

Educating the Whole Person in the 21st Century —
An Evening with Sraddhalu Ranade

Held at the New York Open Center, October 20, 2011

Introductory remarks by Barbara Sargent (Kalliopeia Foundation) and Linda Lantieri (Inner Resilience Program)

Barbara Sargent:

Thank you very much. My name is Barbara Sargent, I am the Executive Director of Kalliopeia Foundation and we are located in San Francisco. Our mission is to support the evolution of communities and cultures that honor the unity at the heart of life's diversity, and we do this through supporting organizations that are working to strengthen a collective recognition of the oneness of humanity and the oneness and the interconnectedness of all of life.

We've got three different program areas. One is nurturing the inner life. Another is support for the wellbeing of Indigenous cultures, because the Indigenous cultures live in a way that is in accord with the Tao and recognizing the inner-connectedness that is between all of us. And the third area is fostering the global consciousness of the oneness of humanity.

We have from the very beginning of the foundation, which was 1996, tried to find and support programs that work in education that work with the child to support the child's innate vision, the knowledge and the awareness, the intuition—what the child, or what the soul was born with in order to live the life according to that person or that soul's purpose, so that they emerge

*Co-sponsored by The Inner Resilience Program, Global Peace Initiative of Women,
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at age 18 from the educational system knowing who they are. That's the most important thing to us.

There aren't so many programs that we can support, but a few years ago we were honored to meet Sraddhalu Ranade, who will speak with us tonight. And truly Sraddhalu holds a beautiful vision and works beautifully with the students that he comes in contact with in India and around the world. I'll speak more about that in a little bit.

So, I'd like to introduce Linda Lantieri. Linda and her work have been long-time grant partners of Kalliopeia Foundation. Linda is well integrated into the New York City public school system through her years of experience here. Her current program, the Inner Resilience Program, the mission is to cultivate the inner lives of students, teachers and schools by integrating social and emotional learning with contemplative practice. And it is Linda who holds, for Kalliopeia Foundation, the hub of our work in New York City. So thank you, Linda.

Linda Lantieri: Such a pleasure to be here tonight and a real honor to be with us together and to be with you, Sraddhalu. I'd like to just kind of frame tonight, because I know that—how many of you were in schools today? In New York City schools? Many of you. And how many of you have been connected to the work of the Inner Resilience Program in some way?

So one of the things, when I was taking my kind of quite time this morning in meditation, that came to me is that what we're doing tonight is visioning together, of what we know can be, in education. And what often happens for us, and I know that many of you know that I've spent many years in New York City schools in a variety of capacities, what I know sometimes is how hard it is to be living the life that we live each day

knowing what is possible for kids. And so what is exciting about this evening, for me, is that what we're doing is visioning together, because we already know what's the problem. We already know that schools are becoming giant test prep centers and are not preparing kids for the test of life. We already know all of that. But what we need to do is to come together to gain that inner strength and courage, to be able to do, in our small way, the visioning that we're going to hear about tonight of where we can go. And sometimes we need to come together for that strength and that dialogue, and I feel that more than anything tonight, in your company we're graced with that possibility of doing that, of visioning together. So I'm going to turn it back over to Barbara and I really want to thank you for coming and let's have the kind of dialogue I know we, in the Inner Resilience – enjoy having with each other and with our speaker.

Barbara Sargent: Sraddhalu is a scientist, educationist, and scholar at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, India, where he grew up immersed in the teachings of Indian philosophy and Integral Yoga. He's a multifaceted researcher in several different disciplines, including physics, artificial intelligence, and psychology. His decades of interdisciplinary research lend a unique perspective on the potential of education to nurture the depths of a child, which he will share with all of us this evening.

Sraddhalu speaks widely on education and has given teacher-trainings in Integral and value-based education throughout India and beyond, reaching thousands of teachers from more than 200 schools and colleges. He's also a sought-after speaker on the themes of Indian culture, science and spirituality, and the Yoga teachings of Sri Aurobindo.

His wonderful ability to weave all these diverse threads into a coherent and inspiring picture of what's missing in our education system today is amazing. And he inspires us as to how we can reimagine education for the future. So Sraddhalu, thank you for coming tonight.

Sraddhalu Ranade: We are at a crossroads in human evolution where everything that humanity had built up over centuries, everything which had served to bring us to where we are, is as if breaking apart. And we find the more we cling to those very forms, the more we fall into crisis. And yet, to let go of those very forms which brought us to where we are is threatening, uncomfortable, seems even impossible, because it might lead to greater chaos. We're, in fact, at a crisis of proportions that humanity has never faced before. We are, as a species, like the lemmings, driven, compelled. In spite of our rationality, in spite of our better understanding, we find ourselves driven to the precipice as if incapable of preventing ourselves from that collective suicide. Knowingly, we are poisoning our air, our waters. Knowingly, we are destroying our environment, which is the very basis of our life at a genetic level. Knowingly, we are putting all our children through a painful torture because we love them. We want them to have the best in the world, and for that they must go through the grind and somehow we find ourselves helpless. Knowingly, our economic systems are leading to a complete breakdown and collapse. There is more food than humanity needs, and yet, half of humanity is starving. We understand all this. We know what should be done, and yet, we find ourselves helpless: bound and chained by circumstances, by systems, by structures, by societal expectations, conditionings. And if we were to go back through to understand how this happened, how did we end up in this mess, we end up blaming “something

or other.” Perhaps it’s the government, perhaps it’s the economy, perhaps the education system and perhaps it’s the media—and it’s a tautology. Everything depends on everything else. There is no one thing you can blame. It’s as if everything has taken small steps over time, and we are in a kind of a gridlock and we don’t know how to break free of it.

In fact, at the heart of this problem is not the gridlock of society or education, or media or economy or governance, it’s the gridlock we experience internally within ourselves.

We began this journey of creating a great nation with the ideal of freedom. We created mechanisms to protect that freedom, to inculcate that freedom and to lead to a greater, freer, more beautiful ideal society. But we find that at the heart of this problem of freedom is that *we* are not free. We are trapped in our own mindset, we are victims of our own greed and desire and compulsions and instincts. And together, as a society, we are as if in a kind of a mindset time warp, unable to break free.

We are not free and therefore everything that we have created finds itself stuck in grooves that even as we try to tinker with the system, we end up with greater problems. In fact, it’s a very strange thing, if we begin to introspect. We find that from the most profound depths of our being, we seek freedom. We believe in freedom, we know it is possible and there is a deep conviction, in spite of circumstances. But it’s not just freedom that we seek, we seek also beauty.

From the moment a child is born, before any conditioning of forms can be placed upon him, the child is attracted to a beautiful object rather than an ugly object. The attraction to beauty is innate within us, even as the call to freedom is innate. From the moment we are born, we are drawn to truth, and you’ll see, and we’ve all experienced this as children, even in

kindergarten it's so difficult to tell a lie. And we are taught, we struggle, we force ourselves, teach ourselves to lie, because the consequences of the truth are often too painful. And even after we have become so skilled in lying and deceiving ourselves, because we must deceive ourselves if we must deceive others, even after the whole society has become so profoundly hypocritical, our whole being rebels against falsehood.

That's how those lie detectors work. You've seen those serials with the moment of truth, well, a person is wired up and asked these questions, and when you speak a lie, even though you believe you are speaking the truth, your body rebels, and in ways that you cannot control. Your heartbeat speeds up, your breathing becomes shallow, your skin begins to perspire, your pupils dilate, there is a rush of blood on your face, and these are things you can't control.

And why does that happen? Because our whole being rebels against falsehood. We are drawn to truths in every way: freedom, beauty, truth, love—we are drawn to love. It's wonderful to be loved, but it's extraordinary to feel love. And to feel that love pour out from within us is one of the most beautiful and fulfilling experiences of life. It makes life worth living. And all of these things—freedom, truth, beauty, love—are impossible in life, isn't it? Have you ever seen true love? Can you show an example of true love in human history? And yet, deep inside us, we know, we know it's possible, we know it's out there, we know we can manifest it.

My favorite example is of the movie the Titanic. What made that movie so wonderful, it was not the size of the ship, it was the fact that in that story, for a brief moment, these two experienced a spark of true love. And at the end of the movie, the director explained, he had a choice, whether to let the heroine survive, or whether to let the hero survive. And he said, "We

chose to let him die.” And if you think about it, had he survived, had the two gone on with life, then they would have quarreled and divorced and the whole journey. The moment of true love was immortalized because he died. And that’s the sad part of life. Because he died, that moment of true love was frozen in time. And everywhere in history you will see those sparklings of true love, sparkles of true freedom, sparkles of beauty, of all that we feel deep within us, which we seek. Somehow, we know we seek and we never realize it, and yet humanity persists. Why? That’s because deep inside us, we are that already. We are a core of pure love. We are a core of pure freedom. We are a core of beauty, of joy, of harmony. And because we are that, we seek that in form, in life. That’s why humanity always has hope, in spite of the worst circumstances outside. Because deep inside we are a core of strength, therefore, however difficult our life, we persist, and eventually overcome.

And when we consider the circumstances of today from this perspective, we can feel this sharp dichotomy of what we are truly deep within us and the mess that we have formed outside, and which we find ourselves unable to change. Education has been described as the key. The key because it gives us a chance to draw out that inner potential and manifest it. To shape and form our whole personality around that inner potential that humanity and society itself could be an expression of that. And yet, even in the very act of attempting it, we find ourselves floundering. And we need to understand how this mess came about. And it was not because we didn’t try, it was not because we didn’t hope, it was not because we didn’t do our best, truly. There were things we couldn’t help, which we were unable to change of which we were, ourselves, victims.

If we look back historically, we see certain trends and cyclic developmental passages we've had to pass through which brought us to where we are. But the last great wave that we passed through was the industrial age. And it gave us a lot in terms of material development, but the character of the age was the mindset of industry. And it was that mindset which permeated all society and infected everything else. And in that mindset, everything, even society itself, was seen as a gigantic industry, as a gigantic machine. And school, therefore, would naturally become the factory, where children go in as raw material, they are beaten and shaped and fit into different forms as necessary for the wheel, for the machinery of society, cogwheels into that machine. And as in any factory mechanism, you have an assembly line, there is a mass production, there is a mass teaching and a mass examination and the test, finally, to determine whether a piece is fit to go into society, and if it's not it must be rejected. And when we found that we didn't have enough enthusiasm to pass through this torture, well, the only way industry can flog the worker is through more fear, more threat, more whipping, of a "carrot and stick" combination. We put more exams, more tests, hoping that through that, somehow, children will make more effort.

