

## ON EXAMINATIONS AND CERTIFICATES

*Talk by Kireet Joshi*

*August 20, 1999*

*(This is extracted from a talk ON DHARMA given in two parts on the request of the students of Last School. At the conclusion of the first session some time was spent in answering a few of the students' questions specifically on the subject of certificate education. These questions are listed at the end of this transcript).*

There is a question here: "Do you think we need a certificate to find a work in life?"

If you ask the question whether you need to have a certificate to find a work in the life of Auroville, the answer is: "No". If you are only looking for work in life and you want work in Auroville, Auroville has been created specially as a place where you can get work without having a certificate. Now, supposing somebody says, "I do not want to live in Auroville" — it is a matter of choice! — and you ask a question, "Do you need a certificate to live, to find work, in the outside world", my answer is: unfortunately — and I use the word "unfortunately"— it is most often required, if not always.

There are many people who do not have certificates and they rise to the highest positions. I do not think that Mr. J.R.D. Tata had a certificate. You know Mr. J.R.D. Tata? He was one of the greatest men of India, of the world perhaps. Ms. Indira Gandhi had no certificate and she became the Prime Minister of India. I had one certificate myself called IAS. I renounced it; I gave up that certificate. And, when I was again called back in the government, they did not ask me whether I had the certificate of IAS. Simply because I was privileged to work in a system of education which did not give certificates, I was given the highest position of education in the country — only because of that reason.

Therefore you might say that it is not inevitable that you should have a certificate to find a work even in the outside life. But unfortunately most often it is needed.

Now, why do I say unfortunately? It is unfortunate because the certificate system is joined up with the system of examinations. There is one question here which says: "I am confused about the purpose of examinations, and I would like to know why in Auroville education, exams are not so useful?" Now, this is a very difficult question, but I shall make it as simple as possible. Certificates are unfortunately tied up with examinations. Examinations by themselves are not unfortunate, it is the connection of examination with certificate that is unfortunate. Examinations of a certain kind alone are tied up with certificates, not all kinds of examinations.

Examination is a constant phenomenon of life. When I came to talk to you, I was under examination. You had put a question to me: "What is Dharma?" And I had to sit in examination by sitting here. I had to find an answer to that question and give you the answer. So, examination basically means, very simply, a situation in which a question is put to you and you are required to answer it. This is called examination. Now, such situations exist throughout life. Life is nothing but a series of examinations, and you cannot eliminate them. The only point is what kind of examinations? What situations of examinations, purposes of examinations, the manner of examinations, the contents of examinations? We must ask these questions.

The present examination system is bad because you are asked to sit down for three hours and a question paper comes to you, and you have to answer it as fast as possible because everything has to be done in three hours time. And it only examines your power of memory. How much you have thought, how much you have contemplated... You might have contemplated only for one minute, or you might have contemplated for one full year... (All of this is irrelevant) People who examine your papers, only want to see how much you have memorised.

But supposing there is a different kind of examination and a different kind of examiner... You know the famous story of Byron: there was a competition, and the competition was to write about Christ — Jesus-Christ. And people were writing papers after papers on Christ within three hours, and Byron, a very great thinker (he was a young man at that time), was thinking, and thinking and thinking and he could not write one sentence. Three hours were about to finish, and the examiner came to take the paper from his hands, saying that now the time is over. And he said: "Wait, wait, just one second". At the last moment, he wrote only one line: "Water saw its

master and it blushed". He only wrote this one line: "Water saw its master and it blushed". What a beautiful sentence? You know this is the highest poetry — last time I spoke to you about poetry — poetry gives you the deepest experience, and the most beautiful expression; that is called poetry. Deepest experience expressed in the most beautiful terms is poetry. Beautiful words, rhythmic words. And here was a young man, penning down only one sentence, and imagine the power of the sentence: "Water saw its master and it blushed". Here was a master; Christ is a master who makes inanimate things animate. Not only animates it, makes it blush! Blush means... 'blush' is the one experience of the soul. You know, the experience of 'blush' is a very important experience of life. When you blush.... Many of us have blushed in our life. When you meet something wonderful and you feel so shy! And you feel thrilled, absolutely thrilled, and you fall in love with so much of intensity, and yet you hide... no? This is the experience when you blush! It is an experience of your deepest soul, when the soul meets another great soul in which you find utter fulfilment, you want to completely merge into it. You find utmost satisfaction, fulfilment, and you feel a little hesitation, because it is so great, so majestic: "I am so little, how can I?" This is what creates a blush! So, he wrote: even water saw the master and it blushed. He is such a Majestic Existence that an inanimate thing became not only animate but became pulsating with the soul. The whole of Christ is given there. What is Christ? This is Christ! He had not read any book in which this was written; there was no memory here.

And the examiner was so good, he was a 'right' examiner, he did not look whether Byron had read the life of Christ, whether he was born in Bethlehem, whether he went here and there, and then ultimately was crucified, nothing of the kind at all. The examiner was good, he did not look for this at all. He only saw that here was a young man, who had grasped Christ as God himself, he had seen God in Christ, because only God can make you blush, really speaking. Even when you see your beloved and you blush, it is because you feel the beloved to be your god, then you blush. And here was a man who wrote in one line, and he got the first prize. Now, such an examination is perfectly good! One should not be confused about examinations, it is good to have examinations, and you should meet examinations with the kind of the spirit with which Byron confronted his examination. But also there must be an examiner like D., who can understand. I know, your teachers are very good teachers, and I know they have got the capacity to examine you properly.

