terms of seating arrangement and furniture was moved back to the place after every time the use was over. It involved bringing chairs, tables, books, pencils or crayons, arranging them, subsequently dismantling the whole arrangement after the instruction or work was over. The students especially six years onwards helped the teachers in this. However, there were places, which remains fixed to do certain special activities like Music in *Delafon*, clay work or 'play of painting' at Auroville. The practice added to the discipline and respect of space, use of objects among the children. Participants' interaction with classroom and its objects could almost be addressed as a ritual, which was to be practiced consciously and earnestly as much as possible.

Spatial arrangement in the classrooms

The arrangement of furniture was not fixed to particular spots and could be moved around to suit any teaching-learning activity in the classes. Tables and chairs were light enough to be easily removed or arranged at different places when needed. The chairs were small suitable to the size of students and mostly the teachers used the same chairs as the students; there was

no separate chair for the teachers. This practice was relevant to understand 'role' of teacher since teachers' chair is significant symbol of authority in most of the classrooms which was absent here. Most of the teaching was done without any furniture. Sometimes the teachers sat on the floor with the children, or moved around with them wherever the learning activity was going on.

There was a very active use of the space by the participants. Structures such as classrooms, buildings had fixed usage of spaces with proper arrangements and yet there were places where rearrangements were possible. In order to establish this practice as 'ritual' of the schools in which all participants indulged in as per the need of that space, activity and objects involved, I share an observation of a special practice to lay tables, mats for the soup time.

The same open space could be meant for physical activity of children few minutes back while at this particular time of the day (9.30 am) it became the dining area. In order to make it ready for snacks, teachers along with ammas put the long tables (height of the tables was at the waist of average three years and six years old.) mats were spread parallel to the table so that one can sit on the mat and use table to keep the snacks. The area was cleaned after children and teachers finished eating. the long benches were nicely stacked one above another and put aside. The space was again ready for some other use by the students or teachers.

Obs/ SAICE-KG/ june 2009/Researcher, teachers and 3-5 years old

This was interesting to see how the space was utilized for point of view of 'convenience'.

Making use of the objects

The classes at *Delafon* and Kindergarten (two sections which were observed in detail) were full of various objects such as, display boards, blackboard, huge cupboard where the material such as, notebooks, books, colors, plastic sheets to put on table, puzzles were there. There was abundance of material but not a splurge. Each object was put to its proper use. A closer look revealed how meticulously the teachers engaged in making the objects useful for classroom. Any old object like in the following episode was most likely to be precariously decorated while old tin biscuit or chocolates boxes were used for storing colors, brushes and old paper was used to make teaching aids.

An example,

In a classroom, I spot the carton of a famous brand of eau de toilette with beautiful flowers printed on it. The teacher had decorated it with sparkles and colors. The carton is strong enough to hold the brushes that children used for painting. The carton is placed on a mettle that catches the attention.

Obs/ june09/ KG SAICE/students, teachers and various objects

Objects of different shapes and sizes had their place in the daily routine^{ix} of teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom. There were objects that could not be taken outside like puzzles, games and hence were static. Another example of a static object was piano in Kindergarten, which was used for music classes. It remained there, it was uncovered to play, a stool was placed for the artist and then covered back again after the use. Few objects also came inside the classrooms,

Today children at the kindergarten made a 'château' with blocks and then for decorations they used colored glass pebbles, some brought few leaves from outside and other objects like pebbles to decorate it.

Obs June/09/KG/SAICE/ children, teachers

The observation signified children's liberty to use the material available in the environment as tool for learning. There was therefore, wide range of objects that a child at an average would engage with.

Learning with the objects

Children had access to some of the cupboards, while the teachers exclusively had excess to few cupboards. Children always lend help in passing on various objects (chairs, tables, mats, pencils, boxes to name a few), whatever was in their physical capability to help the teachers in arranging or dismantling the learning set up. Learning to deal with the objects available in the class, or in the school was an important discipline. Teachers gave short instructions for the children to follow; in fact, most of the time went in arranging the objects before children could arrive to the main learning task of that particular day. This also became a method, by which the children learnt French in the Kindergarten,

Sitting outside in the courtyard with three years old, they have just arrived in the school. They know their mother tongue not any other language. The child was crying, irritated but saw the teacher as she pulled out a game set with clay and its tools. The first phrases a very senior ashram teacher was teaching three years old were ' donne moi le couteau, donne moi le cle, donne moi l'argile '(trans: give me knife, give me key, give me clay)

Obs/Dec09/KG/SAICE/teachers, students

The teacher said it with love and persistence and gave the respective objects to the child only when the child consciously repeated what the teacher was telling him. Since the main purpose of KG is to provide intensive program on French and Sanskrit to non-Sanskrit and non-French speaking children it was a relevant interaction for the learner.