And in the process, we dehumanize society. In fact, as we are today, we are victims of a dehumanization process going back a couple of hundred years, through generations. And it's a mindset which has gripped society so profoundly, we find ourselves unable to think differently. And yet, at the core of it, we are still, in our essence, free. We have layers in our personality, layers which are not free, and they are made of substance, which can be conditioned, which is conditioned, not necessarily deliberately by us, by society, by environment, by a whole atavism of our heredity and genes

and memes, and that we are unable to change, at least the way we are. Unless we change something in us, unless we change our relationship with the substance through which we act, in our own personality. And this is really the heart of the crisis of humanity today.

And I'm going to discuss this whole question of education from this perspective, because this is the only way we are going to be able to, first of all, understand what went wrong, and then find the strength to set it right. We had to pass through a passage where we had to attempt everything else, simply to convince ourselves that it doesn't work. And that's a very useful lesson for humanity. Because the thing which works, which we are required to do now, is more difficult, because it requires us to change, not the system we live in, not the society and the machinery and social values, we need to change ourselves. And that's hard to do. No one likes to do it. So we first attempt to change everything else, and when all else fails, they say, all right, there's no other option. We have to turn within.

That's really the crisis of humanity. If we step back from that industrial mindset and discard, unveil all the layers of our conditioning, for a moment, just allow ourselves to soar free. Feel and draw from what we know deep within, already, wordlessly, and then give words to that which we already know. Where would we go to?

And a very sharp contrast to the industrial mindset is the truth of our being, which is, each one of us is unique, each one of us already is what we are meant to be. Each one of us is, in a sense, a soul, a soul of truth, a soul of beauty, a soul of love, a soul of freedom. And a soul in evolution, that's growing, learning, exploring, and revealing, unfolding, emerging, expressing itself. That's the paradigm, that's the mindset of the future. It's also interestingly the paradigm of our most ancient past, when humanity was not

so tightly and rigidly bound in the industrial mindset, when it was in a different cycle of human development, when people were more direct, simple, honest, and we recognized that this was what we are. Many religions drew on this. They built on this insight; they grew out of these experiences. And that's why we see deep affinities between this introspective perception of who we are and what religions have taught us, in their essence, in their mystical core.

Of course, most religions lose their way in the forms of their articulation. But that's a different matter. So when we examine ourselves, and then look from there, from this soul and evolution that we are, and we look at the children who come to us, as souls in evolution, everything else naturally falls into place. And we will articulate inwards what we already feel and know deep within our heart. But we can articulate it in a way that not only makes sense but has practical implications for how the whole learning environment can be organized and how children can grow freely, joyously, loving.

The first thing we recognize is, in every child, that essence, that potential, is already there. That which we must become in life, which we must express, is already within us. There is nothing we need to take from outside. What we draw from outside is an experience which helps us draw out what is within us. If we did not experience the challenge of life, the pain of a contradiction, we would never draw from within us the strength that is inherent within us. When you look back at life, you see the points of greatest growth are those when we were in a crisis. And it's not that the crisis taught you something from outside, it created an opportunity to draw out what was already within. In that sense, we can say all our learning or our taking in

from outside is really a means to draw out what is within and that's the true sense of education.

And so the first formulation we can give to this is to say, the first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. Because if we were to take something from outside and try to plug it into us, it would be artificial; it will fall out because it's not us. But the only learning we have is that unfolding process of drawing out. In fact, if you observe carefully, even at an academic level, let's take an example of something which is most mundane and superficial, such as learning a formula of mathematics, or physics, or a technical term or idea of biology.

When you are learning something from a book by rote, you don't understand it. And you work to penetrate the words and formula to get to the insight, the truth that it represents. And there is a point where suddenly you click to connect to it, and the moment you connect, there is this: "aha, I've got it." That moment of "aha" is the moment of true learning. And observe what happens then. In the moment of "aha" it's not that you plugged in something from outside into you. The "aha" experience was something awakening within you, lighting up from inside. When you saw through, an insight of the idea burst out. And once you have the "aha," you experience, in that moment, a lighting up and a joy of that revealing. And the idea, the insight, blooms as if from within. And notice in the classroom setting when a child has the "aha," he has understood it better than the teacher could teach. And he can explain it to other children better than the teacher can.

And you can say therefore all learning is really a drawing out, an unveiling, revealing, removing of veils, which are preventing us from seeing it. Observe what happens when you are trying to get to that insight and suddenly the insight comes, the words you use to describe, you say: "It's so

simple; it's so obvious, look at it this way.” And the other child changes his mind's perspective and he catches it also. And you notice in this experience two great things. First, when you say, “It's obvious,” you mean by that, you already knew it. Isn't it? And second, when you say, “Look at it this way,” you are asking for a shift of perspective as if to go around a barrier that was preventing you from seeing it.

And ultimately, therefore, all true learning is a drawing out of that which you already knew, that's when it's obvious, that's when you truly know it, by the removal of a veil which prevented you from seeing what was already within.

If we catch this, the whole interaction within the classroom can now be structured around creating “aha” experiences. Assisting the child in revealing, discovering the experiential insight. So the first principle of true teaching is: nothing can be taught. And what's my role as a teacher then? Well I assist the child, I'm a helper, I'm a friend, I'm a guide, I'm a mentor, I'm not a teacher anymore, because I can't teach. I can only help you to learn, and the whole dynamics of the class interaction changes.

This is a very profound insight. In fact, dwelling on this, you can restructure all interactions within the school space—including inter-teacher interactions, including the way classrooms are set, including how a curriculum is organized, everything can be recast around this one insight, one principle. And if nothing can be taught and we want to create “aha” insights, what tools can we use? What are the means available to us? Can we create an “aha” experience? Is there a process we can use? Are there some tools we can utilize?

Sri Aurobindo describes, points to, two great gifts that nature has already embedded deep within every child. And it's a gift of nature. We've

done nothing for it. Nature has a huge investment to ensure that we grow up, even if somehow we were in the forest and our whole family tribe was eaten by some lion and I'm the only baby that survived, I still need to learn and grow and come to my full potential. So nature has already implanted these two gifts.

And the first gift she has implanted is an insatiable curiosity. You notice how far that can take us. You can observe this curiosity in the fetus in the womb. They can observe a fetus, and when the mother or father speaks, the fetus turns. It's trying to identify the source of sound, familiarize itself with this interesting, attractive voice. And from the moment it's born, the child turns immediately to that familiar voice that's it's been listening to for months, and that's curiosity. It wants to know, what's the source, even before it can open its eyes. And as the senses open up and unfold, at every step, through all senses, it's trying to reach out to get to know its world. And the whole curiosity is turned outward. And you see, at the earliest stage, it is a sensory development that predominates. Subsequently, it becomes a more emotional development and then a more rational development. At each step it's still the same curiosity, it's just changing forms.

The baby bangs away at a new toy. And you say, "Oh, that's destructive behavior." But what's the baby's instinct? That's an interesting sound, that's an interesting bouncing experience. Oh, how far does this go? Wait, it cracked! Wow, that's an interesting experience. Feel the vibration of a cracking object, it's a fascinating experience, and it's not thinking of good or bad, it's just a sensory experience of a new world it's born into. And that's curiosity. And when it asks questions, where did the sun go at night? Where did I come from? That's the same curiosity. If you did nothing else except feed that curiosity, the child will find his way through life.

But notice what we do, instead. We try to dampen that, restrain that, and, “Oh, don’t be restless, don’t disturb me. I’m busy now. Don’t ask silly questions.” And what do we do in a classroom setting because that’s the discipline of the school? Don’t speak unless you are spoken to. And if you have questions, you are going to wait. You are going to have to wait until I give you a chance to ask a question. And the whole thing is to suppress the instinct of curiosity, until this curiosity, of course, cannot be suppressed; it just gets diverted into other channels. And then we complain as teachers, “Oh, children are not interested in learning today.”

We further compound the problem by making the whole learning process profoundly boring. And then we complain, “Oh, they are not interested.” Interestingly, they are interested in whatever else they are doing when they don’t want to study. And that’s the curiosity, that’s the learning experience they have. They find ways around our limitations, roadblocks that we place. If we could recognize that this curiosity is our first tool to assist the child to learn, we could reorganize the entire content of her interaction around this one thing. And you can see you don’t have to know anything as a teacher. You just have to support the curiosity and the child will find his answers. It makes the job so much easier.

The second great gift that nature has implanted in every child, every child is a natural hero worshiper. It’s an interesting thing. The child looks to you, parents, and teachers, as his hero, as his ideal, as his role model: I will be like my mom, like my dad, like my uncle, or that favorite teacher, and that’s their reference always.

And you will see children imbibe, absorb—an imitative tendency. They absorb all your habits, all your mannerisms, all your values, like sponges soaking up everything. It’s not always the genes which transmit

these things. It's the environment of an embracing consciousness in which they soak up like a sponge; even mannerisms, without realizing it.

And this hero worship, at the heart of it is an attempt to rise to an ideal. And what's the ideal the child has? You. He doesn't know anyone else. You're the closest thing he has. If you can provide that reference, the child will grow to be that ideal, or will struggle at every step to use that as reference. But, if we don't, then the child instinctively shifts the focus of idealism to someone else who is more ideal.

So if you observe yourself—for example, if you look back at your school years as a student, there is one teacher that comes to mind who is your ideal. And when you have difficulty in a class interaction, spontaneously your mind turns to that teacher. And you wonder: “What would that person do?” And you spontaneously flow in the same groove in that vibe of that teacher's consciousness which you've absorbed.

And you flow spontaneously in forms without even thinking of them. Just the vibe of that consciousness emerges as a certain style and form of expression. And that's what happening in children. They spontaneously identify those role models. And if you don't find good enough role models here, you have them on TV, you have them in cinema, and every cinema has an ideal or at least a dramatic role model. They even think that that's how those actors are, that's why they hero worship those actors. But the instinct there is really to find a reference of the highest potential and imbibe it by absorption. So if the child has this hero worship instinct, provide him those references and then he will do the rest. You don't have to teach anything. And how would you do that? Ideally, you be the example: “Oh, I'm not good enough.” But the best example I can be is the attempt to be good enough, the attempt to live up to my own ideals, is itself the ideal I can set,

and it's a practical ideal. We can't be perfect, but we attempt always to exceed our limitations. And you will see the ideal, the reference for the ideal of the child are precisely those things we spoke of in the beginning: truth, beauty, love, freedom. That's what attracts the child. He does not get attracted to somebody who is always lying; someone who is always uncouth, coarse and rough. That's never, for him, an ideal. Instinctively, because we are that, we look for those symbols.

