

**Journal of the
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JOURNAL
OF THE
KRISHNAMURTI
SCHOOLS

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AN EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

This is a journal of education that carries an anthology of writings by educators and thinkers exploring a new vision of education in its many dimensions—philosophy, psychology, classroom experience, curriculum, nature and environment and contemporary issues. It lays special emphasis on Krishnamurti's principles of education. It will be of use to teachers, parents, educational administrators, teacher-educators, and to any individual interested in engaging in the educational challenges of our times.

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Question: What is the significance of history in the education of the young?

J. Krishnamurti: If one has read history it is fairly clear—that man has struggled against nature, conquered it, destroyed and polluted it; man has struggled against man; there have always been wars. Man struggles to be free and yet he becomes a slave to institutions and organizations from which in turn he tries to break away, only to form another series of institutions and organizations. There is an everlasting struggle to be free. The history of mankind is the history of tribal wars, feudal and colonial wars, the wars of the kings and nations; and it is all still going on; the tribal mind has become national and sophisticated—but it is still the tribal mind. The history of man includes its culture; it is the story of the human being who has gone through all kinds of suffering, through various diseases, through wars, through religious beliefs and dogmas, persecution, inquisition, torture in the name of god, in the name of peace, in the name of ideals.

And how is all that to be taught to the young? If it is the story of mankind, the story of human beings, then both the educators and the young are the human beings; it is their story, not merely the story of kings and wars, it is a story of themselves. How can the educator help the student to understand the story of himself, which is the story of the past, of which he is the result? That is the problem. If you are the educator and I am the young student, how would you help me to understand the whole nature and structure of myself—myself being the whole of humanity, my brain the result of many million years? It is all in me, the violence, the competition, the aggressiveness, the brutality, the cruelty, the fear, the pleasure and occasional joy and that slight perfume of love. How will you help me to understand all this? It means that the educator must also understand himself and so help me, the student, to understand myself. So it is a communication between the teacher and myself; and in that process of communication he is understanding himself and helping me to understand myself. It is not that the teacher or the educator must first understand himself and then teach - that would take the rest of his life,

perhaps - but that in the relationship between the educator and the person to be educated, there is a relationship of mutual investigation. Can this be done with the young child, or with the young student? In what manner would you set about it? That is the question.

How would you as a parent go into this, how would you help your child to understand the whole nature and structure of his mind, of his desires, of his fears-the whole momentum of life? It is a great problem.

Are we prepared, as parents and teachers, to bring about a new generation of people, for that is what is implied-a totally different generation of people with totally different minds and hearts? Are we prepared for that? If you are a parent, would you give up for the sake of your child drink, cigarettes, pot, you know, the whole drug culture and see that both you and the child are good human beings?

The word 'good' means well-fitting—psychologically, without any friction, like a good door-you understand? like a good motor. Also, 'good' means whole, not broken up, not fragmented. So, are we prepared to bring about, through education, a good human being, a human being who is not afraid – afraid – of his neighbour, afraid of the future, afraid of so many things, disease, and poverty? Also, are we prepared to help the child and ourselves to have integrity? The word 'integrity' also means to be whole and to say what you mean and not say one thing and do something else. Integrity implies honesty. Can we be honest if we have illusions and romantic and speculative ideals and strong beliefs? We may be honest to a belief but that does not imply integrity. As it is, we bring children into the world, spoil them till they are two or three, and then prepare them for war. History has not taught human beings; how many mothers must have cried, their sons having been killed in wars, yet we are incapable of stopping this monstrous killing of each other.

If we are to teach the young we must have in ourselves a sense of the demand for the good. Good is not an ideal; it is to be whole, to have integrity, to have no fear, not to be confused; these are not ideals, they are facts. Can we be factual and so bring about a good human being through education? Do we really want a different culture, a different human being, with a mind that is not confused, that has no fear, that has this quality of integrity? .

❧ Editorial ❧

It all started with a feeling that the legacy that Krishnamurti had left us in the form of his vision of education was something precious that had to be conserved, explored and shared. I felt drawn to the work of the teachers who were trying to give expression to their understanding of this vision in myriad ways, in the classroom and outside. Could there be a forum for sharing their joys as also their struggles, with their fellow teachers? Long back Krishnamurti had wished that we worked on a journal bringing the schools together. This is what impelled us to launch an in-house journal, and that was what the Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools was in the beginning. As teachers responded to our invitation to write and wrote authentically of their perceptions and how they were translating them into action there was a recognition that the educational philosophy we hold is dimensionally different, and not just a 'better way of doing things'. That is when we made efforts to widen the circle of our readership, reaching out beyond our schools. Since its inception, the journal has been an opportunity for teachers to step back, reflect upon and share their work. In the previous issues, you will find articles that deal with philosophical themes and classroom practices. Importantly, the journal has offered reflections on the 'middle ground' – between philosophy and action. It has enabled teachers to explore the implications for new curricula. As well, the journal has consciously brought in writings on nature and care of the earth as part of our responsibility.

This issue is dedicated to the teacher.

Teaching is something wonderful. The teacher's life is however demanding and hard – particularly in the present context.

In today's world the teacher has a tremendous responsibility. For instance, how should she represent the reality of the world to the child? Here she would need to walk the fine line between 'protection' and 'exposure' – safeguarding the child's innocence without keeping him in a state of ignorance. A delicate task.

Again the teacher needs to respond intelligently to questions of divisiveness in politics and religion or to social injustice and this is not an easy task. These issues would need to be opened up to dispassionate scrutiny and

critical enquiry, taking care that her own personal predilections and beliefs do not influence the child.

Failure and success are a part of children's life. How can the teacher help them understand the place of academic success and failure in the vastness of life? This requires of the teacher a balanced view. She can then address children's hurts and fears with understanding and warmth. In the process the teacher will see the importance of understanding her own hurts and fears.

Responsibility to meet the pressures of contemporary society intelligently is asked of the teacher. It calls for an awake, and subtle mind and heart. But there is an even greater responsibility that devolves upon an educator. In an article in the same issue of the journal Krishnamurti is quoted as pointing to it as 'making new human beings'. At first glance one might gloss over this as mere rhetoric, impossible to be even held in the mind. But a serious educator, one who has taken to teaching as a calling, might want to reflect upon those words and explore what it means to be 'a new human being' or to have 'a new mind'. Perhaps what is old must be recognized and put aside: the processes of thought that have fallen into a mechanical groove, the hurts, fears and anxieties – the whole spectrum of what happens within. Once the educator captures the depth and the vastness of this journey, she begins to look at the meaning of education a new – as a religion and new doors open up. 'Religion' here would have the most universal, non-dogmatic connotation. Understanding the ways of the self assumes a greater significance. All that you teach then is attention to the many happenings within, attention to one's relationship with people and so on. And when this attentive, observing mind applies itself to the learning of knowledge and skills, learning is effortless and much more interesting. It fosters the spirit of enquiry.