Painting class with 5 years old were held in French, the teacher asked each child to bring a brush, some color, paper, sheets on which paper (all was said in French) was to be kept so that the paint did not stain the desk and a piece of cloth to clean the same. Each child went to the cupboard, brought the necessary things and completed the work.

Obs/ June 09/ KG/SAICE/ teacher, students

Teachers involved the children to deal with objects at different occasions in and outside the classroom. It was evident that learning how to handle various objects was important. This practice was conspicuously stated in 'play of painting^x' at Auroville:

The teacher told me that this was a special room, it was a quiet and spotless room with all white bare walls. Where children entered and mounted their charts at their height level on the wall. each step with each object- paper, pins, colors, brush, cloth, water was important. The colors and the brushes were put in the center on the table. The children were supposed to pick up the brush dip it in color and clean the extra color so that it did not drip and was ready to paint. Teacher insisted that each step was done with full attention/ concentration to avoid errors and add to the proper use of objects. No spilling was allowed. The children finished their painting and put everything back after the brush were washed, aprons hung while paintings were left to dry. As I entered, the class had finished their paintings and the children were finishing the rearranging of various objects. Teacher reminded them gently

that how the brush needed to be cleaned against the neck of the bottle with extra color. No mixing of the brush with other colors was allowed.

The teacher insisted that the idea was to teach respect of the objects and increase the duration to use the material objects.

Obs/ june2009/ the Aid/ the teacher and students

Learning to use the space and engage in behavior appropriate to that place and with the objects of that place was part of what the children learnt. The overt training part in the classroom in the episodes discussed till now showed the learning by the child. However, an overt mention by the teacher to respect the objects in a particular case was met with the students' disagreement with the idea.

In a class when a student hits the table the teacher said firmly, "aeyi! Don't you think it (the table) gets hurt when you do like this?" the ten years old immediately responded (giggling) "no it doesn't, it is non-living." There was pause for two seconds, and then teacher asserted (politely) that there is a life in the table, and that's why one needs to treat (inanimate) objects with respect too.

Obs/mar2011 SAICE/ teachers and 10 years old

In this case, the child's scientific knowledge about living and non-living objects came in conflict with the idea of 'consciousness of the matter'. I could observe another episode in a science class, which put science and consciousness ideas at conflict. The teacher was explaining about trees to the students. After explaining the scientific information, he added that he felt that many Ashramites could not think scientifically and started mumbling to inanimate objects including trees. This was another example where Science was in conflict with ideas of life in matter.

Beauty in the environment

Aesthetics was part of the surrounding where children moved, it was important input both in the environment and through art education. It was the onus of teachers along with students to maintain the beautiful environment and harmonious environment in the class. Aesthetics apart from beautiful objects implies an important aspect of matter consciousness, to believe that matter has life and treat it with respect. Most of the students learnt it as part of the

instruction, way of learning and habit. The idea of 'consciousness and physical matter' (an Integral view concept) was implied and for them to grasp.

Similarly, older students at SAICE participated in beautifying the school by taking small project of painting on the walls with few teachers; the building department did the major work. Apart from their deployment in helping to maintain the building, students on some occasions were also engaged with the building's planning and its maintenance. After the cyclone during the holidays, a few teachers have taken up the project of planting fresh grass sapling in the lawn of the main school building. Gardening was also one of the projects even at LB, by which the children were involved in defining the beauty of the gardens.

One of the common and central features of three schools was 'pond' with fish and water lilies in it. This was the relevant feature of the schools' aesthetics. It was an important place for many children to spend time and explore it. The children and teachers never out grew spending time around the pond. The ponds in the three schools held special place for children for their experiments and recreation; in which even the adults participated. The little guppy (fish) was common in the ponds, and the children enjoyed catching and leaving them back. They also put their feet in the water and allowed the fish to nibble away the dead flesh:

I was initiated into this that is to put the feet in the pond and sit at the edge of the pond by the children at The (AID) school. The children told me that the act required to just put my feet in the pond and then be still, the fish would come and bite the flesh or dead skin softly. Like a slight tickling feeling on the feet, the feet relaxed. and I used to do it whenever I was in school even at LB.