You know, I had an exam in my life. I was asked the question: "What is self-government?" when I was in college in the first year. And I must tell you that that was the one paper about which I had read least, and I was very hesitant — what will I do. In our examination system if you fail in one paper, you fail in all papers. It is a barbaric system. Therefore the examination system is not so good. If you fail in one paper, you fail completely. And this was the one subject about which I had not read much. And I was asked to write on self-government. There were five questions to be answered. I was still an innocent boy of fifteen years and I did not know so much of the regimentation of the examination system. I felt free to write on self-government and I took all the three hours in answering only one question instead of five questions.

And when I came out of the examination hall, somebody told me: "Did you attempt all the questions?" And then I remembered: "My Lord! I took only one question, I took all the three hours, and wrote only one". So he said: "So you are bound to fail now".

And I was so afraid. I said: "My Lord! I'll fail now". I did not write to my father as to how I had done in my exam. I waited till my examination results came, and go and behold, I had got 98% marks on this paper. 98%! And what had I written? Nothing from my text book. I had written, in answer to self-government, a dialogue between Soul and Nature. This was... you know — I felt so much inspired. At the age of fifteen, I was reading so much literature on soul and things of that kind. I had simply written a dialogue. It was not just an answer of the ordinary kind, in which you write the introduction, and then you develop your points, and then the conclusion and a final résumé and all that. Nothing of the kind which all the teachers teach you — that if you want to have an examination, always start with the introduction, then develop your points, write the elucidation, then come to your conclusion, and in the end you write a résumé. This is called a very good classical answer to a question. I did nothing of the kind. I don't know what had happened to me in these three hours. I rose completely in answer to self-government and I wrote a dialogue between Soul and Nature, in which Nature wants to bind the Soul, and the Soul wants to be liberated from Nature. And this movement of liberating Soul from Nature is

what I called the movement of self-governance. So I said, self-government is the movement of the Soul to liberate itself from Nature. This was my whole answer basically. But I had written it in the form of a dialogue where Nature is trying to capture the Soul and says: "You cannot come out of it", and the Soul says: "No, no, no! I want to come out of you!" It was a dialogue. And three hours I had taken to write this dialogue. And my examiner was like that other good examiner. I got a prize in this actually, whereas I had complete diffidence that I would fail now! It is because of this high mark that I really got a very high percentage ultimately in the examination.

So I always feel that examinations by themselves are not bad. You should have examinations, everybody should have examinations. It is wrong to say "no exams". Not at all, why should you not have examinations? But an examination should be of a different kind, not the present kind of examination. Once I asked this question to the Mother and she had said: "Examinations are and will be". This was her answer. "Examinations are and will be". But examinations should be real examinations. That is the first answer: examinations should be real examinations. What does it mean? And she said: "A silly mechanical mind passing examination and that too with flying colours is an absurdity." And this is what happens at present. Our examinations are of such a nature that a silly mechanical mind writes an answer to an examination and gets flying marks. So Mother said in elucidation of it: "Examinations should be real examinations and should not allow any pretence". This is the important point. It should really examine. If you really know — it is not a reproduction of memorised things that you write down and say: "Now I know". Such a question should be put that your real knowledge can alone answer it. Mere memorising will not help you. So Mother said: "Examinations should be real examinations and should not allow pretence."

Then, she said: "Examination should come to a student only when he is ready for it". That is another condition, which is very important. At present, examinations are always announced. On such and such a date, examinations will take place, and everybody has to run up: "Prepare, prepare! Memorise, memorise! Read!" This is completely wrong. Every student should read calmly, quietly, with full understanding. Let him take his own time. When he is ready he should say to the teacher: "I am now ready, ask me." And you will find that when you are ready and when questions are asked, you will be very happy. It should be a joyous exercise. It happens — when a teacher comes and asks a question, and if you know the answer — how readily you want to answer, you say: "Yes, yes, I want to answer!" So examinations should come to you only when you are ready for them.

Finally Mother said: "Examinations should be given to each individual according to his needs." Now this is very important — "according to his needs". And there are many kinds of needs, you know. Examination can be a matter of amusement, that may be your need. You know, there are many kinds of games that you like to play, and those are also examination. Many games are only examinations. Even when you are asked to make words out of so many letters which are given to you saying — now fill up the blanks, it is an examination, it is fun. So examination can be a game, and that may be your need; you may like to bubble with ideas, and you like to have amusement, and you should tell the teacher: "Give an examination: I want to play!" That may be your need. Examination may be also for your own self-knowledge, you want to be sure whether you understood, you may think that you understood, but you want to be sure that you understood.

It is not "pass" or "fail", not at all. Usually examinations are only to declare whether you have passed or failed — it is barbaric. Not at all. Examinations must only give self-assurance. You thought that you knew, now I examine you and I give you certainty that you really know. And what a tremendous assurance it is! You go forward, immediately you jump into the next step. When you know that you have already learned, you have mastered, you can go forward.

Thirdly, examination may be a stimulation to move forward. Suddenly a teacher comes and says: "Give me the meaning of Dharma." I am only giving you the example of the present day. It is not to examine you, I know that you do not know the meaning of Dharma, but I am just asking you the question: "Give me the meaning of Dharma." It is to set you thinking; it is to stimulate; to put questions in your mind so as to incite you to learn. So examination can be given also to stimulate you to learn further.