So to keep that flame of attention alive is the educator's highest responsibility.

The intention of the Journal has been and is to tend that fire.

The tenth issue of the Journal of Krishnamurti schools is special. For this issue we had invited several thinkers and educators who value our work to write and we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to them.

Ahalya Chari

Placing Krishnamurti in the Philosophy of Education

C SESHADRI



Scholarly research into the philosophy of education abounds with accounts of contributions of several educational and social leaders to the understanding and practice of education. They include great men and women who have expressed their views on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of education, some among whom have also established institutions to propagate their ideas. Not all of them, however, pass as philosophers of education. Philosophizing on education is a wider and deeper engagement. It involves seeing education holistically and in its relationship with the totality of life, its goal being enlightenment through sustained reflection on the very fundamentals of education – its meaning, ends and means. From this perspective, Krishnamurti stands out from among the galaxy of educational thinkers chronicled in history.

A Philosopher of Mind

It is essentially as a philosopher of mind that Krishnamurti looks at education. He sees the ultimate basis of all learning in the innermost workings of the human mind. This is not psychoanalysis as it is commonly understood but a deep look, unburdened by any kind of conditioning, into one’s own person, into one’s innermost thoughts, feelings. ‘Mind’, ‘thought’, ‘intelligence’, ‘attention’, ‘perception’, ‘freedom’, ‘love’ and ‘self’ accordingly dominate his teachings. Understanding them for what they really are, says he, holds the key to the transformation of the individual and society.

Truth, says K, is not a matter of logic. It is direct perception. It is seeing without conceptualization, without motive, choice or self-interest. It is ‘pure observation’ and ‘choiceless awareness’ where ‘the observer becomes the observed’. The conscious mind is totally conditioned; it is determined by thought, constant movement and desire. Only when the mind is freed from

thought can the light of truth be seen. Krishnamurti's 'choiceless awareness' and 'observer is the observed' seem to echo Buddha's *nairatmya - vada* (doctrine of no-self): to Buddha there exists no 'soul' (pure self). Krishnamurti's insistence that the 'word or image' is not the 'thing' also echoes Kant's *das Ding an sich* (thing-in-itself): Kant held that we can perceive objects only as they appear to us (phenomena) and never the thing-in-itself (noumena).

Psychologically, the individual human being, says Krishnamurti, is inseparable from the whole of mankind. His central concepts of 'goodness', 'responsibility', 'relationship' and 'love' are associated with life and humanity as a whole. "Being a representative of all mankind, you are responsible for the whole of mankind". This total responsibility, absolute care and concern for the good of all, is love. And education is the cultivation of such responsibility in the student.

Goodness, in essence, is the absence of self, the 'me'. Goodness and love in all our relationships can transform life. The flowering of goodness is possible only in freedom and in the choiceless awareness of our daily existence and activity. It is the total unfolding and cultivation of our minds, hearts and our physical well-being. It is living in complete harmony in which there is clear, objective, non-personal perception unburdened by any kind of conditioning. It is the release of our total energy and its total freedom.

What comes in the way of such absolute perception and limits the release of total energy is 'thought' (in a wider sense that Krishnamurti uses this term). "Where thought is, love is not". Thought is the root of all our sorrow, ugliness, anxiety, grief, pain, power and violence. It is a destructive factor to the wholeness of mind, its infinite capacity and its total emptiness in which there is immeasurable energy. Education should help one to free oneself from the limiting influence of thought and experience life in its wholeness.

The Centrality of Education

Krishnamurti is truly an educational philosopher in that his thinking is centred on education, on understanding its fundamentals as well as praxis. There is no need for one to 'draw educational implications' from his general thinking or search for strands. How could one even entertain such a distinction given K's severe opposition to fragmentation of all kinds? His educational teachings do not hang loose but are integrally woven into his thinking on life, world and humanity.

Krishnamurti addressed educational problems, even the nitty-gritties of day-to-day classroom teaching, squarely and directly. He dealt with them by probing into their very roots with his penetrating insights. His educational concerns are strikingly contemporaneous and global. They include: freedom and discipline, comparison and competition, learning through the senses, scientific temper, joy and creativity. A primary audience of his has been the educational community—schools, teachers, students and parents. Krishnamurti’s educational teachings also encompass such broad, general concerns of mankind as freedom, fear, god, living and dying, love and loneliness, peace and the future of humanity. It is against this awesome sweep of ideas and his deep love of humanity that one has to understand his educational philosophy.

The Purpose of Education

Education is usually taken to be an organized, purposive activity, with pre-established goals. What sense can one make of Krishnamurti’s “truth is a pathless land...it cannot be organized...” and his ardent espousal of education and his setting up of a number of schools? The reconciliation of the apparent contradiction lies in K’s situating education in the active, existential, living present and consideration of education as a cooperative exploration by the teacher and student.

Krishnamurti sees education not with the eyes of a reformer, as a means to serve this or that end, but as an intrinsic, self-fulfilling experience requiring no further justification. The function of education, he said, is “to bring about a mind that will not only act in the immediate but go beyond...a mind that is extraordinarily alive, not with knowledge, not with experience, but alive”. “More important than making the child technologically proficient is the creation of the right climate in the school for the child to develop fully as a complete human being”. This means giving him “the opportunity to flower in goodness, so that he is rightly related to people, things and ideas, to the whole of life” (On Education).

Insights into teaching and learning

It is not possible to do justice to the richness of the body of K’s insights on teaching, learning and other aspects of education in a brief write-up. I quote a few below that have a significance all their own and leave a lasting impact.

The Point of Education: Education is essentially the art of learning, not only from books, but from the whole movement of life...learning about the

nature of the intellect, its dominance, its activities, its vast capacities and its destructive power...learning it not from a book but from the observation of the world about you...without theories, prejudices and values (Letters to the Schools).

Principle of Method: If one really has something to say, the very saying of it creates its own style; but learning a style without inward experiencing can only lead to superficiality...Likewise, people who are experiencing, and therefore teaching, are the only real teachers, and they too will create their own technique. (Education and the Significance of Life, p.21, 48).

Schooling without Competition and Comparison: When A is compared to B, who is clever, bright, assertive, that very comparison destroys A. This destruction takes the form of competition, of imitation and conformity to the patterns set by B. This breeds...antagonism, jealousy, anxiety and even fear; and this becomes the condition in which A lives for the rest of his life, always measuring, always comparing psychologically and physically... Goodness cannot flower where there is any kind of competitiveness. (Letters to the Schools, p.80)

Learning through Observation: Learning is pure observation – observation which is not continuous and which then becomes memory, but observation from moment to moment – not only of the things outside you but also of that which is happening inwardly; to observe without the observer. Look not with your mind but with your eyes... Then you find out that the outside is the inside...that the observer is the observed (On Education).