However, owing to dust in the pond and regular cleaning it required we decided not to put our feet inside.

Obs/ June 2009/The Aid/ children and researcher

Tress also added to the beauty of the campus with their flowers and shades. The children also interacted with these. The Aid and The LB had more trees in the main school campus than SAICE. Climbing of trees was not allowed but often part of activity of the children at three schools; they liked it and found free time and liberty to do the same. Aesthetics in case of ponds and trees were more proximal in the students' interactions during free time outside the classrooms.

Other objects of significance

Other significant objects were – notice boards, pictures of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, and the flower arrangement. The notices or display board or objects on the wall displayed relevant or interesting information in the classrooms and in corridors. The photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo donned almost every classroom. At LB and the AID there were other gods and goddesses (mostly Hindu deities) that formed part of the display (See: Annexure 4.4). Incense sticks and flower arrangement around the photographs were important too. At *Delafon*, as one entered the first floor, there were display boards that displayed the work of third year students, below which was a small wooden desk. On the desk there was a bowl, a small pot or a vase in which the flower was put (depending on the size of the flower). In front of the flower there was small wooden plank to hold a three inch by one-inch thin card approximately. The card always had the spiritual significance of the flower in French, as given by the Mother.

The main school building (at SAICE) had several 'Notice boards'. The one on a small wall from the back door entrance often had prayers and meditation of the Mother in French. The notices at *Delafon* and Kindergarten always displayed the works by the students or something displayed by the teachers as well, which teachers wanted to share with the students. At *Progrès* classroom in the main school building the display board changed thrice during the visits in three months, it had displayed the important monuments of India, fighter planes of India and prayers the children wrote to Sri Aurobindo on his birthday. The first two display contents were peep in the 'outside' world mainly, about India for the children and latter was a relevant theme to study development of faith in the children.

Relevance of Schooling Spaces

The physical space that the school occupies is important first as a pure physical spatial aspect, second from the point of view of being 'child-centered', and third that the spatial reality has relevance to aesthetics and meaning participants' active engagement with spaces and objects in it, signified.

A purely physical aspect of school plant was highlighted in academics during early 20th century often addressed under different heads School Building (Holy, Arnold & Anderson, 1932), school architecture (Davis, 1905) or School plant (Wilson, 1948; Herrick & Conrad, 1952). Schools have their own pedagogical needs, which effects how building should be

planned. The articles and review of school building in academics mainly came with reference to two points: one was the growing demand of schools and need of space for it. Second were the new psychological and philosophical aspects like child-centered education, learning by doing, all round development of children in schools (Miller, 1942). The needs of planning school building recently have been on rise due to these two reasons. School buildings need to be multi-purpose (Herrick & Conrad, 1952) with growing demand of space for schools. Indian Education Commission (1964-66) recommends 'school plant' to provide better infrastructural facilities to school. A School building as a result of this work became joint effort of engineers, architects, school teachers, students and educationists (Joyal,1948); this was common feature at the three schools in the field where the interactions between school teachers, students and architect was possible to improve the school building. Nelly(2008) considers characteristics of school plants and facilities as important foundation for successful schools. The table below looks into a comprehensive view of school building based on review of relevant issues of a school plant reviewed in detail by Pierce(1929)and other points in the evolving area of schooling spaces. The purpose of the table is to put all the points of school plant and present a comprehensive picture of three schools with reference to its infrastructural capacities.

4.1 Table Representing Features of School Plants and Various Facilities in the Schools

Points for the school plant	Name of the school	LB	SAICE	AID
School building		Single complex and use of other community spaces	Spread at several places.	Single complex and use of other community spaces
Single/ Multi storey		Single; only library was on first floor	Double story; multi storey	New building-single. Rest multi storey
Architects		Mona	NA	Several architects
Over all area Placement of Site Surrounding		In international township AV	In main town Pondichéry	In international township AV
Use of architectural material		Modern- concrete Experimentation with concrete	Heritage- limestone and Modern	Modern- concrete/ experimentation with concrete
Flexibility for future use		Open space	Less than other two schools (old buildings, less open space)	Open space