So the best thing you could do is actually to give them those ideal stories, because at least in the story there are ideal forms from mythologies and those are very powerful because of their archetypal nature. They relate, by resonance, profoundly to different aspects of our own being. And help them to align to the extremes of perfect potential and ideals. And you can start with those, or draw from great examples from history. There are always extraordinary people in history, each in their own way extraordinary, with many other feelings, perhaps, but it is that extraordinary potential which attracts us to them.

If you just take an example, because it's so topical today—Steve Jobs. What did he do that made people feel so deeply for him? He was a businessman, a multimillionaire who just sold things which you never thought you needed and he did it well. So what is it that draws people to him and that makes you feel? It's not his business acumen. It's not the money he earned. It's something of that obsession for perfection. And it's not even seen because we never met him personally. It's the glimpse he had of a perfect potential and the ability to materialize it and give it form and then reach it out to us. And the thing which attracts us is this connection with something perfect, something beautiful, something which is worthy of our ideals. And he made it possible, that's what makes him a great man.

Did he have a happy marriage? Did he behave well with his employees? None of that matters. It's this potential of an ideal. And in history you will find many examples that children will find support from. And if you observe in your own life, as a child you will find there were some historical personalities that attracted you, that moved you, and even that became an inspiration that stayed with you for life. And it's important that we give them those ideal examples.

So through narration, through stories, even through selective cinema, things which draw out heroism, courage and selflessness, self-sacrifice, all of these are powerful symbols through which a child learns far more profoundly than any moral and ethical education you can give with books and by rote. These are two gifts which nature implants in every child. And we use them powerfully to help a child to learn when nothing can be taught. So this being the first principle.

There is a second principle that emerges now from this insight. The second principle of true teaching is that the mind must be consulted in its own growth. Remember, every child is unique and remember at the core the child already has all that he needs to express in life. And so if he has to express it in his own unique way, we can't impose our idea of what's right on him. We need to refer to what is his deepest aspiration, what is his deepest potential, what is the line of unfoldment and sequence of unfoldment of his potential? And that's unique for each. And as a teacher, therefore, my first responsibility is to observe the child. Observe, what kind of a being is he? What are the things that he aspires towards? What is it that draws his attention naturally? Observe his temperament, observe his interests, observe his aspirations, observe his nature, and then align the content of experiences that I offer him to feed and develop those along those lines.

It's a very interesting concept that exists in the Indian tradition, which is called svadharma, loosely translated in English, it means, self-truths. Dharma is truth, sva is self-truth. And the idea is that each one of us has a unique truth, and it's meant to flow and develop uniquely along the line of your truths, and no two are alike. And the great statement that is made in the Indian tradition is that it is more important for you, more valuable for you to fail in your line of development than to succeed in imitating someone else's line of development. Think about it.

What do we mean by success? The references we use for success: "Oh he made it big. He was famous. He made a lot of money, etc., etc." Doing what? Following someone else's truth. And if you look at such a person, he is profoundly unhappy. Look at Michael Jackson and his internal problems and you can see what happens when someone is pushed into a groove that's not natural to his own truth. But, on the other hand, if you follow your innate line of development, you may not be successful in the conventional sense, but within you will be profoundly happy. Because at every step you are doing what you enjoy doing, what you like to do, and maybe you don't make it big, the way people think it should be, but I did it in the way I needed. And I'm happy. I'm satisfied. I lived my life the way I needed to.

So this idea, that there is a line of development unique to each. Once we recognize it, then as teachers, we can assist the child to grow along his line. Just to use an analogy: you can't take a grain of corn and plant it and then whip it every day and demand that it become a grain of rice. It doesn't work. There is a line of development it has. If you keep trimming and hitting at it, it becomes a bonsai: it never grows to be a giant tree and it never develops its potential. We are full of bonsais today in modern society—people who are stunted, underdeveloped, incapable, locked up, bound and

with complexes. It's unhealthy. It's sad. It's pitiful. But most of all, it's hypocritical.

That's what makes us unhappy. That's what makes society sick, because we are not what we are. But if, instead, from the very beginning, if we are allowed to grow along the line natural to us, and maybe that line is not a straight line, it's a zigzag, we wander through so many different experiences, but at each step we feel we are learning, we are growing, and it's interesting, then we're happy. We are healthy, we are true to ourselves.

You notice this difference between people who have grown up in cities and people who grow up in simple households in small villages where they have freedom and they can pretty much do what they like. And you see this difference when you look in their eyes.

When you look at this uneducated orphan or not overly-educated simpleton from the village, when you look in his eyes, it's transparent. What he thinks, what he feels is what's out there. What he says, what he acts, they are all in one line. But in the city, especially when you have gone through the rigors of modern education, when you look in the eyes, it's veiled—not one veil, layers and layers of veils. There is a whole complexity of thoughts contrary to feelings, contrary to words, contrary to actions and you never know what's real. In fact, the person doesn't know what's real. I don't know what's real within me. I'm just doing what works at that moment. I'm not myself.

If we assist the child to grow naturally, however zigzag his path may be, he will be himself, that's assured. And he will be happy and he will be healthy and society will be healthy.

Interestingly, observing this unfolding process, we notice nature has, again, a very interesting support system, a gift, we might say. And that is, in

the unfoldment of personality, and there are many layers and many parts, in the unfoldment of personality, that which is the current focus of development is the activity which is interesting. Notice, when a child is at the age when the brain is developing the sensory faculties, the most interesting thing for him is a sensory experience. However weird it may be to us as adults, listening to an object break, listening to a hammer banging away on a vessel, it's noisy for us, but for the child it's a novel and unique experience because the whole brain's development is centered on the senses.

Once he moves out of that phase and is in the development of emotions, it is the play of emotions—liking, disliking, making friends, making my best friend versus my best enemy, and then switching them and exploring those relationships—that's fascinating! And then, when he enters the domain of abstract thought and speculation of ideas—that's fascinating! At that stage, when he's in abstract thought, if you say, "Uh-uh your sensory development is deficient, let's go back and train the senses,"—boring! What nature is doing is going through a process of a natural sequence of unfoldment of faculties, and she ensures that that which is the current development of the brain and mind is fascinating and interesting.

So if you did nothing else, automatically the child would go through the normal sequence of things. And when he gets bored with something it means he's had what he needed, he moves on and finds something else that's interesting, and he will grow. But if, as a teacher, you observe this principle, you can help a child to develop what he most needs by noticing what is interesting for him at that point. And it's not the activity he does, but the particular faculty of his consciousness that's being utilized in the activity. For example, you watch children playing video games. "Oh, that's unhealthy, it's full of violence, stop it." That's the first reaction. But if you

observe what it is that fascinates the children, you'll notice it's not the violence that fascinates, it's the state of immersion of concentration in which you are handling two or three different focal points. It's a state of multiple concentration, not one point, but three or four points.

It's the turn of vigilance with your senses, the turn of mind to develop a strategy, and so on. They are all powerful faculties of our consciousness, which are being trained while they play the video games. It so happens that the game has this huge dose of violence. Yes, that is bad. If we could remove that and keep the rest, that would be a perfect game. Or perhaps there's even an age when violence is fascinating.

I often have this interesting interaction with children of a certain age group. When, on someone's birthday, we say, "Okay, what would you like to do?" And the child says, "Tell us a ghost story." And I say, "Oh my God, that's not exactly what I want them to do." But if you observe what's behind it, there is something interesting. When you narrate the ghost story, it shouldn't be flat; they want to get scared. But when they are scared, they are very uncomfortable. They can hold each other and they shake in fear and sometimes you get reports from parents, "My child couldn't sleep last night, what did you do with that ghost story?" And yet, they ask for the ghost story. What is it? There is an experience of thrill, an experience of emotions, of fear, of danger, of courage, of overcoming the fear. That's the struggle they are experiencing. And they are learning and it's fascinating, at that age.

Once you cross that age—a ghost story? Uh-uh, been there, done that—it's over. So even in the video game there is a phase when the experience of violence can be a useful experience — suitably tempered, suitably balanced and put in context. But the point I'm making is, try to get beyond the form of their interest to the faculty that's being utilized and developed. And then

provide them support for nurturing and training that faculty. And you don't have to do much. The child will learn on his own.

So when you say, "The mind must be consulted in its own growth," you can see what profound implications this principle has. But there is more. We notice also that there are types of minds, there are types of natures, there are types of personalities, and you need to recognize that and assist the child to learn along his track. Can we categorize, can we describe these, and there are many systems of doing it. But if we go back to the essence of all systems, we find certain interesting combinations or patterns.

We find there are three kinds of learners. There are children who learn through their sight; they observe something and they've got it. They observe you typing on the keyboard, how you did the password, how you got through certain things and the next day, before you realize it, they have done exactly the same thing. That's one type: the visual learner.

And there is another type which goes through hearing. And the visual sight is not enough; he needs to hear it again and again. And through hearing, he internalizes. And this child will tell you, if you draw a picture on the board, it's not enough. He says, "You explain it to me again and then I will understand." And when there is this one-to-one connection with emotions connecting us, he's listening with emotional contact, and he gets it.

And there is a third type that says, "That's okay, you've done it there, but I don't get it until I have it in my hands and until I do it myself." In practice all three may be as intelligent, potentially. But, as teachers, we tend to deprecate the second and the third as not so intelligent because they take longer to learn. The first type learned by looking at it, so they say, "Ah, they are smart, they got it." But the other two types could be just as smart in terms of intelligence, but because they need a different channel to internalize

and experience and we didn't offer that channel, they were at a disadvantage, and we label them as slow or less intelligent.

If we could offer them the experience through their mode of learning, you'll find they pick it up as quickly as the visual learner. Especially in the industrial setting of a mass class teaching, the only mode of connection is visual. And it's the visual learners which automatically come up at the top of the class. But in life, it's often the others who make the interesting breakthroughs.