It is because examinations are not of this kind that we are confused about examinations and there is an unnecessary debate: "Should there be exams or no exams?", or:

"I do not believe in exams", and somebody else says: "I believe in exams." These are all useless talks. Main thing is exams are and will be — as Mother said very correctly: "Exams are and will be." But exams must be real examinations and should not allow you pretence. And exams must come to you when you are ready. And examination must be in accordance with the need of the student.

Now you fulfil all these conditions and you will find that examination will be absolutely useful under every circumstance. But it will not be a tyranny as it is now. Nobody will like to run away from exams, because it is not given when you are not ready for it. Nobody will say that it is a bugbear. Not at all. You will like the teacher to ask you a question because he lifts you up. Because there is one thing which you must remember: every student feels happiness when he makes progress. That is one very important thing. You will never feel happy when you are not making progress.

Once Mother asked me: "Do you know how to judge your students?" I was myself nonplussed because how to judge my students? She knew that I would not be able to answer that question, she was very kind, she was examiner, but a very good examiner. So, she told me: "If you go to your class and you find that your students are happy, then, you judge that they have made progress". This is a very simple formula given by the Mother to me. You know, when I see these smiling faces here, I feel very happy, because I feel that here is a group of children who are progressing and therefore their faces are filled with smiles. They are really happy. Such should be the condition all the time in our classes, in our examinations, where students feel that they are being examined not to find out whether they are up to the mark or not up to the mark. Passing, failing, all these are absolutely nonsensical things. But children should feel, that when they are being questioned there is a helping hand all the time, which does not want to judge but which wants to give happiness. And in the "lifting up" you feel a such tremendous upliftment, such a great joy, that you will like to have again and again the same kind of exercise, you will want to repeat it.

This was the great discovery of Montessori. You know, have you heard the name of Montessori? She was a great educationist and she said that one of the secrets of education is "repetition". Now, very often many educationists believe: don't repeat, because people become bored by repetition — you repeat the same thing, people feel bored. Now Montessori said the opposite, she said: "No, repetition is the one thing children like to do when they have really learned." You see a child — she has learnt a few sentences. And give a chance to the child and it will like to repeat with great joy, because, it's not at all a trouble, it's not boring at all. Because the child had learnt, therefore the child likes to repeat. Similarly if the child has learned and enjoyed upliftment in an exercise, every child wants to repeat it, and says: "Again, and again, and again, and again." This is the real process of education. This is the real interaction between the child and the teacher — when the teacher is not a judge, is not judging whether you are good, bad. The teacher is your friend, he is himself you — he is so much one with you - — and all the time he gives a hand to you and lifts you. Such an exercise gives such a tremendous joy that you want it again and again. So, actually a right system of examination should be that children should say: "Please give exam, please give exam, please give exam!" That is the right system where examination has found its proper place.

Only, now I come to the other question about certificates. Please don't tie up this examination with certificate; that is ruining our whole examination system, because the whole purpose changes. Certification means what? Gaining work in life. Gaining work in life for what? For earning. Earning what? So that I can save. Why save? So that I can meet a rainy day, so that I have no anxieties. And go on doing it until when? Until I die. This is the programme. The whole programme of life is this, as it is given in ordinary existence and this is a horrible system of life. Why has Mother thought of Auroville? It is because she wants humanity to be saved from this horrible condition of life. In "The Dream" she has said: "There should be a site where children do not learn for passing examinations and for getting diploma and degrees". But then they learn for what? For development of their faculties. Why? Because it is development of faculties which gives you happiness, as I told you just now. When your faculties develop, then you progress, and when you progress, you feel happy. So education must be for real happiness. That is why I do not like children who want to have certificates — I am not very harsh, there are some children who want certificates and yet I will love them because I know some of the conditions. But normally I would like that children, if they are here, they should regard it as a tremendous facility where they can really learn, without the botheration to have examinations of

the ordinary kinds, without their being tied to certificates. Certificates tied to your post of life, and post of life to your grave — ultimately. This is a whole system of life which goes to death. And which looks only to death, ultimately. This, Mother wants to break.

Therefore I'd like the children of Auroville to study for the sake of progress, to learn the secrets of existence to [develop] mastery. Not that you cannot work, you should work of course! There is no true education which will not enable you to work and work very proficiently and masterfully. Sri Aurobindo has said that true education must have four elements in it: wisdom, heroism, art of harmony and art of skill. Now you tell me: Can any work be done in the world without these four elements? And if you have these four elements you can be sure that you will be able to do any work. If you have learnt the skill, if you know how to harmonise, if you are heroic, and if you have wisdom, tell me which is the work in the world — whether you have certificate or no certificate — which you will not be able to perform? Therefore I would like the children of Auroville to be free from fear. Here is a place where you can be free from fear, you can really spring into the future without ordinary kinds of fears and anxieties. It is an education that takes you not to the grave but to life and to eternal life. As Mother said: "Unending education, constant progress and a youth that never ages". And this is a great possibility which is opened up to us.

I think that there are many other questions from you which we are not answering now, because we shall have another chance to come and talk. All right? We stop here now? Granted? Yes? ... Not yet granted, but... Thank you very much. I feel very pleased. I am very happy to meet you. I am not flattering you — to meet you is to make my soul blush! I feel very, very happy and I thank you immensely. And give me this company of yours whenever I am here with you. Thank you.