Cost of construction/ maintenance	High	Mostly Low but sometimes high since buildings required heritage	High
	LB	SAICE	AID
Aesthetics	Imp factor	Imp factor	Imp factor
Classroom Size	Same for all the rooms and apt for no of children	Varied	Same for all the rooms and apt for no of children
Paint of classroom Walls	White- students took a project to paint the walls and do curtains.	White	Red bricked walls
Windows/Ventilation	Huge windows natural ventilation	French windows Natural ventilation	Small Shutters Natural ventilation
Org of classroom	Flexible; utility based	Flexible; utility based	Flexible; utility based
<u>Objects in classroom</u> Furniture Appropriateness of furniture- size, comfortmovement Innovation (any*)	Locally designed Optimum Chairs and desks	Locally designed Optimum Chairs & Desks	Locally designed Optimum Seating on floor on mats with desks
<u>Electronic connections</u>	Available	Available	Available
Plugs	√	√	√
Fan	√	√	na
Notices/ display	√	√	√
Visual comfort	Optimum in all seasons	Optimum in all seasons	Optimum in all seasons
Natural lightening	Sufficient in all the seasons	Sufficient in all the seasons	Sufficient in all the seasons
Artificial illumination	Available	Available	Available
Acoustical level Smell <u>Provision of</u> Water facilities Toilet Kitchen Dining area	Silent surroundings No unpleasant smell Clean & hygienic Clean & Enough √ √	Noise from outside Smells from outside Clean & Hygienic Clean & Enough X √	Silent Surroundings No unpleasant smell Locally available Clean & Enough √ √
<u>Env of school</u> Gardens Use of energy level	Maintained by students &gardener Battery, state supply & solar	√ State supply & solar	Open space and plants State supply

Open space around	Ample with possibility of further construction	sufficient Practice of permaculture	Ample with possibility of further construction.
<u>Ecological responsive design</u>	Adoption of permaculture	Farms and gardens for self sufficiency	Gardening projects
Light	Mainly Natural	Mainly Natural	Mainly Natural
Water	Natural Water conservation	Water conservation project	Natural water conservation
Gardening	Chillies, rosella, tomatoes (products)	Banana, mango, lemon, groundnut (products)
	LB	SAICE	AID
Electricity generation	Attempt for solar	Attempt for solar	NA
Water source	State	State	State
Sustainability			
Use of cycles	Cycles / Buses	Cycles/ Buses	Cycles/ Buses
Alternative form of energy (mention)			
Use of material	√	√ (quite High)	Not observed
Recycling/ reducing/ reusing			
Garbage disposal	Adoption of project Garbology by RibhuVohra(TED)	Attempt at garbage segregation; recycle	Garbage segregation
	LB	SAICE	AID
Safety	Closed environment	An issue- attempt at cycle test for safety.	Closed environment.
Road			
Environmental hazards	Natural- insects etc. (chapter 7)	Traffic and Natural (chapter 7)	Natural
<u>other spaces for teaching</u>			
Library	√	√	√
Science Labs	Life Sciences	√	---
Computer lab	Available	√	√
<u>Crafts</u>			
Pottery	√	√	Play of Painting
Carpentry	√	√	X
<u>Playgrounds</u>	√	√	√
Medical facilities	√	√	√
Theater	√	√	√
Others (mention)			
Free area for children	Open spaces	Open space	Open spaces
Use of the spaces mentioned above	Regular	Regular	Regular
Teaching aids	Ample	Ample	Ample
Modern/	Both	Both	Both
Traditional			

Use of tools/ equipment Tools/ equipment storage area Sufficiency of tools Utilization of tools by teachers Students	As per the activity Proper utilization and storage √ Both used them.	As per the activity Proper utilization and storage √ Both used them.	As per the activity Proper utilization and storage √ Both used them.
Maintenance Cost effectiveness	By the central Auroville board	By building department and students.	By the central Auroville board
<u>use of school plant</u> for children- community- other-	√ On occasions for parents or AV not regular	√ At time open to the visitors; regular use by community	√ On occasions for parents or AV not regular
<u>Safety of building</u> Fire fighting Any other calamity (mention)	X No attempt for cyclone or earthquake resistance	X No attempt for cyclone or earthquake resistance	X No attempt for cyclone or earthquake resistance
	LB	SAICE	AID

Concluding about the relevant feature of schools building one must also take into account that these school buildings were made for a small number of children. School buildings at Auroville expanded faster as per the need in comparison to SAICE. LB and The AID were expanding during the fieldwork for need of more infrastructural facilities within the school. Schools could be rated high on certain factors like architecture, aesthetics, child-friendly, multipurpose to name a few. Dopeau (1983) argues that a well-organized school plant is going to facilitate learning, which is true for the three schools. The schools were planned as per the local and innovative needs especially when they follow the needs of children and curriculum. At times, it did not fulfill the criterion and it needed to be worked upon. For example, even if the literature suggests for the use of local material in making the school plant (Miller, 1942) which was not in wide practice in the field. The natural material would be rooftops with palm leaves, which were occasionally used. Many people in the Ashram or Auroville voiced their objection to the use of concrete and other ecological harmful material. As a school plant the schools also fared well on several aspects as small schools. However, had more artistic touch which could be described in following line,