So, ideally, if we recognize the type of the child, we can change the kind of interaction we have to meet their particular sensory axis. And if you could even make an experience axis through all three senses, that would be perfect. And so the entire class interaction can be recast with this awareness, or even the children segregated by this type of learner and the class interaction tailored to their needs. And you would have an extraordinary advantage and children would learn faster and enjoy it much more because you recognized their type and addressed their need. But this is one insight we have. There are other insights also. If we look and recognize the types of emotions, their types of thinking, their core aspirations, and we could have interesting categories and interesting discussions of how to address those. Especially when it comes to discipline issues, we can recognize three different types, even within that, and address the child according to his need. I'll just touch upon this briefly.

When children do something wrong, mischief, as we call it, and we want them to change behaviors, if we address them all the same way it doesn't work. They are some who are just so stubborn they don't get it. They refuse, they rebel. And that's because we are not tapping, accessing them through the right channel of their temperament, their nature. There's a type that

understands because it's right. And you can tell that type, "You know this is wrong, because..." and you give a whole explanation, "...because it disturbs others, because it distracts another, because it interrupts in someone else's freedom." He gets it.

But there is another type which doesn't get it with this. He needs to experience the consequence of that error. And you have to have him pass through the experience of the consequence. So he spilt water, well the consequence is we have to clean up the floor. So he must clean the floor for the water that he spilled. And that's fine, he gets it.

There is a third type, which is naturally heroic, and you have to tap that heroic temperament and say, "You are such a great person. This action is not worthy of you." And that resonates deeply with his emotions. And so you find the right channel of access and you'll find discipline is not such a big deal.

There is an interesting study which was done in one of the universities in the U.S., when children were using swear words and all the punishments did not work, even detention did not work, and lectures did not work. What worked? When they were fined. For ever swear word you pay \$10.00. Within a single session all the swearing stopped, because it touched them at the level where it meant something. The point I'm getting at is, if you observe the children carefully, if you recognize the type of their nature, of their mind, of their emotions, of their aspirations, you know how to access them the right way. And the process becomes very easy. It sounds ridiculously simple, but that's how it is.

In the industrial mechanism, we have flattened everybody out. We say, "They are all equally the same raw material, and if we dish it out to them in the same way, they will all get it." That's not true. We are all

unique. So the second principle of true teaching is, the mind must be consulted in its own growth, and you can see, it's a huge ocean of insights that follow from this one key.

And from this, we come now to the third, the third principle of true teaching. And that is, to grow from the near to the far. And this insight comes from the recognition that that which is innate within us does not suddenly burst out in one go, but unfolds in layers as the bud blooms to become a flower. Unless the outer petals open first, the inner petals cannot open. They don't have space to open. And there is a natural sequence of unfoldment. There is a natural pace of unfoldment. If you pump the plant with steroids and make it burst out quickly, yes, the flower opens up, but it has no perfume inside. The fruit grows to an exaggerated size, but it has no nutritional value and no flavor and no taste. There is a rhythm, there is a sequence and there is a time required for that unfolding. And that sequence and unfolding can be described as "near to far". That which is near, close to the senses is where we begin. From the senses, through the emotions, through the emotions, through the intellect, and even within this there are subcycles. But without going into detail, once we recognize this, then we approach that which the child is ready for, and not go to things they are not ready for. And I'll give two examples here.

In many schools, we begin to teach children to write while they are in kindergarten. We teach them the alphabet, we teach them the mathematics tables, and we have them start writing when the hand is not ready for fine motor skills, when the brain is not ready for abstractions. And the result is they spend years struggling with this, until their brain catches up and then suddenly it becomes easy and they get over it.

Now, in the school where I grew up, where these things are attempted to be put into practice, we teach writing at the age of seven, six to seven. And what other children in other schools would take three or four years to learn, these children pick up within six months, because we caught the brain at the time when it's ready for that particular skill.

Or to give another example, and this is something we can observe with MRI scans of the brain, if a child is forced to learn mathematics tables prematurely, as in kindergarten, when the brain is not ready for that abstraction, then the brain is forced to deal with something without intermediate steps. It jumps to a new level of development, skipping those steps and there is a kind of a barrier to the passage of information in the brain.

And do you know, dyslexia, when observed in the brain scan, dyslexia is nothing but a “hop” in the information flow, a layer skipped. We are causing dyslexia by pushing the brain to deal with abstractions before it's ready. And the strange part of this whole mindset of industry of the examination system is, if you have an exam in class 10, then you start preparing for it in class 9, and because in class 9 you have to be ready for that exam, you start preparing for it in class 8, and it starts seeping backwards. And the school thinks of its reputation, “So that I have better pass marks and I have a better reputation for smart kids who are high performers, I test the children coming in to ensure that they'll be capable of that kind of performance.”

So your class 10 exam determines your class 1 entry. And what do parents do? In order to put my child, whom I love so much, into that best school which will give him the best things of life, I grind in him all the stuff he needs to learn to get through the entrance exam for this good school. And

you see how it goes backwards. From the moment the child is born, parents are already thinking: which school will it be? What do we need to do for our children right now so that they are prepared for that good school? The whole career track across schools is mapped out in their minds and it starts drilling already in their behavior. “If you do this, you won’t get into that school. You must behave yourself. You must learn this,” and so on.

And in this whole process we are skipping steps, leading to a disjointed personality. The brain is damaged, and this can be seen in MRI scans even after we’re an adult. And it’s so hard to go back to that layer which was skipped and to train it. But that’s the only way to correct that dyslexic condition or whatever other psychological damage we have. We are forced to go back to something which is no more natural to an adult and deal with it and organize that layer of consciousness.

So we see our faculties, our consciousness arranged in layers, unfolding. And that, which starts from the nearest, most material, grows towards a more abstract, towards mind, through those layers. And at each step of an ascent it turns back and reintegrates with the layers before. And once we recognize this, we can sequence the curriculum, we can sequence the class interaction, even within the classroom for a single day’s program, we can make it grow from the senses to the more abstract. Even in teaching a topic such as history or geography or physics, we can go from the near to the far. And what do we mean by that? History from the near to the far doesn’t mean we work backwards in time, it means we start with the history of our people—my family, my town, my city, my state, my country, my culture, my world. From near to far, that which is accessible and meaningful to me.

Or, if it's physics, then you start with a sensory experience and then develop from it to an abstraction of formula. And notice how our textbooks actually do the reverse. The first thing they do is they give you an abstract word and an abstract formula and then send you to the lab to do some experiment, which somehow corresponds to that formula. How? We are not too sure, and we are supposed to figure it out on our own. If, instead, you do something with your hands and there is this magical explosion and smoke and color and fire and whatever the experiment is, and then give a name to that experience, "this is what we will call it." Then, for the child, it's obvious, it's simple, I already experienced it, I know it, and then I give names to it, which is fine. And then those names are described and experience described and then we can word it into the shorthand of the formula and say, "Oh, I understand that formula perfectly well. It's just a quick way of noting what I already understand and feel."

I will just give—there are many examples I could give of this but maybe we're short on time. But you see how a near to far approach makes it possible to convey even the most abstract concepts. And I can assure you, for those of you who hate mathematics, you could do a near to far approach and in 10 minutes appreciate algebra, appreciate integral calculus and differential calculus and differential equations, or whatever it is that's the abstraction that we hated. Because we go near to far, it will actually appear to you as, "Oh, that's obvious, it's so simple."

So recognition, not only that our personality unfolds from near to far in layers, but also the content of our experience in developing the high experience must grow from near to far. And then suddenly all the rest of our content and pedagogy falls into place. If you observe these three principles of true teaching—nothing can be taught, the mind must be consulted in its

own growth, to grow from the near to the far. These three principles capture the whole process of our educational experience. They are profound and have profound and varied implications, and I leave you with just these very simple formulations as seeds of what can be developed. And you will notice any problem you have in a classroom, or with a child, or with your own learning, because as adults we are all students also, if you have a problem, refer to these three and you will find some insight, which will help you break through that problem.

There is another factor which is peculiar to modern education, which goes contrary to the innate temperament of our mind and brains working, which was not so in the earlier systems of education before the industrial age. It's not so in the way we, ourselves, learned. And yet this error is imprinted in our educational system and the error is, "to teach in snippets." We cut up the time of learning into tiny chunks of 30 minutes, 40 minutes, it varies, but typically it's about 35 to 40 minutes. And what happens is, from the point you start entering this new subject that we are studying, it takes about 10 or 15 minutes to get into the hang of it, build your concentration, and the last 10 minutes, a part of your mind is already waiting for the bell to ring. So the actual time spent in the immersion of concentration is barely 10 minutes. And how much can you learn in that time?

In fact, as adults, we are already steeped in that habit, it's there in our minds, deep inside, subconsciously. Whenever a person has to give a public lecture, the normal thing we tell him is, limit it to 40 minutes. Why? Because if you observe an audience, at the end of about 40 minutes, suddenly the audience starts becoming restless, because internally this bell has just gone off, the school bell. Time to change class, "Oh, why is this guy still talking the same thing?" And then we fall back, once again, in a new cycle of

concentration. But if you observe how you learn when you have to really do it, you don't stop every 40 minutes. You don't change subject every 40 minutes. You take one thing and keep at it and keep at it, hammering away, until you are sick of it and then you throw it away and go to rest. And then you wake up and again take the same thing and keep at it and keep at it.

In the ancient times, the method of learning was to take a single subject and pursue it for days together, sometimes even weeks, until it was thoroughly mastered and then we went to the next subject. Now, for obvious reasons, we can't replicate that model today: it's hard on the teachers; that's one of the biggest reasons. But the point being, if we can extend the duration of the class, if instead of teaching in snippets, we take up a continuous state of concentration or immersion in a subject or a topic or an experience, take it to its full, then we would be also able to absorb far more. Not only that, we notice what happens in the brain. When you study for a long time, there comes a time when you can't take in any more, you are as if full-up. You can't, just can't take it in. And what do you do at that point? You leave it all aside and you go out and play until somehow it gets digested, and then you come back and continue.

There's a very interesting study observing the brains working when we learn something new. And it confirms this, and it teaches us how to teach the brain. What we find is, when we first learn something, the information goes deep into our temporary memory. And then, when we stop learning, we go out and play in the garden. That's when the brain organizes the material from temporary memory and puts it in the permanent memory.