Freedom and Order...if you want to be free...you have to find out for yourself what it is to be orderly, what it is to be punctual, kind, generous, unafraid. The discovery of all that is discipline... Freedom is not from something or avoidance of constraint. It has no opposite; it is of itself, per se. Clarity of perception is freedom from the self. Flowering of goodness in all our relationship is possible only in freedom (On Education).

Krishnamurti as a Communicator

It is rarely that a great philosopher is an engaging teacher too. Krishnamurti is one such. He employs talk and dialogue with great effect as didactic devices to communicate the most abstruse and complex ideas. His method is to unlock commonly held, pet beliefs through a form of Socratic dialogue – raising a question, assuming the role of a skeptic, testing

received wisdom with reference to instances, counter instances, analogies and illustrations, ultimately leading the inquirer to light. It is tempting to see it as a kind of linguistic analysis (a la Wittgenstein) but it is anything but that – the aim is not mechanical, positivist search for conceptual clarity; it is a deeper search for inner meaning. Krishnamurti constantly cautioned against giving primacy to verbal clarity. “The word is never the thing...it prevents the actual perception of the thing...”

Through his talks, speeches and writings Krishnamurti establishes a kind of communication that is at once intimate and personal. When you read Krishnamurti, you feel like you are being talked to personally, so close and direct is his mode of talking to the reader. He takes the reader along with his thinking, step by step, all over the territory covering the issue, negotiating twists and turns, all the while increasing the subject’s anticipation of arriving at the ‘destination’. The unraveling, the denouement, however, does not come in the form of a crisp definition or a cut and dried answer to the question but in the form of a thorough mapping of the contours of the issue, laying bare its complexities. At the end the reader is left alone to put together and make sense of all that the exploration has brought out. At least, that is how I felt when I read ‘A Religious Mind is Like Clear Water’ (KFI Bulletin vol 3, Nov 2005 –Feb 2006).

Krishnamurti’s teachings are also characterized by cryptic aphorisms and maxims: The first step in freedom is the last step; The ending of the continuity – which is time – is the flowering of the timeless; To discover anything...your look must be silent; We learn to earn a living but we never live. Moreover, he packs so much into certain commonly used concepts that they need unpacking before their hidden meaning is understood. ‘Thought’, to Krishnamurti, for example, does not just mean logical, abstract, ideational thinking but refers to the entire content of consciousness — memories, emotions, impulses, fears, hopes, desires. When he says that thought is responsible ‘for all the cruelty and the wars as well as the beautiful things created by man, cathedrals and poems’, he is using thought in the above sense. ‘Mind’ implies the senses, the capacity to think and the brain that stores all memories and experiences as knowledge, the total movement (Letters to the Schools). Similarly, ‘insight’ is not just instantaneous perception of truth but also associated with love, intelligence, action and a host of other attributes like – believe it or not – it’s being absolute, accurate, final and true! (Letters to the Schools).

Krishnamurti as an Educational Philosopher

As a philosopher, Krishnamurti, it appears, has not engaged the attention of academia, in India or in the West. Possible reasons for the apathy of universities towards Krishnamurti's teachings could be their basically theoretical and intellectual orientation, or the uncritical celebration of thought that is characteristic of our times (Javier Gomez Rodriguez in his review of 'On Krishnamurti' by Raymond Martin, *The Link*, No 25, 2005-06, p.64). It may also be due, as some say, to the 'limited' nature of his message.

But it can hardly be denied that Krishnamurti is essentially a philosopher of education. It needs no deconstruction to say this. His teachings with their core concern of education make him that. As a philosopher of education, Krishnamurti has been a favourite 'subject' for scholarly study leading to a few doctoral dissertations. This is significant considering that philosophy of education (like philosophy and, generally, most humanistic studies) is far from being a vibrant field of academic activity in our country. Krishnamurti also finds a place as an important educational thinker in courses on educational theory and philosophy. But these are just commonplaces. If one were to appreciate the true significance of K's teachings to the body of knowledge and insights that we call philosophy of education, one needs to look far beyond and far deeper.

First, the educational issues raised by Krishnamurti—place of knowledge in education, freedom and discipline, learning from nature, role of sensory experience and observation, comparison and competition—are of such abiding concern that they have been discussed by several educational thinkers in the past. The greatness of Krishnamurti lies in the fact that he dealt with them not as educational problems per se but in relation to their deeper philosophical ramifications. Also, he did not consider them as so many disparate issues but as comprising an integrated whole connected with the attainment of the summum bonum: absolute, pure perception of truth and goodness. This gives his educational teachings a firm philosophical anchor.

Secondly, the educational concerns of Krishnamurti being at once topical and contemporaneous are capable of supplying the needed grist to the philosopher's mill. This intellectual activity, it appears, is presently confined to a rather limited circle. But the issues raised are anything but sectarian; they are the general concerns of each and every person with a stake in the

education of their children and the well-being of society. For example, the distortion of 'knowledge aim' in schools, the danger of virtual reality replacing learning from nature under the euphoria of IT, the neglect of childhood as an intrinsically desirable stage, to mention a few, are plain, universal concerns. It is to the credit of those engaged with Krishnamurti's educational work that attention has been drawn to these concerns and the initial momentum has been imparted for their wider discussion.

Apart from Krishnamurti's own writings, his teachings have begun to spawn publication of a variety of educational writings of a philosophical kind. These are in the form of reflections based on field experience and scholarly analyses of issues on various aspects of education, schooling, teaching and learning, emerging thus far mostly from the educational centres established by Krishnamurti himself*.

In the final analysis, Krishnamurti stands out as an educational philosopher not so much for his 'pure' metaphysical beliefs, as for the veritable mine of precious insights he has left behind on schooling, teaching and learning. At a time when genuine educational values are being overrun by concerns of the market place, Krishnamurti's teachings today acquire an added relevance and urgency.

Prof C. Seshadri, a scholar in philosophy of education, was formerly Professor of Education and Principal at the Regional Institute of Education, Mysore, a constituent unit of the National Council of Educational Research and Training. He is presently associated as a consultant in teacher training with the British Government – All China Women's Federation project on integrated skills training of poor, adolescent girls in



*The Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools which publishes these is a valuable contribution to the 'philosophy in practice' genre from the Krishnamurti perspective. †Concerning Education (the Report of the Krishnamurti Birth Centenary Educational Conference, 1995) has also enriched the philosophy of education literature.

Responsibility to 'The Other'

MARY CADOGAN



I have been asked to contribute to the Journal which is now marking the first decade of its existence, and I am happy to do so because of my involvement in the work of the Foundations, which, of course, can be seen at so many levels as part of the world of education. It was suggested to me that I might provide 'a peep from the wings' about 'what K wanted for Brockwood as a school community', or on 'K's vision of education', and I hope that I may provide some focus on all this.