“At the highest level aesthetic education Invites beauty to enter Into every part of (Lie school community: the building itself, its decorated classrooms, the choice of materials, the work of the children and the very way the teachers teach.”
(Coodkin, 2003, p no. na)

The schools invited the aesthetic abilities of individuals and focused on human behavior with the material and different objects in the classroom which was true to the vision of Integral Education (The Mother, 1953/2002)

Organization of Classes and Learning

SAICE and Light Bearer followed their own organization of classes and learning for children. In absence of recognition with any board, SAICE has a letter of recommendation of Ministry of Home Affairs clause recognizing its higher education course as equivalent to undergraduate pass course (See: Annexure 4.5). While LB came under SAIER: Sri Aurobindo Institute of Educational Research, a department that takes care of Education at Auroville. It also followed no examination policy and offered a simple letter stating the presence of child in terms of time spent in the school. The Aid is recognized by Tamil Nadu board, and hence has class organization like mainstream schools. However, was flexible about age group in the respective class. Class organization at SAICE had been a level organization following for couple of years and the Mother gave the names to these levels or age groups, as told by an old *Ashramite*:

Table 4.2 Class, Age, Building and Knowledge Organization at SAICE

Class name	Age groups	Building	Subject or knowledge areas offered
Kindergarten-petits, moyen, grands	3-6	Kindergarten	Oral aural skills-French & Sanskrit through play, music, watching videos
L'avenir- premier, deuxieme, triosieme annes	7-10	Flower room, Delafon	Mathematics, languages, craft, clay, music, some scientific skill in second year
Progrès- un, deux, trois	10-12	Main school building	Progrès- (Annex-x)
EAVP- un-six	13-18	Main school building	e.g. (Annex- x)
Knowledge	18 plus	Knowledge building	Time tables / Languages, Sri Aurobindo and the mother's work, engineering, psychology.

Table 4.3 Class and Knowledge Organization at LB

Name of the class	Age group	Subjects	Other areas and subject
Dragon fighters	6	Language, Maths, projects, craft, pottery, designing, gardening, science.	Exhibition, visit to AV departments, other schools open house, Pondichéry school, sea diving, bamboo center, archaeology.
Gold fish	7	Same as above + Tamil, French	
Silver cats	8	Same as above	

Table 4.4 Class and Knowledge Organization at the AID (new building)

Class and age group (as per the board) ^{xi}	Knowledge Organization
4 (9 +/- 1 or 2 year)	Projects, Social Sciences (was the only different sub not offered at other two schools), Science, Maths, Tamil, French, English, & Co curricular activities & Sports
5 (10 +/- 1 or 2 year)	Same as above
6 (11 +/- 1 or 2 year)	Same as above

What a school considers worth teaching students is an important aspect for education and development of individuals in a stipulated time (Kumar,1992). Schools segregate the subject areas that is what type of subjects are taught on day-to-day basis to children and on how these opportunities change for different age groups, different persons, and different spaces. Teachers in the schools had freedom to choose within all subjects: various skills, concepts, and teaching method. Teachers referred various textbooks and designed methods to teach the chosen content to the students. The system became relatively free of centrality of exams, competitions to compare the students. At the outset schools declared not to teach for a job or money but it focused on the joy of learning. Chapter 6 would deal with the details of Knowledge Organization.

Organization of knowledge with reference to the physical spaces is very crucial for any school. It means that what are the spaces where learning takes place? Normally students are made to enter a physical space and they remain there to carry out all the learning. However, in the schools, delivery of knowledge area had important connotation with the space. There

was variation in spaces when a particular knowledge form was delivered. Sometimes an individual child had option in choosing the spaces for learning especially after an age. An example of this was SAICE to your own time-table at sixteen years of age (see: Annexure 4.6), while at LB around 14 years a child could choose to apprentice with someone in the community.

Unfolding of Time: Annual and Quotidian

SAICE began at 7.30 am but respective teacher could begin a class earlier than this time (especially in the main school). The school functioned till 11.30 am with 'soup time' (break for snacks) at 9.30am in between. It recommenced at 1.30 at *Delafon*. It functioned till 4.00 pm and after that children went for their respective physical education program. SAICE has vacations during the month of November and the new session begins on December 16.