So I'm going to ask you, where did the real learning take place, in the classroom or in the garden? [*Audience member: In the garden.*] Obviously. But if, and this is the interesting part in the MRI scan, if, instead of going

and playing in the garden, I change subject and start learning something new altogether, the brain takes this new information and overwrites the information in the temporary memory. All the material in the temporary memory is erased and replaced by the new information. And then the class bell goes and we move to the third subject which goes in and replaces the second subject, and the class bell goes and the fourth subject replaces the third.

Try this as an experiment, when a child comes home ask him, “What did you do in school today?” And the only thing he can tell you is the last class. All the rest actually got erased from his brain because we never gave the brain time to organize and assimilate and put it in the permanent memory. And you see your own instinct was to throw away all the books after all that intense study and go and play and just allow the thing to get digested. So we recognize the mind needs two phases: first an absorption phase, followed by an assimilation phase. And during the assimilation you are not permitted to learn something new. You can do anything you like, including play, including daydream, sing a song, have fun, chat, but not learn something new. Watching TV doesn't count, that's learning something new. It erases. It does more things also. It weakens the power of concentration. I will briefly digress.

If you will watch someone watching TV, you will see their pupils dilated, and their eyes don't blink. These are two classic symptoms of mild hypnosis. The child, or the adult, we are in a state of hypnosis when we watch TV, because the screen is flickering and the image is changing. An attractive program is one in which the image changes every 3 to 5 seconds. A good editor of a movie changes the scene, changes the camera angle every 5 seconds, maximum 10 seconds; beyond that, it becomes boring. Imagine

what that does to the brain. It stimulates, it hyper-stimulates it, and with a flickering screen, you are hypnotized.

Try to sit in a room where a TV is switched on in a corner, and try to read a book. You'll find your eyes constantly drifting towards the screen. You won't be able to hold attention on the book. The TV not only puts you in that state of mild hypnosis, it puts you in a passive hypnosis, where you drink in all the junk (that's how they pick up the swear words in a single movie), but it also weakens your power of concentration, because the mind doesn't have to make an effort to hold attention. The constant visual changes hold your attention.

Have you ever watched this band of the news which rolls below, if you are sitting at an airport it's the same thing repeating itself every five minutes, and yet you are compelled to read it, just in case something else came up. And that's the hypnotic power. It grips you and you can't pull away from it. That's an aside. I'm saying there is a spirit of assimilation, absorption and then the assimilation, and TV doesn't count there. Assimilation can be anyhow: you can sing, chat, daydream, it doesn't matter. If you remain quiet, keep your mind silent; then the assimilation is most complete and most effective.

If you then allow your mind to wander over what you have studied, thinking about it, dwelling on it, immersing yourself in further thoughts around it, meditating, so to say, with your mind drifting around that idea, that's most effective. And it leads automatically to the third step. And what happens when a child comes home and he's had a wonderful activity in school where he's learned so much truly. What does he do? He comes home, "Mommy, you know what we did in school today? And he will repeat to you all that he's learned." If he enjoyed it, you will be sure that he will repeat it.

And that's the third step. Automatically the mind, the brain, the personality wants to express: absorption, assimilation and re-expression in your own words. It completes the loop. Now it's yours. It's your creation. It's your insight; it's your experience, your knowledge.

So, if once we've got this, within the classroom we can build the three-step process in the class interaction. We can't do it in 35 minutes. With little children, of course, you can. That's kindergarten. But already, when the mind is sufficiently developed, it needs a longer time. Extend the duration of the class interaction and bring in these three steps. And you will find that what used to take two months to learn can be better learned in one month. A 50 percent reduction of time spent in learning. It's dramatic. Dramatic. It's not something which is out of the blue; that's the training we've done with teachers in schools, hundreds of schools and it's dramatic, just because we recognize the rhythm of the mind and brain. And develop the learning experience around that rhythm. Imagine how much time we waste in erasing layers and layers of learning every day. And if we just give the brain enough time to assimilate and express, so much is absorbed and retained and becomes yours.

So this recognition of the way the mind learns, and adaptation of our class around it, the state of immersion in the link is a very powerful insight. And in all these, the point I want to highlight is that once we begin to observe the mind, the brain, the individuality, the personality and its unfoldment, its needs, everything just falls into place. All that I have described so far, if you look at it from the paradigm of the child as a soul in evolution, who already has within him all that he needs, and the whole process of learning education is nothing but an unveiling, revealing, drawing out and organizing the personality around the essence that he is. If you

recognize this as your paradigm, all that we have discussed emerges spontaneously. There is nothing I have said which you didn't already know deep inside you. And yet, in articulating it in these terms, in these structures, we're giving it a concrete form, which makes it also practically applicable in the classroom.

And this is a framework, the first step, the foundation of what we will describe as an Integral Education. Integral because it takes up the whole of our being, all the layers and all the parts of our personality, not just the intellect, not just the left brain, it includes also the emotions, it includes also the body, takes them all up and develops them all in sequence in the natural rhythm of unfoldment of the personality. But at each step, each layer unfolding is developed around the center of the essence that we are.

At each step you turn back to the core and relate it to the core. And so what you have is the blooming of a flower—healthy, complete, integral. And this is the essence of the approach.

In my interactions with teachers, I face, constantly, the problem they have with the system in which they are bound, with the class curriculum and the textbook with which they are bound. And the point I emphasize is: whatever the system, whatever the compulsions of the management and their priorities, whatever the textbook, the interaction is yours. And all of these principles are dependent on none of those issues. Whatever the requirement that you have to work within, these principles can be activated. And the change will start with ourselves as teachers, as parents, recognizing these things within us and then flowing out as we expect our children to flow, flowing out from this paradigm, this state of mind, flowing out naturally. And you will find you will develop your own techniques, methods and approaches as you go along, if you center yourself in this paradigm. And it's

the paradigm most natural and true to us in any case. It's not difficult. In fact, what's difficult is unlearning, undoing the habits which we have been programmed into. And if we strip ourselves bare of that, we just fall in place with this, which is our truth.

So in practice, the shift to this state, to this paradigm, is not as hard, it's as easy or as difficult as returning to ourselves. But that's hard, because, well, there is this whole atavism, as I said, of society going back generations, and yet it's the most natural and spontaneous thing to do. And if we can begin to make this shift in ourselves, recognize in ourselves the correction necessary and shift the mindset in us, the rest follows. Not only in our space of learning, but also in our society and our family and everywhere else. And if we look at the huge problems that the world is beset with and the correction necessary, that's within our reach.

We can't change the system out there, but we can begin by changing the mindset within us. And that will ripple out and that will eventually change the system. Perhaps the system will change gradually as more and more of us awaken and shift, choose a deeper mindset, profound soul-centric mindset, or perhaps the system will break down and collapse and what will emerge from its ashes would be this spontaneous and natural truth of our being. Whatever the process externally, we can initiate the change from within us by changing our mindset and changing ourselves.

It's this switch I would pause with. And we've covered a rich tapestry and I'll invite your questions on anything we've discussed or anything beyond that which we have not discussed.

End of talk, Q & A to follow:

Q&A with Sraddhalu Ranade

Q: Thank you, first of all. I wanted to say that I'm one of those people that really didn't get and still doesn't get the algebra and calculus thing, and I didn't really get the go from the near to the far. Can you say a little bit more about that?

A: Okay, let me just give you an example of the algebra thing and going near to the far. And the thing which we have missed, if we didn't do it the right way, is the faculty of mind, which is involved in algebra. So I'll just play with that a little bit. And it's just like a sampling of what it can be like. I'm going to play with you a game, it's a mystery novel.

There is this little theft that took place in a little house where the person who stole jumped out of the window and he left a footprint and it's a size 12 shoe, and with a left toe that's bent, and that's the clue. With that clue, you can easily look around and find the person, isn't it? Because that's a unique clue. So I'm going to play a game with you, of a person, in this case, the person happens to be a number, and I'm going to think of a number, and I'll give you a clue and you'll tell me what that number is.

There is a very sweet little number, if I double him, you get 6. What number am I thinking—3? It's simple, isn't it? Okay. I'll give you a little more complicated one. This is another sweet number. If I double her and then subtract 2, then I get 6. Who am I thinking of? I double this number, and then subtract 2 and I get 6. You got 4. What did you do to find this? How did you follow the clue? What did your mind do? If you observe, when I said I subtract 2 to get 6, you went back one step, unveiling one layer of the clue. If I didn't subtract 2, then it would be 8. And before that, I doubled it and you get 4.

So when I describe the clue in a sequence, you undid the sequence and found this interesting number. That's algebra; that's all algebra does. Your x is this mysterious little number. And what did we do, just now? If I double x , I write $2x$ minus 2 equals 6. That's your algebraic equation. What did you do? You minus 2, you removed the minus 2 and your 6 became 8. You removed the 2 from $2x$ and your 8 became 4.

And you see here, the process of how you solve an algebra repeated. But you did it without knowing any process, without knowing any technique, as a game. Now, I'm doing this in a very quick, summarized form, but playing with this, I would develop the complexity of the problems step by step. Each time I would add a little bit more difficulty and a little bit more difficulty and I can assure you, within half an hour, we would be doing complex algebra in our mind. I would be throwing at you numbers, just like that, and you will just be solving them, just like that, because each step of this addition of a little difficulty, the faculty of the mind involved in this is unveiling, developing. And at the end of that half an hour, that faculty would be bright and playing. And often if I complete this, children will play among themselves: guess what number I'm thinking? And they throw a few clues. That's how it works. That's your algebra, that's all it's doing. It's helping you find this little number whose qualities you know, and you are supposed to find who it was. Simple, isn't it?

Yes?

Q: Thank you for your presentation. My question is, I'd like to know it better, the system you are talking. Perhaps there's a place I could read it with some examples like you just gave, because in one shot, what's left of my brain doesn't take it all in well. Thank you.

A: [Laughter] Yes, I enjoy supersaturating the mind because it helps us to transcend the specifics of the information and forces us to step back to get the feel of it because the feel is the key, and the rest is an articulation of what you already know. But to develop it further and then to engrain it and organize our thoughts, I'd suggest some books which you can read. There is a book, which is based on workshops that I've done, which is right here. It's called *Introduction to Integral Education*. There is a whole series of articles that

were written by Sri Aurobindo on education, around which this is based, and he articulated this approach about 100 years ago as the approach which was the most rational for the future of humanity. And what I've done is to elaborate on that substantially.