I should mention here that a conversation between Mary Zimbalist and myself about Krishnaji's approach to education was published under the heading of *Shattering All Conditioning* in the 1999 book *Understanding Ourselves*, which celebrated the first thirty years of Brockwood Park School. It will be difficult for me to avoid some repetition of what I said then. Although that conversation related especially to Brockwood, it also touched on Krishnaji's passion for the work of all the schools.

K was the supreme educator, in the broadest and deepest sense of that word. I recall that way back in the early 1960s when we wanted to issue a press release about his forthcoming public talks in London, we didn't know how best to describe him in just one or two words. 'Philosopher' did not fit, and he wouldn't allow 'mystic' or 'religious teacher'. He suggested 'Educator'—but eventually decided on 'Teacher', with capital T. (In the event, the press release was never sent out because Krishnaji always had some reluctance for what he considered to be any kind of personal advertisement!)

Working with K involved many discussions about Brockwood, but it is sometimes difficult to unravel what he said that *specifically* concerned the school. This is because he often used the word 'Brockwood' to mean the whole of the work—the Foundation, the schools and the International

Committees; also, towards the end of his life he included the Centres which he was vigorously planning, and about which he spoke with great feeling. His wish that Brockwood would last for a thousand years was much quoted. I told him I felt uneasy about this because Hitler's frequent declarations that the Third Reich would continue for a thousand years still rang loudly, if hollowly, in many ears.

K's vision of the right atmosphere for the school was both sweepingly wide and meticulously detailed, as can be sensed in his many discussions with the staff and students there.

When Krishnaji talked about Brockwood, the physical beauty of the place – the elegant house, the great old trees, the lawns, meadows and wild flowers – seemed to merge with the psychological atmosphere which his presence there generated. As well as the teachings, respect for the earth and the environment has always been at the heart of Brockwood activities. K's vision of the right atmosphere for the school was both sweepingly wide and meticulously detailed, as can be sensed in his many discussions with the staff and students there. He saw it as a place without fear and a place of excellence brought about by the passion and endeavour of all the people living there – teachers, staff and students – and also by visitors. He often said that 'Brockwood is more than a school'. As well as creating an atmosphere in which young minds could open and flower, that special quality of life should embrace people seriously interested in the teachings who would visit Brockwood.

There would be a two-way influence: these visitors would bring an input from their own creativity, and the school would have an effect upon them. I think that this feeling for an 'osmosis' between Brockwood and visitors eventually led Krishnaji to suggest the establishment of a Centre there. (It was mooted some years earlier but, although favouring *aspects* of what he called 'an ashrama', K then had some doubts about it. Perhaps he felt that the school had first to establish its own enquiry and integrity.)

We will come back later to some of Krishnaji's reflections on Brockwood's atmosphere, but I would like first to mention two moments with him that particularly stand out for me in connection with the school. The first was when Brockwood had been in existence for some time and we wanted to write something about it for the Bulletin. Krishnaji asked the trustees and

some of the staff what we were actually doing at Brockwood. He expected us to answer this individually, and no one's replies satisfied him. He winced at them, and turned away. Eventually, we all sat together quietly. K had that extraordinary inward look, with his eyelids down. We seemed to be in the presence of something remarkable, a power-house of energy, and we hardly dared to speak. However, I eventually said, 'Krishnaji, can we ask *you* this question, what are we doing at Brockwood?' His reply was, 'Oh, it's quite simple. We are making new human beings'. I asked if we could put this into the article we were preparing for the Bulletin, and he said, 'Yes, of course'. However, two days later I had a telephone call from him and he said, "I think perhaps we should not put that in". Nevertheless, I'm sure that, in his heart, that *was* what we were doing at Brockwood – making new human beings. What a tremendous challenge this was – and is – to everyone who is part of it.

The other deeply revealing moment also came when Krishnaji was talking with some of the trustees and Brockwood teachers, and by a single sentence lifted a stagnant discussion into new dimensions. He had asked what happened when the bright, questioning child grew into the bored teenager and, as we probed, he said very factually, "After all, goodness is *there*, wanting to manifest". I asked him whether 'there' meant all around or inside us, and he indicated, by repetition of the word *there* and by gesture, that it was both inner and outer.

One of Krishnaji's greatest gifts to us was the ease and naturalness which so often flowed between him and the groups with whom he worked. We couldn't always take full advantage of this at Brockwood and, sadly, frequently failed to ask 'the right questions'. However, at Brockwood and his other schools, K's long and intense discussions with staff and students are invaluable. So too are what sometimes appeared to be his 'throw-away' remarks.

We know that from his early years he was drawn to the establishing of schools. Sometimes people have asked: "Why schools? Why not adult groups, communities, workshops, etc?" My feeling is that, as well as recognizing the vital need for young people to grow up without psychological conditioning, Krishnaji sensed that caring for them would enhance sensitivity and openness in the adults who chose to work in the schools.

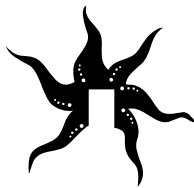
One of the key points made in the book, *Understanding Ourselves*, mentioned earlier was Mary Zimbalist's note of something said by Krishnaji in Saanen in 1975 to a group of people with a special interest in schools.

Discussing responsibility he commented, ‘Responsibility is not to the students but to ‘the other’. He asked if there were a catalyst that would shatter all the child’s conditioning: “By bringing about an atmosphere, a seriousness, real affection in the air, disturbing but interesting, a sense of stability, abiding reverence in that immutable truth, unchangeable reality”.

This, surely, describes Krishnaji’s vision of education. He died twenty years ago but the vitality and immediacy of his teachings, and his work in the schools, can be accessed through his talks and writings. What he once said to some of the Trustees about the teachings we can echo in the context of the schools:

“This is a sacred treasure. This is a mine where there is immense gold and it is sacred. I will leave it with you.”

Mary Cadogan has been broadcasting, lecturing and writing about children’s books and popular culture since the mid-1970s. She has written articles and book reviews for many major British national newspapers and journals. Her fifteen published books include biographies of two prominent children’s authors and two studies of girl’s fiction. She is also president of literary societies in London, Cambridge, Yorkshire and the Midlands. A close associate of Krishnamurti for many years, Mary Cadogan is a senior trustee of the Krishnamurti Foundation Trust Ltd, UK and has been involved in the development of the Brockwood Park School and Centre.



Exploring Fundamental Questions at School

PAUL HERDER



It's a sun drenched Wednesday morning and fifteen freshman and twelve sophomore high school students sit as one large group in a circle. They have assembled for Fundamental Questions class, a bi-weekly hour and half session intended for large and small group inquiry. The day's question is "What are we distracting ourselves from?" It's a question generated by a student and a question that most in the group have agreed is worth investigating. A week earlier the junior and senior high school students assembled for their Fundamental Questions class in the same room. Their question was "Can a person understand what another person is going through?" This question came from a different process with the students but was similarly ranked as worthy of discussion.