Students and teachers referred that the Mother scheduled the annual calendar, '*this is from the time of the Mother*' (reference often made to other practices too). The school also had its holidays on *Darshan* days and the first of every month. It also had to close down when there were 'strikes' due to political reasons or Election Day to avoid violence interrupting the normal functioning of the school. Any kind of leave for personal reasons was discouraged. Exceptions have been made for medical reasons or any family members' illness or death. In such cases, the parents informed the authority before they got the consent for their leave. Physical education program functioned even during the vacations or other days when school had to close down unless it was a law and order situation.

LB started at 8.00 am with the morning assembly. There was break time at 9.30 am. A brass bell (usually the one used in temples by the priest) was rung to announce the passing of hour in the school but for the assembly. The lunchtime was at 1.00 pm and the teachers ate after the children finished at 1.30. The classes recommenced at 2.30 pm and eventually the children left for the sports as per the schedule. The sports program was not held on Sundays, during the vacations, on holidays and during heavy rains. At LB, the new session started in the second week of July and functioned until the vacations in October and reopened in September till it had to break again before Christmas and reopened after the New Year. The school board of Auroville regulated the holidays; which were mainly the state holidays or local festivals. LB's team at time questioned the holidays and wanted to work on those days. It sometimes even re commenced earlier the school than the scheduled vacations.

The morning assembly at the AID was held at 8.30 am followed by classes until lunchtime around 12 noon. There was a snacks time at 10 am. The children who came early were also served breakfast at the school.^{xii} Therefore, children could be in the school earlier or later than the scheduled timings. The timings did not imply being in the classrooms only but children had freedom to be present in the school premises and to utilize the same. After the lunch, classes or afternoon activities were held; this was followed by another break of small snacks and getting ready for the sports program. The AID like LB commenced its Annual program in June/July, but it observed holidays for local Tamil festivals unlike LB where celebrations for Tamil festivals especially *Pongal* took place in the school and the holiday was not observed.

Students at The AID and LB took leave during the year due to personal reasons. These two schools considered the need of the community or an individual child. Therefore, the school's timetable was not an authority or benchmark for child's learning. However all children loved to come to the school due to freedom given to them which reflected in their regular attendance in all the three schools. The teachers felt that the children should spent most of their time in school related activities, which was generally agreed upon by the parents. However, in conflicts or challenges with any of the decision, the next step was 'dialogue'. One such example of discussion was finding time to do 'Home assignment' at LB and in many cases their parents felt they were doing too many things since, the schools hours were longer including the sports program. It left a little time for their individual hobbies.

Another challenge at SAICE was that its timetable always required an adult to pick up a child under 12 and to drop at the school or sports ground again in the late afternoon. With the small town getting crowded the movement of students was curtailed and adult supervision or guardians became imperative. Timetables therefore brought about a change in life style of parents which all of them made as their willful choice. It also meant that the parents chose some work for economic sustenance, in order to keep themselves engaged while their children studied in the schools. Few parents found some vocation at the Ashram and Auroville as chapter 5 would explain.

Timing the Learning

Time is one of the organizational features of human behavior, which systematize human activities. It also is a means of communication since we share the conception of time.

Zerubavel (1991) explains that temporality has strong effect on human activities. 'Time' orders, controls and regulates the activities of our lives; I add the factor of 'in and out' of various spaces in case of the three schools. The organization of our activities around time and status of authority of time, reflects the view on learning and cognition.

The study found two striking aspects of time; first allocation of child into a class as per their biological age (See: chapter 6). Time as age is a variable of what a child can learn at that age. This is a category of 'biological temporality' as per Zerubavel (1991). This is biological determinism affecting learning and it is an aspect of social reality of humans. Second striking aspect, is regulation of various subjects or learning opportunities and time spent on them. Learning activities of relevant subject at schools was distributed over the entire day and over entire year like any other school. All three schools had vacations for different occasions, times and reasons. The annual and daily schedules of the schools were meant for each one of them, and followed their own protocol. Movements and transition from one spatial temporality to another for learning and time involved in these was acceptable. Amount of time spent on learning of each subject or skill by a student indicated relevance of different types of learning.