And beyond that, there are also a few DVDs, in which some recordings from the workshops exist. You will find also there are many thinkers and innovators in education who have developed their own systems and approaches. But what we have described now is something which is so essential that because of its very essentiality it is universal. And you'll find these ideas at the heart of all those systems, say the Montessori system or various other systems, the names slip my mind.

But you find, at the heart of all of them, all of these principles will be present. But if we recognize these in their essence, then we can develop our own systems and our own variations in classroom rather than being stuck with a particular articulation developed by someone else.

I also want to point out that this approach is being practiced. I had the privilege of growing up in the Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education. That's the school in Pondicherry where I grew up, where we follow this approach as far as possible, as far as the teachers are able to, from kindergarten up to college. There are no exams anywhere. And our classes are typically eight students to a teacher, which allows each student to get the personal attention that's necessary. The teacher knows exactly how much you know or don't know, and so you don't need exams.

You see, you need exams when you are doing the mass processing, to know how far someone has learned. But when you know your own children, you know exactly where they are. And how many children can you teach? How many children can you bring up at a time? Five, eight—if you go a little beyond that, maybe 10, but beyond that, it becomes difficult. So you don't cross that limit.

And in the framework of the curriculum, I've not touched upon this too much here: we not only tap the development of the intellect, but also the development of the emotions, and the development of the body consciousness. You see, these three are deeply interwoven. The same part of the brain, which learns the skill of playing the piano is also the part of the brain which you are using in your logical faculties and through which your

emotional being expresses itself. So if you develop one of these, all the rest are affected. If you develop all of them, then there is a dramatic enrichment of all of them far more than the sum of the parts. So in the development of the physical training, again the focus is not how well you do your gymnastics and cartwheel, but how conscious can you make the body? And we have a comprehensive program, which is compulsory, it's part of the curriculum, that in a week, all the children go through a cycle of gymnastics, athletics, swimming, combatives, wrestling, boxing, judo, football, volleyball, basketball, the works, boys and girls equally. And that's one and a half hours a day. And they are busy from morning 7:30 to evening 7:00, continuously. There's very little homework that needs to be given because you do everything in class. You don't need to do much at home. Whatever little is there is only for the later years.

My conviction is that, if a child needs to go for any specialized training outside school, then we have failed within school. What does the child do when he goes for tuition? He gets personal attention. And if tuition itself becomes big business, then of course, there are more children there. And after tuition the child goes home and says, "Mommy, please explain to me." And what happens there? Personal attention.

But if we gave personal attention right at the beginning, you don't need tuition and you don't need to have mommy's help, because I'm mommy, in school. My point being is that there is a school which attempts this practice, there are many others I'm aware of within India who have developed or been inspired by this approach, which I could suggest the names of those schools and if you are interested you could further go into them, look up their websites and things like that.

Q: Is there a way, do you feel, to cultivate this space and this energy and interaction if the classroom is 32 kids, for example, and one teacher? I mean, I wonder, because it seems to me different than, and I guess it's related to, somehow, cultivating that space of interaction if there were only eight or nine children. But also, perhaps it's different when the reality is 32 in the room. I wonder what you think about that?

A: It's a very important question, which I have to deal with. In practically every school where I've gone for training, that's the reality. They have 35 students to a teacher.

So the point I bring them to is the recognition of the need for personal attention, and then we develop different themes within the classroom for that personal attention. Just play with this idea a little bit.

When you have a very large class, whom do you teach? The average in the class. So if it's a class of 30 children, then 15 are above average and 15 are below average. So on the average, the 15 who are above average, they are bored because you are going too slow. The 15 below average are bored because you are going too fast, and on the average, nobody is happy. So the idea is to move away from teaching the average to teaching individually. Since I can't pay attention to 30-35, I split the class into smaller groups. Because there is always those few in the class who already know what you are going to do. And rather than them sitting and wasting their time and doing mischief because their minds are idle, I tell them, okay, you know it, you're a good teacher, come on, you teach others. And for them, it's deeply satisfying to take that responsible role. And in the attempt to teach others they learn better, they learn to articulate.

See, learning involves normally the last third step of articulation, that's when it completes the cycle. A lot of children know here, but if you ask them to explain, they start fumbling and mumbling, because the capacity to articulate has not been developed. That's what they are training at when they are teaching, while the others are gaining the personal attention they need. What's this grouping we do, typically five students in a group, and that's useful interaction. And then I follow it up, I'll invite those who taught for summary, a brief discussion afterwards, giving them tips and suggestions on how they could improve their teaching and the point at the end of a whole class is everybody got the personal attention and everybody moved forward, no one was left behind. There are other variations of this but you get the idea.

You had a question?

Q: First, I want to thank you so much because I've been teaching young students for about 14 or 15 years and when I first started teaching, I always felt these things in my gut. And so working with Linda in Inner Resilience and listening to you speak, it kind of validated a lot of things that kind of I always believed, so I thank you for that. So one of the questions I was going to ask was, in terms of class size. And also, so I believe very

much in this and I try to be very mindful of this on a daily basis, sometimes the pressure from above; whoever, wherever that may be can sometimes get in the way of that. And I'm wondering if you have any advice to help us as teachers when the pressure is on, to be able to stop, because it does take time to do all of this. And so how can we kind of—if you have any advice on how we can deal with the issues of the reality of what we're actually dealing with in the schools. I don't know if I was clear.

A: I get your point. We have the reality that we have to complete so much within the year. And we are stuck with that pressure, we don't have a choice. And there are many things one needs to do. The first thing would be to engage with parents. Make them aware that it does not matter, that what children need at this age is something very simple. They don't need all this extra stuff. And if we make it simple enough, we can get them to learn thoroughly what will really help them in life. And this message needs to be brought to parents, first, and we have to engage parents in any change in our process. Assuming that's done, or that cannot be done or you do it as far as you can, you still have the problem in the classroom. So there I will point to this three-step process where we allow children to go through a process of assimilation and re-expression. And the key there is, when you give them that time for assimilation, and it's a book, it's a textbook you have to go through, we have done this bit, we have covered it and then we say, "Now I want you to just think about it. Think of what you have read; think of what we have discussed. Does it make sense to you? And I want you to tell me what you have understood and what you have not understood." And that's when they start this introspective process and that's the assimilation phase.

And then, you give them an assignment after this. "You tell me, tell me something new that's not in the textbook, but which emerges from what we've discussed. Come up with a new idea. Come up with a new insight. Come up with something which this implies, show me your creativity." So that will be the third phase, when they re-express, and not mugging up, but coming up with something new, but derived from this. And that's how we'll complete. You could also do a variation of this to break it into small groups for discussion and for those seniors to teach the younger ones. And make a

variation of that in the same classroom after your group interaction. And then bring them back into the group. That's another thing you do.

One more thing: at the age of 14, already you can begin to introduce, emphasize the importance of developing the power of concentration. Here I want to briefly step back and discuss something else.

In all the informational content that we have absorbed over the years of our learning, what remains with you? Do you remember all those names and dates of history? Do you remember all those formulae of mathematics or physics? Do you remember the technical terms of types of mountains and clouds from your geography class? None of that remains. What remains with you?

And I ask this question sometimes to students who have just completed an exam, their year-end exam for which they've prepared the whole year. And a week later, when I ask them, "What do you remember?" They say, "Nothing." Because we swallowed it and vomited it out, nothing remains. But then I point out, something does remain. "You developed a capacity to process that information or that knowledge. You developed a capacity to work hard at something you don't like doing, at the very least. You developed a general sense of familiarity with different types of mountains. You got a drift of the historical development of things. You developed a familiarity with numbers and relationships of numbers. You developed a certain logical faculty in your mind that today you can think rationally in a structure. Those are the things which stay with you.

What stays is the development of faculties, not the specifics of information. Once you recognize this, the whole class content can be tuned through developing faculties. What I do with teachers is when they prepare for the class, I ask them to list, "What are the faculties I want to concentrate on rather than the informational content?" Using the existing information of my textbook, which faculty will be developed? And then I concentrate on the faculty development; informational content is incidental. Of course, it stays. But because we focused on faculty, the whole absorption is much more complete.

Now, among all faculties, which is the one faculty which allows you to develop all faculties? And that's the faculty of concentration. If you can gather your attention and hold it in a pinpoint laser-sharp, then you can break through anything, learn anything, change anything within yourself; everything is open to you. So at the age of 14 they are

old enough that we can have this discussion. And you can give the analogy of a laser versus a light bulb and the laser gives 1,000 times less light and yet, because it's one-pointed, it can burn through paper, metal, whatever it is. And that's how our mind is. We barely use $1/10^{\text{th}}$ of our mind, because all the rest is scattered out. If we can bring our awareness to a point, then we can learn so much more in less time. Point out to them that when they are doing their homework, if they are distracted, it takes so much longer. When they are concentrated, it's so much faster. And then they have free time.

Once they understand this, they immediately begin to participate. You can give them exercises for developing concentration. You can teach them first even in the class to gather, center themselves, before they enter the learning activity and then they are naturally more concentrated. See, if you just rush, breeze into a classroom and then open your books at this and then start, your energies are scattered. Center yourself, align yourself. Make your mind silent. Use these words even. When your mind is silent, then you can concentrate. How they do that, we can leave it to them, and then enter an inner state of concentration. You'll find, just with that participation, so much more is achieved in the same class.

Yes?

Q: First, I would like to thank you for your speaking. You spoke first about society and the Industrial Revolution. You spoke about hero worship. And what I find the most disturbing is the worship of money, the worship of values, who is the person that they worship as heroes. We are teachers, for the most part they know we are not well-paid. And when they see and hold the values of a society that is ever present and filling so much of what their life is about, I was wondering if you could speak to that.

A: Yes. There was a time in the ancient past when the teacher was the most valued. Even today, in some of the more ancient civilizations, that label "teacher" is still respected. But the actual teacher in the classroom is not and is the lowest paid, unfortunately. And that's somehow to do with the mindset of the age. But if we recognize the role that we play in the child's life, in society, and to ourselves in being true to ourselves, that gives us the strength, the courage and the resilience to do what we have to

do, in spite of lack of respect from society. And if you have that innate self-respect, the child senses it in you and responds to it. They don't respect you for your flaunting of wealth, or even if others don't seem to respect you. But they sense this innate, I use the word *chivalry* of a kind, a sense of self-respect and honor. They sense that. And they respect that immediately. And I think that is a more powerful example, which you can give. But it means that we need to align ourselves to why we took up teaching and what we are doing here. If we have that alignment it will carry through.