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*Some of the students' questions relevant to this talk:*

1. Do you think we will need a certificate to find a work in life?
2. I am confused about the purpose of exams and I would like to know why in Auroville education exams are not so useful?
3. Why is it that society will respect those youth who have achieved exams more than those who haven't. What should be the correct way for us in Auroville?
4. If Auroville wants to be a different place why do some schools reproduce the European way of teaching? Is it because those teachers don't agree with the idea of New Education? If they don't why do they teach here? Why should some schools be materially privileged — grow bigger and bigger when others are still in their old buildings?

*Here are two selections from Kireet's reflections on education (one from a talk he gave at Bharat Nivas last April to members of SAILER and another to the group coordinating the CIRHU Resource Centre last November).*

*As you will see it is a very open-ended approach, one which he himself sees as an on-going research.*



## ON EDUCATION (extracts)

Kireet Joshi

28.04.2000

*In answer to a question...*

... I personally think that for younger children when lot of help is needed there is a need of schooling. The word schooling means a place where you need lot of help and lot of help is given.

This is my interpretation because Mother has not written what is *Last School*, what is *After School* and so on. This is my interpretation which is to be given, the interpretation of somebody who has thought over it. It may be helpful so I am not putting any authoritative statement on this subject. It is only my own research.

I think that the kindergarten is already *no school*. Children are free, they can do whatever they like, and it is very pleasant. In fact, everybody agrees all over the world that kindergarten schools are the best schools. Children are so happy, they can do whatever they like, they swim ? here for example you have got a swimming pool for younger children which is a very rare thing, even anywhere in the world. But you have such beautiful experiences that you might say it is *no school*.

But then when you come to *Transition*, the kind of experience that you have got is also very good. The structure that you have created is neither a structure nor that kind of complete wildness which happens in some of the progressive schools in the world. It is a very good blend, and the possibility has been helped by the architectural design. What I call *hall of culture* and *laboratories* are already combined as it were in each classroom. This is what I would call a place where schooling is needed but as a *last school*, because that the children know that after this schooling will become less and less. Because when you begin to grow and you need less help, then you need to have a new kind of structure. So I would say actually, in term of these words, that *Transition* school should be really called *Last School*. It is a *last school*. It is a good schooling because all things have been taught in a way where the freedom and structure are very well blended. I think that you have done something that is excellent. It is why the idea came to me that you should have somebody to report on the research that has been done in the emergence of *Transition* school. It is a beautiful school I tell you. Every child is happy, every child. For example, there is one girl who was writing a story and she said: "I don't want anybody near me. I have to write a story and think." She was allowed to sit alone at her table. This freedom is rarely obtained anywhere. A child who would say: "I want to write alone in my own small table..." So, first of all a child who is able to express this wish, her own decision that she needs solitude so much so that even when you are present she hardly looks at you is unusual. We were present in the classroom. She hardly looked at us. She wrote very seriously... So, I suggest that you should now have somebody to report, somebody who will interview the teachers and students and makes a good report of fifty, sixty, eighty, hundred pages on how this has emerged. But don't disturb it, don't make more structure than there is now. It is very well done; it is a kind of optimum level that has been reached. I would really call this *Last School*. In the sense that I would tell the children as they grow up towards the class 6 to 8 or whatever, that now you will learn more and more by yourself.

It is a *last school*. Not that you don't jump immediately from *last school* to *no school*. So I am very happy that Mother has spoken of three schools in between: *After School 1*, *After School 2* and *After School 3*. *After school* is something which corresponds to what children do at home in regards to homework. *After school* is a time for homework, for what the children do for homework?

What I find, for example, in Deepti's school, which is called *Last School*, is exactly this. Every child is doing his homework. There is so much of individuality, so much of doing by oneself. The kind of drawings they have done ? I must tell you it is something you should exhibit in Auroville in a very central place so that every body can see the kind of drawings and painting that they have done ? such beautiful things. It will be amazing. I would really say that somebody should photograph and keep them in your archives. It is very important.

So I conceive that what is done actually in *Last School* is what is should be named *After School*. Not *Last School* but *After School* because it is what children are doing when they

are at home. When you want to individualize everybody in that school. It is a real freedom there is no structure as it were, which perfectly corresponds to the needs of the children at that stage. They can read by themselves, they can write by themselves. You know on the lower level you need to teach the children how to read and write ? unless they need no reading and writing ? otherwise how can they do work on their own. They need lot of schooling before that, so I would say that from class 1 to 8 should be called *Last School*.

Then after you should have *After School*. But Mother has spoken of three stages, and I was wondering what these three stages correspond to. In any case what is done here at *Last School* is one of the three stages of *After School*.

*Intervention not audible...*

... We have to see. I am not proposing anything. It is up to the teachers here what they decide to do, but if you ask me, I would like to give the name of *Last School* to the present *Transition* school. I would like to give the name of *After School 3* to present *Last School*. What is being done in *After School* that is for me *After School 1*. The school *Center for Further Learning* I would name it *After School 2*. And this one which is *Last School* now *After School 3*.

You see the progression. From the blend of structure and freedom in the classes of *Transition* school you come to another kind of structure ? it is more like tuition which is given, like tutors who are teaching children at home. It is what I call *After School 1*.

When I visited the school *Center for Further Learning* which is such a beautiful school I saw there is lot of freedom there and there is some structure. Then I came to *Last School* which is really *After School 3* And now I am taking classes with the students there and I find that what I am doing is *Super School*.