The Fundamental Questions class is new this year to Oak Grove. The intention is to create another forum for the high school students to explore deeper questions in a supportive environment that encourages their own thinking to come forward, be shared and examined. There

is no pre-determined content to cover, no knowledge to acquire. The content and the direction the discussion takes are largely up to the students and emerge in the process of actively relating. The teachers act primarily as facilitators (there are at least two, typically three); they organize the class and help frame the discussion. With the suspension of curriculum-driven interactions, and the presence of substantive questions, there is a possibility of true equality between student and student, and student and teacher.

The first meeting of the Fundamental Questions class was dedicated to introducing the importance of group inquiry and asking basic questions. We asked, "Why are we bothering to do this?" This question would re-emerge as the semester progressed with greater degrees of urgency on the part of different students. In some ways it is a core question, one that may take a year for some to appreciate. We talked about the nature of fundamental questions and their importance in life. Examples of fundamental questions were: What is freedom? What is justice?

How do we know anything? What is love?
What is right livelihood?

It was pointed out that many fundamental questions have been answered for them in some form or another by various authorities such as parents, peers, politicians, and marketers. For example, the answer to the question ‘What is a good life?’ is broadcast day in and day out on television and in other media. Having the most ‘cool’ stuff, having the right body, and a glamorous career are recurring themes. We also considered the student’s daily experience at school and how it is profoundly influenced by the way people here and elsewhere have answered the question ‘What is education?’ We suggested that maybe the answers to this and other fundamental questions were sensible, but then again maybe they weren’t. Was it intelligent, we asked, to assume that the answers provided for us were correct?

Educational Conditioning

In the Fundamental Questions class we came face to face with some important educational conditioning. School has taught many students to be passive consumers of the curriculum. The typical learning process is entirely set up for them. Even when given options and choices they are basically told what to do, what material to cover, what metric to conform to and what the ‘right answer’ is. The students come to depend upon and conform to a comfortable routine that they recognize as ‘learning’. The exception to this is

the ‘creative’ assignment or project. These important activities allow for more individual initiative, but tend to emphasize self-expression above and beyond self-inquiry. In the Fundamental Questions class, perhaps for the first time in their career, these students came face to face with the dependent nature of their learning. When the teachers are not running the show some students found themselves uneasy with the increased responsibility and asked, “How can we learn anything?” “Aren’t we wasting our time?”

At the beginning, many students felt that they were not capable of answering or really investigating these questions. Students suspected that there were “right” answers that were somehow embedded in the questions and that they didn’t have the background or knowledge to discover them. They sometimes felt adrift because they weren’t sure what steps to take to please or placate the teacher. They also wanted to stay in their comfort zone, to regain their role of recipients of the known.

They rightly intuited that they were entering unknown territory, unknown to themselves and to their teachers. This was made explicit in one group discussion. Students admitted to feeling that they were “nothing in the larger picture of things” and “had never experienced major life events.” In response to these kinds of feelings we looked at what it meant to be human and it was suggested that we were no different from people everywhere on

earth. Someone brought up fear. Fear was a human universal and if we were to learn about fear wouldn't we learn something about all people everywhere?

The Source of the Questions

It's the freshman and sophomore's third session together and we've just concluded a large group discussion. The students are sufficiently warmed up and are asked to write down any questions they have about what matters to them or things they wonder about. The overall list of questions generated by the students was substantial. Examples included:

How can someone know how the mind works?

Why are we categorized?

How does the brain work?

What is society?

What is the difference between happiness and what society says is happiness?

Why is it almost forced on us to be successful?

What is the point of being here if we just consume and copulate?

One student captured something of her mental process of coming up with a question when she wrote: "*Why do we need to write a question?*" She then continued—"*Why can't I think of a question?*" Finally she asked "*Why are some people so mean and some so sensitive?*"

Teachers as Facilitators

As facilitators of these sessions, the teachers were encouraged to be

aware of ways in which they might shut down the student's thinking. Before the launch of these sessions, the teachers discussed the importance of allowing for the expression of diverse opinions and for creating a more transparent environment where the student's (and educator's) conditioning could emerge. We discussed the fact that a fine balance existed between allowing for free expression and letting the discussion bog down in gratuitous diversions (sometimes called 'bird-walks'). For example, during the discussion on "What are we distracting ourselves from?" a few students were entertaining each other. They came up with the theory that extra terrestrial beings were the reason why people are so unfocused. The facilitator's comment was that perhaps talking about terrestrial beings was itself an attempt to distract the group.

From the point of view of the facilitators, these discussions were held in a spirit of openness. Curiously, when the teachers were careful to keep things open, the students were likely to close things down. They were often quick to condemn and express dismay at the shortsightedness of this or that opinion. A hidden competitive atmosphere in the junior and senior group was revealed by one student's comment. When asked why some students were holding back and not speaking, one said; "You have to choose your battles." This comment was said to the accompaniment of much nodding of heads and other gestures of agreement.

This came as somewhat of a shock to the teachers as we had set up the classes with a very different intent, and on the surface at least there seemed to be a fair amount of cooperation.

In the subsequent session the facilitators opened the morning by sharing the perception that a certain amount of judgment and polarization had happened and reminded them that the intent of the discussions was fundamentally to learn. We went on to suggest that a large group like this was a microcosm of society and that we were experiencing the same basic psychological dynamic that leads to division between peoples and ultimately to war.

“This Makes My Brain Hurt!”

It’s the last class before the end of the first term and a few students have expressed unease with the way the sessions have ended ambiguously, without resolution. In response the students have broken up into smaller groups in an attempt to come to some shared understanding around the day’s topic: happiness. In one small group there is some disagreement around the nature of happiness and whether or not happiness is the same thing as pleasure. One student was wrestling with this, citing examples where clearly happiness was pleasure, then trying to think of an example of being happy that didn’t involve pleasure. Another student chimed in; “What is pleasure anyway?” The first student threw up her hands exclaiming “This makes my brain hurt!”

The Fundamental Questions class is a place where students sometimes feel uncomfortable and typically express their discomfort as a direct result of having to think for themselves. On top of this they are asked to do this within a group of their peers that inevitably adds a challenging social dimension to the proceedings. In their struggle to express both their insights and their frustrations, these students have an opportunity to unearth their opinions and assumptions, and experience something of the important transition from psychological reaction to inquiry. Granted it is early days. Up to this point, much of what has been expressed is still reaction. Yet this very lack of competence in group inquiry illustrates the need for a learning activity of this nature.

From the teacher’s perspective these sessions offer a rich and thoroughly challenging opportunity to learn about ourselves as educators and as human beings. Facilitation is an art, an art born of awareness. If during these discussions we are helping to make connections or probing with further questions, these contributions are the result of sustained listening. In order for our students to feel supported we must share with them the passion we feel for this level of inquiry. Words alone will not suffice and all our accumulated knowledge will do them little good. What we must sustain is what Krishnamurti called “the flame of discontent”. The urgency of that intent brings about understanding.