We can also explain to them, when they are older, that society goes through cycles. Point out to how, in the past, teachers had this critical role and responsibility and why they were respected. And how, when that respect goes, and education itself is neglected, society also declines. These are things which one can discuss with older children. And point out how there is a corrective movement also emerging, a recognition that something is seriously wrong. It will take a while, but what you have is always more powerful than what you see.

And as for the larger picture, our society, human society, today, is going through a massive collapse because we built on artificial ground. It's a house of cards and it has to break. The question is, will we be able to rebuild from the grassroots soon enough that as the superstructure collapses, something else replaces or will we pass through a period of chaos? That's dependent on us. And that's why we are meeting here, because we can make the difference. And even though it seems bleak out there, because we see the collapse of the superstructure, we don't see the grassroot awakening.

But just as we have a certain awareness here, there are others. They may be individuals, some of them also gather, if they get to know there are more like us, they will also find the courage. And that's the hope for the future. There is no other hope, except our own grassroot awakening.

Q: It feels like partly an answer to my question, but I was thinking, what is the bridge between the way things are now, as you described before, that schools are testing-machines where they teach children how to pass tests and everything is based on statistics, in terms of judging a teacher, a school, and it's by statistics, not even necessarily test scores, but statistics of how a student compares to another subgroup of

students and you have to be a statistician to understand how a school gets a certain judgment.

A: And then you play the system. When everything is reduced to numbers, you find ways around to play the numbers.

Q: And my concern is that children aren't really learning what's really going on like you are describing in their own real world. Are we afraid to teach them the realities and how can we bridge to a more mindful form of education? I know, for myself, I'm trying to practice mindfulness more and more for myself and when I enter any situation, enter more mindfully. And that helps me and I'm sure it affects the people that I work with. But my question is, overall, like how can we not just leave this talk and say, "Okay, back to the way we were doing things the day before?"

A: What age group do you teach?

Q: Elementary school.

A: Okay. The hope for the future is seen most prominently in the increasing awareness in the younger children. And the younger children today are far more aware than we were at their age. And they can see through, they can see the falsehood of things. They can't articulate it, but they can see it. And when we lie to them, they know we are lying. And when society lies to them, they know society is lying. They don't know what the truth is, but they know when it's a lie. And so it's important for you to say it, say it in so many words. Say that this is how it is out there, but that's not the way it should be. And tell them that you have to change things.

I have an interaction with students at the age of 10 or 11. And through the year I'm slowly going through this process of developing their mental... helping their mental development through a passage from the senses to the mind. And in the last one month before they leave me, I often speak to them of, beginning with stories from the past, of the greatness and peaks of the Indian culture and its financial, technological, scientific,

philosophical and other achievements, because that's their identity. But showing those peaks, I contrast it with the present. And say, "This happened because we lost sight of our ideals. Because instead of aiming for the highest truth, we stopped with a moment's satisfaction or deception or lie." And then I point out to them, "You have to build the future. And when it is put in this way, where you resonate, connect to them at the level of the heart; they feel the truth of it, because you are speaking the truth. And with the heart's connection they feel it.

They don't yet have the capacity to articulate in their thought, but that touches them and remains deeply imprinted. I've had children come back to me 10 years later and say, "I'm only now beginning to understand what you tried to tell us then." The point is, they didn't forget. But they may not have remembered the specifics of the informational content I gave, but they remembered because the imprint of that message was there, in the heart. And this is how we are going to help this younger generation to find their way in life. And you may have to say to them, bluntly, sometimes, that it does not pay to deceive. You have to be authentic, you have to express yourself in what is true, and that's how we are going to rebuild our whole society. And tell them that there is a whole rebuilding involved. And they will know it. They will understand.

Yes?

Q: I don't really know how to say this. But I think that there is something else that we're not really talking about and it personally kind of deals with my situation and where I'm not directly teaching children anymore, but I have to work with teachers and adults. And there is politics involved in that and, you know, you want to be truthful, you want to be mindful, but it's difficult to do with the politics above you.

A: It's very difficult to deal with the politics, especially when we are more sensitive. In fact, the whole of politics is ruled by the insensitive, the hardened, the crude and the rude. And because they are not affected by things, they trample over everyone else. That's how the worst gets to the top. But that's also because the more sensitive ones back off; when it comes to a conflict, we back off.

Q: But now I'm finding myself in a role where I have to deal with everybody. And my ideals, which I kept quiet, very, very quiet for like the majority of my time where I am, now suddenly I feel this responsibility to voice the truth, to say, "You know what? This person said this, and we should bring it up." The way I'm dealing with it mostly is putting it in writing and using technology, using emailing as a way to be like, "This was said and it was very transparent, people said it, and we can't just ignore that and let it just go away. I feel like the written word, you have to put it back out there again and like almost force people to look at it again and say, "Let's actually look at this and what are we going to do about it?"

A: I want to briefly step back and deal with it from a larger perspective. The divine manifestation in life has four components. There is a wide freedom, wisdom, knowledge. There is a power of effectuation and dynamism which can break through all the position and resistance, which can actualize that knowledge. Third, there is a harmony and a love which brings together and heals division and aligns things. And fourth, there is a perfection in beauty down to the detail in the manifestation. In the completeness of these four is the divine manifestation. The part which we normally tend to ignore, or we are insufficiently developed in is the second, the strength and power. And especially, those of us who are used to being introspective, who attempt to be mindful, who attempt to be authentic, true, inwardly centered, it's a trial. We are more sensitive, we are also, therefore, more fragile. We are weaker, in that sense. And there is a correction necessary for that. Weakness is not divine. But crude strength is not divine either. It is a beautiful expression, a harmonious expression of power which is divine, emerging from wisdom. And if you have those other parts, the missing element is the emergence of strength and power. And I'm going to use this word "power," in this sense.

There is a static power—the state you are in and the impact it has on circumstances without your saying a word or doing a thing. And then that static power flows in a dynamic action where you intervene with force or with a gentleness. Even if you intervene gently, it can be suffused with that power. Like a father lifting a child, he does not lift with the intensity of his strength but gently and yet with the full support of his strength. That's the kind of reach that must be brought forward.

And this strength comes from deep within you. And it comes from some part deep within you which is unshakable, and you must find that first. And on the base of that, you then emerge into the action.

Or I'll put it another way. Find something within you which is vast and free and unshakable: a vast equality, a foundation of something unshakable. Find that and that will be the base which will give you the strength and the power to deal with those things. It's not easy. It is painful because you are more sensitive. But you are going to have to feel that strength and it will take time. But as you do it, you will find that with that strength you can achieve so much more than others do with the crude force. And the result will be more lasting.

Yes?

Q: There is a songwriter, Kris Kristofferson, who says, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose." And I also read recently somewhere that the only evil is fear. You spoke earlier about failing on your path to success. And in speaking to what you just spoke, the fear of failure and the fear of consequence can be that thing that stops you from the search for that open space of freedom. Can you speak to that?

A: Yes. It's an important question. The fear of failure holds us back often and can even hold us back from attempting. But the worst side of fear of failure is the attraction of success, the attachment of success. It's that which causes the fear of failure. And if you were to let go of that, then there would not be the fear of failure. So the first step would be to align ourselves to what is right, direct ourselves to what is true and just keep going. Not having a fixed outcome as my defined goal of success, but moving in that direction as far as I can go to the best of my capacity. Then there is no question of failing or succeeding. And the fear also goes away. There is also, at each step, the enjoyment of the step, the enjoyment of the moment, the fulfillment of the effort itself. And you know the result will come, if not now, eventually. And the result is in the effort itself sometimes. And if we can bring ourselves in this state of being and this perspective of life, then things become much easier.

Q: Thank you very much for your presentation. I had a few contradictory feelings from a couple of things you said. You spoke of the children from the countryside as being much more direct and clear than those raised in the city. But then you said some positive things about video games and how they develop the mind and the problems of concentration related to television. And my feeling, personally, about technology and young children is that it's being pushed more and more on toddlers in this city, and how it really does work detrimentally towards our ability to concentrate and so we have a generation of children that are just so wired, but yet technology has its pluses as well. So I wondered what your view, coming from India is, on the use of technology in education.

A: Yes. There is a very wide theme, and I'll touch upon two or three interesting insights. You are right. The city children have something the village don't have, and that is a sophistication and complexity of development of intellect. That comes from the complexity of life and the richness of sensory experience. And this is necessary. Unfortunately, and this is part of the problem of any evolution, every faculty can be misused, and the complexity of the mind developed could become a rich tool, but in its misuse, its greatest power is self-deception. When the mind becomes sufficiently complex, it can deceive itself and so it does deceive itself. And that's why the necessity of aligning, constantly, each step of the unfoldment with the essence that we are. And then that self-deception is avoided. But that is one of the characteristics of a more complex mind, that it has the capacity to deceive itself. This is one.

But the second thing we notice, there is, as I said, there have been the rhythms of human evolution. We are now at a certain transition in rhythm where there has been an excessive focus in evolution on the development of individuality. And that's leading to so many other issues and the fragmentation of the society and family and so on. But in the fulfillment of individuality and intellect which comes with it, the fulfillment involves the intellect developing itself to its maximum, including the power of concentration on multiple points. And this is something interesting which is unique to the present age. The mind, itself, of humanity, is as if attempting to rise beyond a narrow intellect to a wide and complex freedom of mind and even rising above mind to an intuitivization of mind where knowledge would be accessed differently. And in this transition there is a

widening and plastifying which includes a stretching out and a multiplicity. So it takes two forms. You will see children, today, don't find it so interesting to go in depth. They like rather a wide picture covering many patches. They like to integrate a wide range of knowledge and experience rather than go in depth in one specialization. Contrast this with 200 years ago, where the natural turn was to specialize and live your whole life in one narrow specialization. Today they want to be wide. This is one form it takes. The second form it takes is the skill of multiple concentration, which I pointed out in videogames. It's a skill. And it's a faculty of the mind to train it. And that's what they are attracted to when they do those types of activities. So you see children today, they are listening to their iPod on one side, they've got a book in front of them, and there is TV out there and there is probably some other homework or there is some chatting with somebody at the same time on the phone.