This is a novel experience for me because I was wondering what is *Super School*? And I find that the class that I am giving to them again involves a lot of teaching and there is no freedom. It is *Super School*. So I was wondering what are the characteristics of *Super School*? First of all, the subjects that you are teaching must be of a high level, therefore super. Secondly, you are not actually schooling them but preparing them to learn higher subjects by themselves. It is schooling, but the purpose here is to enable students to follow higher studies by themselves. It is only a kind of a preparation. So still schooling is needed. And third in this process of preparing you don't trot or canter, you gallop. Therefore at *Super School* the speed with which you prepare them is not a slow, gradual development. You take subjects of such nature that even if you give hundred lectures it is galloping. As Mother said to prepare for studying *The Life Divine* you need ten years of preparation. This can be bridged you might say ? bridged to some extent ? if you are at *Super School*, if you have the possibility of meeting students for two hours, three, four hours at a stretch and you can engage them and take them... For example I cover logic and which I have done in six months, in only two days which is like galloping. You go from one idea to the other. Because you know, most of the time in ordinary colleges, courses are lay down, periods are fixed, teachers come in their own way, many students are not attentive, you have to repeat so much, so it takes such a long time. But if you have students like this who are prepared ? those who have gone to *After School* because they are ready to learn a lot by themselves so that their attention, their consciousness is already developed, then you can gallop in your movements. This is a personal new experience in my life: how you can teach a large number of subjects. First of all I made a survey of the different subjects which are been studied in the world, a very brief and rapid survey. And I fixed in this large survey where philosophy comes, where logic comes, where epistemology comes, where cosmology comes, what is metaphysics and how logic has to be seen in *The Life Divine*. If you want to study logic what is the process of ratiocination, what is the process of application of the law of identity, of the law of contradiction, law of extreme middle, law of sufficient reason. Now all this can be rapidly gone over as Sri Aurobindo said... I have been very much aided by one sentence of Sri Aurobindo: "You should take the children rapidly to that which is the most interesting in the subject." This sentence is very important and I found in *Super School* you should have such methods of learning, such processes of learning where the children gallop from one point to the other and go straight to the thing that is very interesting. *Super School* is a place where you need lot of schooling with regard to very high subjects, very difficult subjects and then you go as fast as possible, as rapidly as possible, you take the students to the heart of the matter as it were which is the most interesting part of the whole subject.



So I would suggest that the students of *Last School* could now go into *Super School* and then they can be trained to inter into *No School* where does not need schooling anymore.

This is how I understand what Mother had written. This is my present interpretation. You have today in Auroville *Last School*, *After School 1, 2, 3*, and now developing *Super School* which can then prepared at *No School*. And it is exactly what Mother has written. Isn't it? It is how I understand and therefore now to answer to your question about growth and structure I feel that at every stage if you have architectural design in such a way that *hall of culture* and *laboratories* are side by side then depending upon the aid that a child needs you can put him here or there for shorter period or longer period and it is a teacher who will observe all this. This is the only structure I will plead for. Allright.

**Extracts from a meeting with Kireet JOSHI  
about CIRHU Resource Center  
22.10.2000**

This *Resource Center* will be a sort of a *no school*, in the sense that here there is no schoolteacher, but everybody learns by himself or learns by collaboration and that membership to this *no school* is open to all.

The idea that emerged was of a multi media Center and it corresponded to one of my own idea where I had spoken of a learning environment which would consist of *hall of culture* and *laboratory* both set together side by side or intermingled in a magical way so that an individual is free to be at home. It is a place where individuals come with questions or without questions in their mind. If there are questions there is a possibility of exploration. If there are no questions there are possibilities of being stimulated by what I would call demonstrations, or else one comes to practice or apply whatever one has learnt theoretically or otherwise so as to develop it further. In the process of practising the help can best be given by what I have called *laboratory*. The difference between *hall of culture* and *laboratory* is that the *hall of culture* is more predominantly a place of demonstration and exploration. The *laboratory* is a place of practicing, a place of development of faculties. In the *hall of culture* the pace is leisurely, in the *laboratory* the pace is measured. There is a rigor and there is a concentration. In the *hall of culture* there is basically a silent atmosphere, but there is no stress of arriving at what I would call perfection. It is a preparation; it is a place for preparation. *Laboratory* is a place where the stress is on perfection. Both processes are very often simultaneous and therefore the contiguity of *hall of culture* and *laboratory* should be contiguous, so that one can switch from here to there whenever one likes.

In fact, the more I think about what Mother has said about *Last School*, *After School 1*, *After School 2*, *After School 3*, *Super School* and *No School* and Mother's big word *research* if you put the whole thing together it makes a big cycle as it were. And although they may seem to be successive in a certain sense they can be also simultaneous. One can be simultaneously in the *Last School*, *After School 1*, *2*, *3*, *Super School*, *No School* and *Research*. This *Resource Center* could have also all these aspects in the simultaneously manner, although the emphasis will be here on *No School* and *Research*. I think all these aspects are actually aspects of emphasis of one of important process namely the *learning process*. We are all students and we are learning all the time but in the *learning process* sometime you emphasis one aspect, sometime you emphasis the other and so on. In fact I have been contemplating on this subject deeply and these are my reflections that I can share with you.