Looking forward, the inquiry process that is beginning to occur in these classes is also beginning to be integrated with other areas of the curriculum. On several occasions students brought up subjects they were studying, such as Buddhism, ancient Greek philosophy and even mathematics. Questions that have more direct links to existing content

areas are natural places to bring the inquiry process back into the more conventional academic sphere. Inviting other teachers to participate in these classes also provides the opportunity for them to learn more about facilitation and to listen and communicate with their students in a more open-ended context.

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Emotions and Learning

N VENU



The Brain Sciences have made dramatic progress in the last two decades. Knowledge emerging from new research has provided neuroscientists with a wealth of new information about the organization of the brain and the complex brain processes that underlie intelligent behaviour. It is now possible, with the aid of new imaging techniques, to study the working brain. Admittedly, we are nowhere near a full understanding or explication of how neural processes “generate” mind and consciousness. Yet what we know seems to require us to drastically revise many of our common assumptions about personal, social and cultural life.

I would like to present some of these insights and suggest the implications that these might have for education. My perspective is not that of an expert in neuroscience. I have no such expertise. Nor am I presenting detailed results from educational research. My view is that of an interested and curious educator, a practitioner in the field, as it were, who wishes to use this new understanding as a

springboard for new ideas and explorations. This point of view is also that of an educational ethos, that of the Krishnamurti Schools, for instance, that holds that education has to address the whole human being, whether teacher or student, and is sceptical of the narrow vision of learning that is dominant today.

I would like to suggest, tentatively, that many of the new insights from neuroscience support this educational vision. They highlight the variability and diversity of human development, the fact that we share much more with other animals than we care to admit, that our cognitive abilities while phenomenal are fallible and depend very much on our capacity for emotion and feeling, and finally that there is no single area in the brain that uniquely defines the individual. Our sense of personhood is a composite, a “fiction” rendered on the fly by complex brain processes that many even believe are beyond the ability of science to explain.

I would like to introduce my view of the possibilities of this line of thinking by

presenting some of the implications of the new understanding of emotions, feelings and their role in learning.

Emotions and the Brain

Psychology and neuroscience neglected emotions through most of the twentieth century. They were considered too difficult to study scientifically and were left to poets, writers and artists to explore. Emotions were often viewed with suspicion, as distractions that impair the operation of thinking and reasoning. This view is no longer tenable. Emotions are not an accident of evolution. There is nothing uniquely human about them either. And it is clear now that cognition and emotion are inextricably linked.

What are emotions, really? Surprisingly, it has been difficult to provide an unambiguous definition. There is some agreement that some emotions are 'primary' (anger, fear, sadness and so on) and seem to transcend culture and some are social emotions (shame, guilt, jealousy) that contain shades of many primary emotions. Another bone of contention is the relationship between emotions and feeling. Many writers consider the two to be synonymous. Others think that feelings and emotions, while closely related, are processes that have different evolutionary history and function. In this perspective, feelings, the awareness of emotional states, are built on the foundation of emotions. Emotions and feelings, in this view, contribute to the building of the perception of 'self', a feeling entity.

I do not intend to describe this debate in any detail. For our purposes, it is sufficient to realise that emotions and feelings (which we experience directly, anyway!) are complex neuro-physiological processes that have at least the following salient features and characteristics:

- 1 Emotions are responses, triggered by the brain and primarily centred on the body, to significant internal and external events. To use a common example: walking along a dark path at night, you encounter an object on the ground. A snake? Before you know it, you have leapt back or frozen in mid-stride, heart pounding, with a muffled cry, perhaps. Many other body changes accompany this response of *fear*: changes in blood pressure, skin conductance and so on. All this requires no planning and thinking. That comes later.
- 2 Emotions are highly adaptive and valuable guides for survival. They are not a luxury or inconvenience. On the contrary, emotions and feelings render in glorious "multi-dimensional colour" what would otherwise be a flat and grey personal world. This, as we shall discover, comes at a price.
- 3 In human beings the basic biological machinery of emotions has been fine tuned to produce social emotions that have helped the development of a complex and rich social and cultural life and experience.
- 4 Emotional body states contribute to feelings: the processes by which we

become aware and conscious of the changes in the body that emotional responses have brought about.

- 5 Emotions have a close link to reasoning abilities. This might surprise many. It turns out that cognition is not an independent capacity, in splendid isolation from emotion and feeling. Sherlock Holmes, alas, is a neurobiological impossibility. Impaired emotions undermine cognition and decision-making. It is no surprise that mental disorders are very often disorders of emotion and mood.
- 6 Much of our social experience is an interplay between emotional selves. Our sense of fact, right and wrong, of 'truth' and falsehood, are not based, as one might wish, exclusively on our ability for dispassionate judgment, but inevitably on our 'emotional biographies', and the 'truth' that feelings provide from moment to moment.
- 7 Processes that generate emotions and feelings in the brain are also, in all probability, involved in the generation of consciousness and a sense of identity.
- 8 Emotional experiences and emotional memories are powerful conditioning forces that have a large role to play in defining 'personality'.

Emotions in Relationship and Learning

From what has been said so far, it should be obvious that emotional processes contribute strongly to the tenor of everyday

experience. We are social beings and particularly in the present milieu, many of our trials, tribulations, the dangers we face and the sorrows we experience are of social origin. Rarely do we face a predator in the wild, or have to hunt for food anymore. This suggests to me that an understanding of our emotional heritage is potentially a powerful tool for greater self-understanding and empathy.

In the context of education, I would like to begin with a few questions, and would then like to suggest a few hypotheses that seem to me to be justified in the light of the insights from cognitive neuroscience.

- 1 What is the significance of emotions for learning?
- 2 How do current educational practices use (or abuse) emotions and feelings? Are these practices justified?
- 3 What are the characteristics (both structure and process related) of a healthy educational environment? To what extent can such an environment contribute to well-being?
- 4 What is the nature of adult relationships in such an environment? How can the educator sustain the momentum of learning in her life?

A Few Observations

Based on the experience of the group of educators that I am part of, and observations of the education system, I believe that the following statements are largely justified:

Learning has an irreducible emotional dimension.

While learning new skills, say in science or mathematics, does involve, primarily, cognitive processes, the emotional dimension in the learning process needs emphasis. The student's emotional responses do influence her orientation to the topic, degree of involvement with the learning situation and even the level of alertness and attention that the student may display. Effective teachers have always understood this intuitively. We all remember the science teacher who brought excitement and adventure to the classroom in our school. And perhaps my attitude to mathematics has been shaped, to some extent at least, by the fear that the teacher evoked.

If we now begin to look at learning not just as the acquisition of skills and knowledge but as a complex process of development of life skills, social capacities and ways of seeing, the hypothesis looks even more credible. This is not to deny that there are innate and genetic influences that exert a powerful force over learning. Yet, the contribution that emotional factors make to learning has been often neglected.