Pacing and *Un*pacing with the time

Educational Policy and Educational Organization views time as an indicator of efficient organization of teaching and instruction to ensure quality in schools. Orellana & Thorne (1998) argue for 'politics of time' in schools that governs the students learning and hence quality teaching, since time is an indicator of school authorities'. Power over children and their families in their observation of timetables in few US schools, they commented

".... Quantitative and utilitarian view of time units, with each unit as interchangeable, with each minute equal to another minute, without regard to qualitative experience or context of placement. This approach also assumes a view of learning as a process that can be measured, quantified, and divided into equal discrete units to be administered at any time with equal effect."

(p. no 458)

The time was a regulatory factor but not an absolute especially during the school. The wide range of knowledge areas the schools were able to accommodate highlights the quality of learning forms, a child could get while overlooking at the requirement of age relatively. The schools organized activities in time schedule and followed it as rhythm but there was possibility to accommodate several other things. At SAICE other things would mean a

student could finish one's work on or before time, or also free time for students to choose an activity, some program by a visitor or visit to other place. The learning was not fundamentally co related with content in the form of a syllabus. This was largely possible since the teachers organized the curriculum and it did not come from some higher up authority. Teachers at *Delafon* had stepwise learning objectives but followed a multi-level and multi method approach in the class (ref: chapter 6), the objectives were not time bound and time as a monolithic variable gauging the students' learning.

Spaces, time and learning 'sans' adults

A school which sees free movement of teachers and students in enclosed space and outside it, is more likely to be sensitive to the role of 'freedom' in an individual's growth. Dopemu (1983) considers there should be free space for students where they can be without the presence of adults. This instills in the children to learn independently and to have the time with their peer group. The children indulge in organized, collective or solitary play. After the children finished their snacks with the teachers; children ran out to play in the sand pit, inside the class, or on swings. There was no restriction on the movement but the discipline to use the objects and to keep them back was insisted to children at that young age. Even when the child finished the individual task, he or she usually picked up any activity, which they liked for example, puzzles, storybooks or blocks/ some construction material being favorite of most of the children. At *Delafon* and Kindergarten apart from the set periods to sit and learn reading, writing and mathematics, there was also ample free time given to the children.

The children are enjoying a new card game to learn names of animals in French which teachers have made for them. The children were supposed to pick up cards randomly from the stack put upside down so that the animal and it's offspring is not visible. The child should match the animal with their young ones. They have to hold cards like in a card game, once the little one was matched correctly they put it aside. If it was wrong then both the cards went into pile in the center and any one of the child re shuffled these.

Obs/Sept 2011/Delafon/ SAICE/researcher and children eight years old

This along with other games of puzzles was an apt example where children interacted freely with objects and learnt without the supervision of the teachers. Games were the best example,

where children learn rules, categories, and concepts on their own. These are essential for the development of 'problem solving skills' among students.

The AID also had puzzles and games in the class, apart from that the children demanded for playing with ball and hence they needed access to the sports material. Teachers allowed the access and in the free time, children could play with balls and skipping ropes. Many children also used the hall (in new building) to play blocks, games like, snakes and ladders, Ludo, chess.

LB also had the same pattern for free time, during which children had access to learning material. However, LB stated clearly that it aimed to follow 'free progress' as stated by the Mother. the children as early as six years onwards had the freedom in the afternoon to choose from the learning activities like, pottery, crafts, Capoeira, dance, piano, singing, computers to name a few. Free time resulted in free play for the children or playing games like the other two schools.

Another activity was climbing trees, which children managed even if they were not allowed to do the same initially at LB. Free time also meant that children learnt to manage their learning, there were other students who wanted to finish their tasks, and they were left to be on their own. an example of the same-

On one such afternoon, when children are free to do what they wish to, I find a young 7 year old busy all alone in crafts room, he is trying to finish his knitting piece which he has started. I requested him to take photography to which he readily agreed.^{xiii}

Obs/Sep12/LB/ researcher and eight years old child

Learning without Adults was a relevant phenomenon in all the schools. Some had more, others less due to their policy and less leeway to experiment in the curriculum. Various learning activities paced with time that is, followed the time and *unpaced* with it on daily basis. *Unpacing* implied it did not take the authority of time as ultimate to judge individual learning and relied more on the pace of individual learning. At first attempt what would look as riot of activities *unpaced* with regular time slots; but eventually it had an underlying unique pattern of individual in interaction with different spaces over the time.

Regularity in the sports

The time changed its meaning drastically in sports. At SAICE the regular sports program is compulsory for all the children and the Ashram inmates round the year. The children were

not supposed to leave the station without prior permission except in extreme cases, one of the reasons being physical education was compulsory during the session. The program continued while there was a month and a half break from the school. The Physical Education program was ubiquitously perennial with the time at the Ashram and SAICE. The students who stayed back participated in it. Each day had a stipulated activity for each group chapter 7 would elaborate on it.