There is a kind of unity which can be filled to its fullness if we have this *Resource Center*. I see now the necessity of what we call a *Resource Center*. May be we may change the name afterwards but there is a need of such a place where all the processes of learning are available in the form of resource. That will be the special quality of that particular place.

So let me now go back to all the processes of learning and then it may give us a better idea.

There are, I think, four things which happen whenever when one learns. There is first the process of development. It is something that is inherent to every individual to develop. A child right from the first day, if there is one learning process it is development ? automatically, inherently. And, in fact, if you learn what is the process of child's development it throws a great light on the entire process of education.

In the first place we see that the child has an inherent enthusiasm. If that enthusiasm is wanting we might say the child is either sick or born premature ? of course we are all born premature therefore we have not enough enthusiasm ? but enthusiasm is something which is the basic capital out of which everything grows. In fact, Sri Aurobindo has said the special characteristic of the student is enthusiasm ? *utsaha*. There is no educative process possible without this *utsaha*. The teacher's function Sri Aurobindo says is to nourish that enthusiasm and to lead it further. But the base is the child lifting up his hand and the teacher drawing that hand which is lifted up. The kind of picture we have put in the book *The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil*. So, the child automatically is holding up his hand as it were, all the time. This is

the basic expression of his enthusiasm. It is that which develops. Every activity of the child afterwards develops because the child is constantly kicking up.

Secondly the child has no intention of learning. His intention is playing. So basically all learning should be play. Mother once told me that if you are concerned with very small children, you should arrange time to play freely and watch them play and intervene only when it is necessary. Seeing that they don't injure themselves. All the things that you arrange in the surrounding should be to stimulate the play.

The third thing about the child is that whenever he plays or learns ? learns through play, because for him all learning is playing and all playing is learning ? the child does it with his entire being. This is a speciality of the child is learning process. Whatever the child does, he does it with his all body, mind, heart, everything, whole heartedly.

Fourthly the child has a normal habit or natural tendency to learn and to repeat what he himself has learnt, and this repetition is done with a kind of a joy. When a child has learnt and you ask him: "You know this poem." He wants to recite it immediately and he is not tired to repeat it several times. I think these are the real processes of development: enthusiasm, play, whole being involvement and repetition. And there is a cycle of this and that is how development takes place.

I was reflecting first on the kindergarten. This is a process, a natural process of learning. Kindergarten is the process in which you develop, in which you begin to grow. And this should be present in the entire process of learning, whether you are a child or an adult or an old man or whatever. You remain a child and all the time you learn by playing and by an enthusiasm which never vanishes. We should ensure that this should be the real spirit of learning everywhere. The whole atmosphere of Auroville should be inflamed with this spirit. We are all the time playing in the garden of God. That should be our real feeling all the time.

So the first stage is an ever-present stage through out kindergarten. We are all the time in the kindergarten. I think Mother use to love the idea of *jardin d'enfant*. And you know there was a very interesting development of *jardin d'enfant*. Usually we used to take children in the school of the Ashram at the age of three or four but then requests began to pour upon the Mother to take children of a lower age. And we did not have so much space either in the school for children of a lower age and so on, but there was a real pressure so Mother told me once you develop *jardin d'attente*. And I have had the privilege of developing *jardin d'attente*. Playing with ball was found to be one of the best methods of helping children at that stage (one year) in the *jardin d'attente*. I use to play with a big ball or a small ball with the children. I think that this idea of *jardin d'attente* and *jardin d'enfant* should be a constant atmosphere in Auroville. All of us are at every stage in *jardin d'attente*.

*We could call the CIRHU "kindergarten of God's children".*

Good idea. Try to fix it somewhere. Research is a natural process in God's kindergarten school.

What I am trying to show is that all the processes of learning should be simultaneously be present at all the stages of education. But some of them may be more predominant at a one stage; others may be less prominent at other stage. If you develop in order that the kindergarten spirit is present at every stage, soon you begin to learn by the method of kindergarten ? playing. There is a need to nourish that development. Because of our human frailty we cannot keep the spirit of playing all the time therefore we make a concession and create what is called *Last School*. Right from the beginning we give a message to children that "you are now going to a school but remember it is the *last school*." Do that so that the spirit of play does not disappear. We tell them: "This is a concession we make for you." The first stage of schooling is the stage of *last school*. In the *last school* the emphasis is upon development.

If you want to make a curriculum of the entire process of education in Auroville, this curriculum would consist first of further developing what the child has already developed in the kindergarten, automatically. You give a push by the methods of schooling.

What do we mean by schooling? Schooling implies in the first place what we call *spoon-feeding*. There is a need of spoon-feeding ? that is to say a great help is given to the child to develop further what the child has already developed by way of playing. Schooling should not be necessary, normally if the world were perfect and play would continue all the time so that all that you need to learn would be learned only by playing. But because human society

is very artificial and is not spontaneous, there is a need of schooling which consists of giving a further stimulus to what the children have learnt by play. And usually the children automatically develop three things: speech and therefore language, movements of the body and some of the development of faculties of the mind. The minimum faculties of the human mind are adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. Sri Aurobindo has said that human mind does not go beyond these four operations.