The present education system makes disproportionate use of one emotion: FEAR.

Our education system implicitly and often crudely assumes that fear and anxiety are part of the price our children need

to pay to be educated. Several common practices in schools seem to provoke anxiety in students. Foremost among these is the insidious role that examinations and comparative methods of assessment play. The assumption that fear can be a source of motivation *in the long run* is very questionable. Secondly, the fear and anxiety that seep into the learning situation through comparative grading and competition seem to me to contribute very little to true learning. Furthermore, the teacher in the classroom is still an object of fear and authority in far too many schools.

The insensitivity and resistance to change in our school systems to these obvious ills is an indicator of how little we understand the process of learning. Learning is potentially a source of joy, wonder and well-being for the teacher and the student. It seems to me that a relentless campaign of advocacy is needed to persuade educators, parents and the state to acknowledge the change in approach needed. An added problem is the tendency to define "success" in narrow ways. Capacities and interests are variable and gloriously diverse. A deeper understanding of students' capacities will take account of varied emotional temperaments, innate dispositions and interests and diverse economic and cultural contexts. In herding all learners into a "one size fits all" framework, we condemn generations of students to anxiety and a sense of failure.

We need new words and new deeds.

Is it possible to sensitise teachers, parents and students to the need to make learning situations emotionally wholesome? Firstly, schools need to pay particular attention to the social relationships in the classroom. It seems to me that children who encounter positive and supportive emotional environments at home and school are more likely to grow up to be sensitive adult citizens. A child who lives in an atmosphere of violence and emotional turbulence, as far too many do, may take these to be 'normal'.

Teaching has gradually been reduced to more or less mechanical training. The assumption that computers can replace teachers is an example of the way in which learning has been trivialized. This view obviously ignores the rich possibilities that a nurturing, cooperative learning situation has, and its positive emotional and cultural benefits. We need to "re-frame" the debate in a way that emphasizes the role of education as a holistic process that nurtures sensitive and responsible human beings, not mere economic agents.

At CFL we try to engage students and parents in a sustained dialogue over many years. These dialogues serve to open many of these ideas to discussion and challenge. The years in school can be a period of intense emotional pressures for the student. Peer interaction is a very significant force in students' lives. But it is often far from

benign. So is the emotional turbulence that the child experiences in relation to many life events. Puberty and sexual maturation come immediately to mind. Sexuality is a realm of intense anxiety and curiosity for the young. We need a "mode of talking" that acknowledges the young person's experience in a non-judgmental way and opens it up with empathy and rigour. Far too often teachers, having forgotten their own childhood, tend to condemn or to "explain away". The discovery of such a "mode of talking" seems to me to be a matter of utmost importance.

Emotional processes underwrite many of the concepts and moral certainties that we acquire throughout life. The strong hold of nationalism and religious dogma is an interesting example. Examples of the ease with which destructive emotions are deployed to protect these beliefs are innumerable. Once such concepts and perceptions are acquired, any revision may provoke anxiety. We would rather persist with destructive emotional patterns than take the "risk" of subjecting them to scrutiny. Schools, I believe, are at the frontline in the attempts that need to be made to help the young learn the art of introspection that might liberate us from the tyranny of such conditioning.

Teachers must be learners too.

Schools in general are far too rigidly structured. We seem loath to change the factory-like school organization that provides teachers (and students) with very

little room for exploration and initiative. Syllabuses are inflexible and created by 'experts'. Such a system does not encourage creative partnerships among teachers. And school is very rarely a place of learning for the educator.

Krishnamurti insisted that the educator is most in need of education. A teacher who is not exploring the nature of freedom, an inward freedom that releases the individual from bondage, is unlikely to be able to nurture creativity in the student.

Can schools be places of dialogue and exploration for teachers? It seems to me, from the experience at CFL, that such an environment is emotionally very demanding. Anger, jealousy and anxiety are common currency in relationship. It was unnerving for me to discover that feelings inevitably moulded my perceptions and decisions, often rigidly. Emotions and feelings are the cement that hold our perceptions together. Unfortunately, they often intimate a dubious "truth" which must be subjected to unrelenting questioning and scepticism. Most of us find this scepticism difficult in the face of feelings that support our certainties, through the

flesh, as it were. Working relationships that are broken by hurt and conflict are all too common a consequence. I believe that a group that invests energy in a process of cooperative dialogue has a greater chance of discovering creative responses to this challenge.

Conclusion

I have argued that a nuanced understanding of feelings, emotions and the nature of brain development and processes that mediate these can be useful. Let me emphasize that we do not have to be brain specialists to be good learners and educators. But too many of the current beliefs and practices that schools adhere to are based on erroneous or outdated understanding of our biology. Correcting these cannot fail to be beneficial. I have also argued that many recent developments in neurobiology suggest the need for new ways of talking about the issues raised here. Many of the sharp divisions that everyday speech insists on, between mind and body, thinking and feeling are no longer sustainable. Educators must contribute to the development of that new language.

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Teaching Peace

KRISHNA KUMAR



*A*s you mellow, the urge to compromise hits oftener, but latecomers continue to annoy me. Over a long teaching career, which is currently under a temporary suspension, I have tried many different ways to reform the unpunctual. My methods have been effectively challenged by the articulate, who used my pedagogy of connecting classroom learning with life outside, to argue that Delhi buses and distances had made punctuality unsustainable as a daily value. Between secret appreciation of such facetious logic and continued annoyance, I have usually chosen the latter, but this option did not seem right for my Peace Education course which had its dry run three years ago. How can a peace class start with anger? Fortunately, the first batch of seventeen had no persistent latecomers. In the second batch, however, I faced three.

One day when we were to start a fresh topic I waited for all three for about ten minutes. One of them came in at this point but the other two were still in a bus as I could imagine. The topic was human relations with nature. I had planned a silent reading from a book about Japanese gardens and a discussion thereafter, focusing on the role that everything, even stones and mud, plays in shaping our experience of a Japanese garden. I did not want the two remaining unpunctuals to miss the start, but I was getting anxious that if we waited any longer, no one might have sufficient time to read in silence without stress. My additional anxiety was about the discussion afterwards. Having spent two decades at India's premier teacher training institute, I had compromised willy-nilly with the idea of a planned lesson. This morning I was determined to follow the plan I had drawn up for the direction in which I wanted the discussion to go. How would I carry out this plan properly now, with thirteen minutes already gone, waiting for my last two challengers? How much easier would it be if I could assume that they were not coming

that day, due to sudden illness which is so common in Delhi. My trouble was that I knew from experience that these two students were not capable of getting sick. They were simply late, as always, and would show up, eventually, testing my patience, consideration and compassion the fundamental qualities our course on peace education, as approved by the Academic Council, loudly announced as being basic to peace.