At LB and the AID physical education took place on the days when school was functioning. When school was off for a day or due to vacations or sometimes due to rain the sports was off. The presence of physical education activities other than *Dehashakti* added more and new options to the physical education of the child. Parents also mentioned sending their children to Yoga or Swimming classes. As a result what appeared from the responses that the time allocation to child's sports activities was mainly discretion of the parents, child and coach; This difference of time management and 'regularity' of students as essentiality resulted in quite stark views of the Ashram school's ex-students who visited *Dehashakti* or joined Auroville. Impressed by the PED and its consistent (almost army like) program they were critical of laissez-faire attitude of parents, coaches, children and teachers towards physical education. However, the parents and children of Auroville argued that there were several ways to approach physical education and why a program should be coerced on their children. In a way indicating just because the Ashram had been following a program, should Auroville follow the same?

Parents questioned the compulsion of child's 'regularity' at the program and suggested that instead of a week's program a child could attend it for three days. Rest of the days a child could participate in other activities other than the Sports Program at Dehashakti. The questioning of regularity implied mainly the questioning of the content for Physical Education. There was no consensus found in the responses of the participants. Time strongly associated with content and space especially in a Physical Education program, which was unlike in the rest of the educational program.

Conclusion: Essentiality of the Space, Time and Movements

Schools spaces and time organization gives schools its identity and platform where culture and other relevant themes could 'play' and 'flow'. Innovations visualize creation of different path for the humankind to follow therefore, the conception of spaces and time and their

utilization to regulate their social phenomenon like schooling and life become relevant to study. This chapter then sets the stage for rest of the research questions of this study to be answered. It explicated the details and meaning of spaces held by the participants from a macro perspective of school as whole, its various divisions that is, various buildings, classrooms, crossing over the spaces; while from the micro perspective it meant various objects in a macro space in relation to the participants and their oscillating conception of time.

This research found the individual in the field were not caged in the spaces but acted upon and created the spaces and crossed the set boundaries. This was more what Lefebvre in Simonsen (2005) describes as dialectical nature of individual body with the spaces. The boundaries were of space (physical), time and knowledge forms (both abstract) and individual's action on the same. It becomes a learning form from the perspective of an educationist and a behavior that was to be instilled in the learners. Hence, to me it was not only schooling that was happening in these buildings but also a change of human behavior with a conscious approach.

Endnotes

ⁱ The study does not focus on families of Ashram inmates, but look into it from the perspective of students in the next chapter. Many senior Ashram inmates and few young inmates lived with their families. An exceptional phenomenon with respect to what an Ashram is originally demanded as a condition in Indian tradition that is, to leave one's family.

ⁱⁱ Directions were reference to tell the destination one wishes to reach or parts of a building; a method of knowing the spaces, which I have to learn.

ⁱⁱⁱ The name of the level is L'avenier. One of the teachers and old Sadhak told me that the Building is most likely named after the French gentleman on whose name this house must have been.

^{iv} See Sri Aurobindo Ashram (1992) Flower and their Messages the Mother. Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust.

^v Entry of visitors was strictly prohibited or restricted.

^{vi} During the fieldwork, I spent time with another senior *Sadhak* who also worked in establishing the lab. Though we usually talked about the content, there were people who wanted to talk about the anecdotes and publish them, there was an effort by the office to do the same.

^{vii} Cobbled roads as they were called were covered by a tessellation of a cemented thick tiles. Pondichery also underwent this experiment during fieldwork and roads in old town were cobbled. This was to ensure rain water harvesting.

^{viii} He narrated the story of making the drawing with water or poster colors on the floor, the Mother supervised it and told him once for one his sketches that this is not correct and sketched it for him. He told he never kept the paper of what the mother sketched for him (indicating his wish that he would have kept it). the design has significance for individual's faith.

^{ix} One can link this whole phenomenon of rituals and practices with the issue of Faith dealt in next chapter. Faith is seen as personal virtue but is even reflected in daily and regular activities of participants.

^x For details of 'play of paining' see annexure 4.7

^{xi} There were no class records checked for age group. But the teacher reported that first criterion for class is age but children are allowed to be in the class and then try out their settlement in terms of performance, temperament and group.

^{xii} I was offered the same by the school caretaker when I was living on the school premises as a volunteer.