*Question: Integration?*

Integration is a higher level of mind. The speciality of mind is to differentiate, to divide. As Sri Aurobindo has said: "All ignorance is based upon division." Supermind unifies. It is the special distinction between Supermind and Mind. Supermind unifies and unifies totally. It is based upon a oneness which is inherently complex. But the complexity is complex at once. It is not by adding up various elements. It is all at once. Supermind is a consciousness of all at once. It is its very constitution. Human mind organises but basically it organises on the basis of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. Its organising is a kind of reflection of the Supermind because Mind is not at anytime separated from Supermind. Therefore the faculties of Supermind already operate in the Mind. But if you want the differentia of the Mind then the differentia is these four operations. And Sri Aurobindo has said that Mind does not go beyond these four operations ? as Mind.

*Question: When a child play he is also not attached to the result...*

Absolutely. That is why God is a child. He plays. His enjoyment is *ananda*, a constant delight. Whatever activity is done is delight. So what you say is quite true. That is why we have to be in kindergarten all the time. It is an imitation of God. God is in a constant play and if you are playing in the garden of God you are in a constant play. So, even in the *last school* this element should be prominent. As far as possible you should always learn through play. It is only because human beings cannot sustain the play that, because of the artificiality of the human mind, that other processes have to be implemented or supplemented there.

In the *last school*, however, this element of spoon-feeding where the teacher knows what the child has learnt by play and these three things as I said are normally learnt: language, bodily movement and four operations which we then call afterward mathematics.

*After a short discussion on discipline and freedom...*

In the ordinary circumstances whenever the mind begins to predominate these dichotomies arise and we must respect them because mind develops in this mathematical manner: freedom, discipline; work, play; all these distinctions we make ? spontaneous schooling and learning. Schooling itself is a part of a dichotomy of free play, free learning and schooling. As soon as the mind begins to develop the idea of schooling arises. But first of all you should remind everybody it is a *last school* so that the idea of play remains predominant. The real education, the real learning should be basically a matter of play. And this schooling, which is being done, is the last time that it is being done. The idea of *last school* I like it so much that right from the beginning a warning is given to everybody, to the teachers as well as the pupils, that this schooling is a concession given to them. They need it because their mind is not directly in consonance with the rhythm of the Divine, so schooling is necessary.

*After a discussion with the assembly...*

It is why the role of teacher is so great. The role of the teacher is a normative role. It is a role in which you lead the child from positive to normative ? to higher. Normative means in which you have reference to ought. Always the teacher is one who holds up to the child the idea of ought. The idea of ought is actually the idea of God. Because we are separated from God, at present in our mind, we always hold up the norm of God. Therefore all education is basically spiritual education whether you like it or not. Any reference to ought, which is normal in an education process, derives itself from God. It is from the Divine nature. Our aim should be constantly to lead the child from the present stage to the ideal stage with least friction, which is very difficult. That is why Auroville education is a great experiment. The reason why we should not do what others are doing elsewhere is this, as Mother once wrote to me saying: "We are not here to do better than what others are doing, but to do something that others do not even know that should be done." And this is actually the true education that we have to develop. And then

the role of the teacher is very great because you have to be constantly aware that actually you are with a soul. And you are dealing with a soul which is playing. Outwardly the child has forgotten that he was playing and you have to lead him back to what Plato call *remembering*. That is the very definition of education for Plato. Plato said that all learning is remembrance. You remind the child that he is God, that he is the child of God. In fact, that is the only thing that has to be done in education.

*Question on the word normative and how it could be misused.*

You are right, therefore idea of normative should be defined. The word normative is not enough. You have to be constantly defining what is value.

Alright, to come back to *last school* which I was trying to expound in my own mind.

*Last school* is largely a kindergarten, but supplanted with a tremendous amount of schooling. Reminding the child all along that he will soon overcome this need of schooling. So the method of *last school* should be so constituted that you remind the child that he has to do by himself. The schooling is only a concession. It may be a long period of seven to eight years because the purpose of this schooling is to develop more and more what is already developed in the kindergarten namely: language, mathematics and bodily movements. Plus many other faculties which might develop up automatically, imagination for example. Many children develop imagination automatically. Then power of imitation and therefore dramatics; the power of formation, designs of various kinds and that is what gives birth to art. And along with sound and language is connected the art of poetry and the art of music. Apart from those three things namely: language, mathematic and physical development you allow also the others things which result from imagination ? painting, music, whatever.

If you want to make a curriculum for the *last school* you emphasise these first three things because to the mind proper these three things are very important. And for other things every child does not necessarily manifest those developments. Every child does not become a painter, a musician or an artist. Therefore although this should be encouraged you should not have a kind of insistence that they should develop these faculties. Even with regard to those three things there should not be compulsion. There are children who are tuned to music more than to learning the alphabet. It is in our preoccupations with our present life that we say you have to learn the alphabet first and we insist that the children learn the alphabet, but some children may not like it, they may be good musicians instead. Once Mother told me that nothing should be compulsory. In the whole process of education nothing should be compulsory.