Now, it may seem so weird and so irrational and silly to us, but there is something they are enjoying in this multiplicity. And that is holding attention on several things at the same time. Now, it does lead to shallowness. But the multiplicity is the joy of it. What we need is the correction for them to develop depth in a narrow point where necessary and widening to multiple points, although shallow, where necessary. They will enjoy both if they are given opportunities for both. And depending on the age group, you might even talk to them, point out to them what it is that they are enjoying and they will agree with you. They'll say, "Yeah, that's it, you got it." And then show them the enjoyment of a narrow focus of concentration. That's just stretching the mind's envelope to the maximum, as a step towards a higher state of mind which evolution is leading us to.

Q: I realize there are many factors that could come into play when we talk about absorption and assimilation. You know the age of the student, their mental capacities and so on. But in simplistic terms, have you found there to be a relationship, a time relationship between absorption and assimilation?

A: Yes. There is a time relation, it changes with age, and it changes also with your depth of concentration. So say, at kindergarten, the children can hold attention for a span of 10 to 15 minutes at a time in an activity. And what you do, our goal should be always,

across anything we teach, at any age, to somehow nudge forward the development of the power of concentration. So at this age, in kindergarten, we give them an activity in which they find themselves immersed. And you'll find after about 10 or 15 minutes, suddenly they stop the activity, break out of that immersion and look around. That's when they are ready for the next thing. So then you take them to the next activity. And again, they play, they are immersed until they snap out of it, and you move them to the third. And maybe two or three cycles are all you can manage and then there is a collective game or some other more dispersive interaction. You observe how the mind responds and catch that train and then allow it to deepen bit by bit over time.

At a later age, say, after 10 or 11 particularly, when the rational mind is kicking in much more, then they need to rationalize and ratiocinate, think over things, brood over things, and you can give them those challenges to come up with new ideas, brainstorm and so on. Play with their creativity in the assimilative phase.

Later on, when they are self-aware much more, to the point that they can observe their own thought processes and play with their own thought processes, which, say, are around mid-teenage or late-teenage, at that point, the time needed for assimilation also becomes less, depending on the kind of activity, but if the concentration is great, then already there is kind of an assimilation ongoing during the concentration of learning activity. And then all they need is some rest, and then they can get back to the activity. You will see children typically spontaneously go through the cycle, and if you observe, you get the sense of the time. They will work hard, depending on the power of concentration, 15 minutes to half an hour to one hour—all the ranges.

And then when they feel full in the brain, they come away, they chat, they wander off, they can't use the mind anymore. It's numb, so to say. And you watch how long that takes place. Typically 10 to 15 minutes, if they've had an hour of study. If they had 15 minutes of study then that time may be five minutes. And then they are ready to go back.

What I would suggest is you watch how that child moves in his rhythm. You will see that duration changes with the power of concentration. What I find is, in different cities, in different cultures, these durations change because of the lifestyle. I have found a direct correlation between the time spent on TV and the shallowness of concentration. So when I interact with parents, I will often ask them, "How much time does this child spend on

TV?” Oh, they say, “Not much.” So I’ll ask them to quantify. “Oh, a little bit.” Again, quantify. And when they actually measure, they come up with numbers like two hours or three hours. And the thing, the correction for that, it’s not enough to say TV is bad, stop it, you must give them an alternative. The correction I suggest, and early on, is to get children hooked to the joy of reading. Reading involves an immersion of mind, development of the imagination, because you have to visualize, it’s not like TV where it’s visualized for you. And where you can also wander off, you can create your own world, but you are stuck with a track, so there is a deep concentration, but also all the other faculties of mind are active. And you develop power of concentration through immersive reading. It doesn’t matter what you read. You like Harry Potter, go ahead. And you will develop the power of concentration and a rich vocabulary and a rich imagination all the better. So once you look at things from the faculty side, you’ll find a lot of fun activities are good for children and they can be encouraged, but then you tap them from the faculty’s angle.

Q: What you have spoken about is very relevant to many people here. My interest is actually more with adults for whom learning is often quite difficult, and it takes repeated, repeated, repeated stuff to kind of get in and so instead of taking it from a child’s perspective, from an adult, fully grown, mature, adult’s perspective is something I’m interested in.

A: Dealing with adults, there are two things you keep in mind. One is in many cases those adults have had a defective education, so there are many layers of consciousness which have not been trained; there are gaps, so to say. That’s what creates the problems they have. And you are required to, as if, go back and work on those faculties which were skipped or ignored. If you can identify what it is, give them an activity, an immersive, even playful activity, but which taps that faculty and you’ll find very quickly the faculty catches up. This is the first thing to do with adults.

Second is, with an adult, train them or teach them to quiet their mind. That’s the first multiplier, in whatever they do, in any study, in any training of mind. If you can quite your mind, you can do anything with the mind including hold attention on one point, or

multiple points, or whatever else. And if you do this as an active practice, it's actually enjoyable and you can take three or four different approaches starting with—try to stop your thoughts by willpower. It's a fun activity. It's strenuous, but you can do it for a few minutes. And then do other activities like observing your breath, or just opening the mind to an awareness above. These are different approaches, all of which may lead to an experience of stilling of mind or silencing of mind. And then from that state of stillness, you begin the activity. This is a fun exercise in itself, but it's the first multiplier for whatever else they do.

We can't do this with children as easily or as completely. But with adults, you can use it. Once the mind is still and if also the emotions can follow in the stilling, the corrections required for them take place also more spontaneously and more rapidly.

Yes?

Q: How do I help a child who has felt failure in terms of beauty and the love before, when he graduated from college was not able to find the job that he had been preparing his whole life for? And how do I support and encourage what was in the past? Because I think there is a certain amount of loss.

A: At what age is this?

Q: He's 22.

A: And is it lost? Isn't there hope?

Q: Well, all the resumes come back.

A: Okay. In some cases, a child has a fixed idea of what he wants to do. Sometimes it's an idea caught at an early age and the mind is just fixed on it. Sometimes it's an idea infected by parents or by peer groups or just something dramatic they've seen. It may not always be their innate aspiration. What I would consider in such a case is go through an

introspective process, of why they were attracted to that idea. I'll just give an example here.

There was a young child at the age of 10 or 12, his relative passed away from cancer. His father was a doctor, and this child resolved that he will be a doctor and he will find the cure for cancer. And, of course, he was not good in medicine, he found it boring, he found it monotonous, it was not true to his nature. He went as far as he could, but now he's lost his way because his parents thought he must be a doctor also because they were doctors. The correction I would do is to go back to what it is that inspired the child. And it was not medicine; it was the courage or the heroism of new innovation that relieves people's suffering. That was the thing which attracted him, or whatever specific form it took. So if you go back to that and from there evolve or discover a new form in which that essence can be expressed; we may find that the child finds deeper satisfaction in a different form than what he was first fixated with. And if he goes through the introspection and finds his new form, he will be just as happy or more happy, because it will be his form.

Q: I'm just suggesting that we bring it to a close.

A: Yes, okay. Then when we discussed the "aha" experience, and the conviction that comes from your own self-discovery, it's that "aha" experience which I have tried to also communicate in all that we've discussed. And the test of, the validation of all that we've discussed is, do you feel it to be true within you? And if that's true and it's obvious, it's simple, then that's all we need to move forward. And the beauty of the "aha" experience is that within it is also the strength of its expression. If we feel the truth of it in our heart, then to express it in the forms of our life is easy.

I'll share with you an experience I had when I went through kind of an existential crisis. And it was a question of: What do I do with my life? What am I supposed to do? Because anything I do is artificial, it's just another construction. And I went through a whole process of introspection and ripping off all the layers of self-deception, really. Eventually I came to an experience which went something like this: I realized and I saw myself as this essence in relation to the ideal, the divine ideal. And that's the only thing

which mattered, everything else was irrelevant. I said, “Oh, that’s all it is?” But what do I do? That was a big question. And then suddenly it became obvious. I don’t have to do anything. I just have to be that essence, that’s all. And when you are, action emerges, it flows from you spontaneously. When you are happy, you do the things which are happy. When you are loving, you do the things which are loving. You don’t have to do anything, you just have to be and the rest just flows from that. And that was the insight which came. And then, it was shown three layers around that; it’s as if three layers, which were like veils, preventing me from being and flowing. And that’s the construct of our mind, of our energies, any one of our physical atavism, which encircle, encase, the essence that we are, the soul that we are. And the challenge is for us to be able to radiate that which we are already, which we know to be true, into ourselves, our own layers of personality—so to say, dissolve its rigidities and let it reflect more and more the truth that we are. Let it flow more and more spontaneously in alignment to the truth we are, and then that flows also in the rest of our life.

But the thing which we have to do or be is already there and I would suggest that we spend some time every day in introspection. It need not be a mental process, but just being centered, in tune with our deepest aspiration, in the essence that we can feel deep within, that we would call the truth, the freedom, the beauty, the love deep within us, or that which aspires for these things. To remain in communion with that and then gradually to emerge out of that, letting it spread into our whole being and extend beyond into our whole life—at least in our awareness and from that then to move into activity.

If we spend a little time every morning, perhaps, in this kind of an inner communion, it has its effect. What we are flows out naturally. It changes us as it changes our environment. And you will find, after a while, something of the perfume of that morning’s sweetness of communion will remain with you throughout the day. And it’s a sense of deep satisfaction and a deep causeless joy that makes everything else beautiful and worthwhile.

Barbara Sargent closing comments:

I’d like to thank everybody for coming. A couple of things: I was thinking, just as Sraddhalu was speaking, aware of how difficult our public and otherwise educational

system is, and how do we integrate some of these ideas? And recently Kalliopeia held a panel at a conference featuring some of our grant partners and the suggestion was made: “there is hope, because even though the system is so difficult, teachers can take the essence and make a space, somehow, that there is a space where something can be held, even if you have to meet these deadlines and these rules, that some essence can be taken, you can make a space.” So that was the advice that stayed with me of what someone had suggested.

The other thought is that really this is all about imagination, that we need to imagine and envision what can be. As a group, in consciousness it needs to be held, so that when the time comes, we’re ready to make this offering into life and improve the lives of our children and our education system. So I hope that the evening has touched you, as it has touched me, very deeply.

The other thing is that we have recorded this evening, it will be on film, and also on CD, and it will be available on Kalliopeia Foundation’s website as a download sometime in the next couple of months. So if you are interested in experiencing it again, please come to our website. I’m going to leave some cards out on the table; you can take one with you if you like. So, would you like to end with a little...?

Sraddhalu: We can end with a quiet concentration together.

Barbara Sargent: Thank you all, for coming.

End