So you should have a kind of flexible curriculum for a *last school* within the first eight years ? *Last school* should be only for eight years when children need to learn by schooling, by feeding, by the constant presence of the teacher to look after them and to see their defects and deficiencies, when their development requires a good deal of guidance. And our aim should be that during the eight years the children learn at least the languages which are spoken in their environment. Secondly, the children should learn very well the four operations of arithmetic. That should be the aim of the curriculum of the eight years. This is the sound rule actually three R's as they are called. They are quite good but if you limit yourself to any three R's and put them in a sequence, first year you do this, second year you do that, third year you do this it becomes uncreative. You should not prescribe first standard goal, second standard goal and third standard goal. You put overall goals for the first eight years. During the first eight years you should educate the child so that basically he will be able to speak, write and read, at least three or four languages. This should be done particularly in the kindergarten and in the first few years. We in Auroville emphasize those languages which are appropriate to the international surroundings that we have. Apart from this what should be the level to which you should reach in eight years? You should have at least the minimum level at which the child may be capable. Some children may become quite proficient in certain languages even at the age of twelve, thirteen; some may not have that capacity or they may be doing so many languages at the same time that in each one they progress only a little, but their capacity is very great. They can become very good translators in due course. We should not discourage, we should only put down the minimum level and we can say that the maximum is any height to which the child is capable of reaching. It may be that even A level in the first eight years in particular respects is possible. We should have no limit with regard to the efficiency that should be reached in the first eight years. Reading, writing and calculating at the minimum level so that afterwards ? and this

is the minimum level that I am now defining ? he does need the help of the teacher to do further studies, as far as those things are concerned. This is the minimum level that is why it is *last school*. *Last school* means that afterwards he does not normally need the help of the teacher ? spoon-feeding is over. That should be our norm. The maximum is any level you can reach, but for minimum a child should learn at least this much. In these days for example computer is a very important instrument for learning by oneself and you should add that also the capacity of skill for computer, so that afterwards one can learn by oneself whatever one wants to learn. So, reading, writing, calculating plus anything that the child has potentiality for, anything the child has already developed in the kindergarten to some extent ? the rudiments have been already developed and you develop them further ? that would be the curriculum for the *last school*.

There are three processes of learning. Learning by development, learning by demonstration and learning by exploration. All the three processes should be involved in this movement of *last school*. In fact, all these three processes are constant everywhere ? in the kindergarten and here also. But here the emphasis will be largely upon development, not so much upon exploration and not so much upon demonstration. They should not be absent, they can be even large, but the largest time should be allotted to development.

*Kireet has been reminded of the time limit...*

After this comes *after school 1* in which the emphasis will be a continuous process of demonstration. You demonstrate to children many things. Exploration is present, development also is present. You imagine a child coming home from the school. What does he want to do? He wants to relax, he wants to watch cricket on the television. Normally we do not do anything systematically but if we are a good teacher you will present lot of demonstrations. Demonstrations about laboratory work. For example how to produce water out of oxygen and hydrogen combined together. But a good teacher finds out many things which have to be demonstrated. And you give an intensive programme of demonstrations. It will be *after school 1*. Other processes are continuing, but there is less teaching, less feeding, more learning and developing by oneself, more demonstrations and also explorations. After two years in *after school 1* you have more explorations, putting the child before the wall and obliging him to explore. A very special programme of explorations. You know that that the child after some demonstration and relaxation in the home wants to go out, to walk out, to wander about. This is the process of exploration. So, what child normally likes to do, you do it systematically, deliberately.

What I call development is a process of assimilation. You develop and assimilate... Assimilation is a constant process of learning, of all development.

*After school 2* specialises in explorations. *After school 3* emphasises development. It is a cycle. What has been emphasised in the *last school* repeats itself in a more prominent manner in the *after school 3* development. After demonstration, after exploration once again there is a repetition of development. And here the process of assimilation becomes much more important than previously. Then comes *super school*. Here again it is a repetition of *last school*. Again schooling becomes important because now there is a transition from one stage of thought to a higher level of thought, from one stage of action to a higher level of action. Therefore the role of the teacher as a stimulator becomes very important. The schooling process becomes very intense at the level of *super school* but the other processes also should be there. A part from schooling but schooling of a different kind and I don't want to go into because the time is running out so, I just put myself forwards into the *no school* in which students and teachers are all one, they are all kindergarten children again. And they can learn whatever they want to learn on their own, there are no teachers available excepting consultancy. Some consultancy will be available; some kind of cooperative learning, every one is a teacher and every one is a pupil. That kind of partnership. And then of course *research*. You advance further, you specialise in some thing and you go on into intensive research by yourself.

As I conceive it CIRHU is a place of *no school* and *research*. And this *Resource Center* of which you are speaking should be a *Resource Center* where all the processes of learning are available; where consultation is available, where schooling is available, where development is possible by your own effort, where explorations are possible, where demonstrations are possible. All facilities should be available. I think that if these ideas are kept in mind we can now organise the *Resource Center*.



*Question: As these resources should be available to all the students from kindergarten to super school this implies that this Resource Center should be located in the same campus?*

It should be not far. Because you know the whole process is one. Contiguity I have found in my experience to be extremely important. Contiguity is very important for some kind of concentration of atmosphere. Too much of a distance distracts therefore it should be as far as possible contiguous. Not one into the other but contiguous. The *Resource Center* should be something from which many stimulating ideas would emerge. And all teachers would like to consult and to come to the *Resource Center* for stimulation, for getting new ideas and so on. And this *Resource Center* should be, not only the Center for what we have so much discussed, the evolution of human species and the mutation and so on, not only for synthesis of knowledge and synthesis of culture, but also for everything that is relevant to the teaching/learning process.

*Question: inaudible...*

Every teacher has to be an educational philosopher. Our programme of teacher training should have this understanding. One used to say I am a small teacher or a big teacher. No, everybody is a good teacher. Everybody has to be a teacher. And a real teacher who understands the real process of education quite well and therefore can apply any process which is valid for a given child or a given group at any given stage.