At the start of the sixteenth minute, when I had finally decided to distribute the write-up on Japanese gardens though I somehow knew my planned discussion was heading towards unseemly collapse my dear ones arrived. Their characteristic knock at the door aroused that sudden flame of anger no training can control. Even before I could fight my desire to ignore their knock, I could picture the two of them, feeling embarrassed, adjusting their gaze so it wouldn't have to face mine, trying to walk past a giggling class which was all too familiar with this daily drama. Over the next minute or so, this expected drama unfolded, with the addition of sounds produced by chairs being dragged and adjusted and dusted because the seating pattern today had been seriously disturbed on account of an upheaval in our room and the rest of our institute's building, caused by repairs designed as part of heritage restoration in the university campus. The two young women had to sit right at the back, in the middle of a jungle of mixed furniture brought from the adjoining room where heritage works read demolition, to begin with had begun.

Just as I was beginning to distribute the Japanese garden reading, I noticed we had thirty minutes left for this period. Something broke inside me, and something else took birth. What came up in a surge of anger was the passionate urge to get to the bottom of my failure to induce universal punctuality in my little class after three decades of being a teacher, two as a teacher of would-be teachers. Things cannot go on like this, I heard myself saying; let us find out why the late come so late.

The usual arguments and examples started pouring in. Someone said, "It is a matter of individual choice". Someone else said, "It depends on how seriously you take your studies". "Do you all agree?" I asked the rest, some of them wondering whether I had abandoned the day's topic. "Does everyone agree that this is a matter of choice as Asmita says", I repeated, referring to the girl who had made the point. After a moment of silence in which we heard a sparrow from the back window, Sneha, one of the late comers, said, "Sir,

Asmita lives in the hostel.” Nearly everybody laughed. Expectedly angry, Asmita said, “Sir has forbidden personal factors as a basis for argument. I know that punctuality is a matter of preference.” Silence prevailed once more. Her logic was impeccable. It made me realise how pointless it was to look for reasons for unpunctuality without allowing personal factors to be taken into account. The reason why I had decided to ban them a month ago was because the course demanded meditation on collective responsibility which seemed incompatible with personal complaints over a group assignment failing to materialize on time. Now I realised that some personal information might be worth sharing; perhaps it would help if those who come from long distances and still arrived on time discussed how they manage their morning routines. It would inspire the three chronic cases, I thought.

It was a new start, and I am not sure whether everybody saw it in a positive light. Some, who routinely arrive early, were visibly disappointed as they wondered if there was going to be no real teaching, i.e. teaching on the topic of that day. They too, however, joined in cheerfully when the new topic opened up. We all felt a little bewildered as students, whose faces we were all familiar with, told us things about their homes and routines some of which were remarkably inconvenient or even painfully bizarre. For instance, we learned that one of the few male students in the class cooked for his sister who had a much tougher life than his. Vasudha who seldom spoke on her own during discussions described the great number of things she did for her chronically sick mother before coming to the class. A number of class members acquired a new image and respect, but the three unpunctuals had nothing much to offer that might inspire us to view their annoying habit with greater tolerance. All they could mention were long distances and difficult bus routes, requiring change and waiting.

We were nearly finished with listening to everybody’s morning life when a myna came in, sat on the ceiling fan and started chattering loudly as only mynas can, without provocation. On earlier days, we had dealt with pigeons and sparrows, but the myna seemed more self-confident. Asmita looked at her and said, ‘Sir, she too wants to talk about her morning routine!’ This was a fine statement to come from Asmita who was feeling a little inane since she had no special morning narrative to offer as a hosteller. Her remark cheered her up and everybody else too. It gave me an interesting idea which vaguely reflected the topic we had fully abandoned. I asked, “How far do you think this myna

has come from?" No one took this question seriously, but it propelled me to go a step further, "What else is present in our class that might have come from afar?" It was obvious that I was now referring to non-human participants, but were they living or non-living? This question came from Rekha, one of the habitual latecomers. Never mind, I said, say whatever you notice. She thought for a long second and then surprised everybody by saying that the electricity giving our tube lights their energy had come from God knows where. Two students immediately intervened, "You know it comes from Indraprastha Estate." This is the name of Delhi's notorious thermal power station. "How do you know for sure," Rekha asked, "it might be coming from the national grid it is all connected, you know." There was silence. Even the myna turned quiet. My job in such moments comes down to prompting further, so I said, "That's a great thought. Let us see if there are any other long distance participants in our class."

The matter had so fully opened up by now that it required no more prompting. My students started spotting things at a wild, inspired speed. Dust on our desks! The air! The sounds of traffic! One by one they quickly exhausted the potential of this exotic exercise. The dust seemed to have travelled the longest distance indeed from Rajasthan as everybody thought. I was ready to conclude, "So, is that the longest commuter?" We were uncertain, a little non-serious too, but still not quite ready to let the quiz die. Everyone thought hard for half a minute, and then Jyoti noticed the long patch of sun as it lay across the floor. She said, "It's not the dust. The sun has travelled lakhs of miles." I was stunned. So was everyone else. We had become aware of a phenomenon we had never thought about, how the sun came from so far away to make our class happen. The pedagogue in me could hardly resist using Jyoti's insight to teach Rekha a lesson. "How does the sun manage to come on time despite its long journey?" To my utter surprise, she took it well, thought for a second, and then replied, "You are right, Sir, but the sun doesn't change buses!"

The bell rang. As its authoritarian sound came pouring in, I felt we had learnt the topic of the day without using the reading I had selected. It would still help, I thought, and distributed the three-page essay about Japanese gardens. As I personally gave everyone a copy I said it would strengthen what we had discussed today. There was no need to bring it back unless they had questions, I told the class. "What about attendance?" several students asked as they always did. "It wouldn't be accurate," I said, 'because the myna has already left.' The students laughed as they started leaving.

Did that lesson, unplanned as it turned out, achieve anything? Behaviourist readers of this article have every right to ask: did the three habitual latecomers improve? Yes, they did, I am happy to recall, but the course could not continue for long for reasons out of my control, so I cannot say if the bad habit changed for good. From the perspective which evolved that morning, it hardly matters because the class changed annoyance into insight, a much higher goal than punctuality. We also came to know each others' lives better, and developed a sense of community. A miracle had occurred, without an effort or plan, which is characteristic of miracles. The unpredicted outcomes of learning are far more important than the ones we can predict and plan for. This is so because the crisis caused by violence and conflicts in the human world is far deeper and vaster than any rational plan can resolve. Only miracles can, if we let them happen, as they do quite often, eventlessly.

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A Feeling for Beauty: Dance in Education

LEELA SAMSON



Long before a child sees that the world is made up of books and classrooms he is aware that he can do the most amazing things with his hands and feet. A baby's actions cannot be imitated by an adult for long. Over three hundred odd marma or nerve points are vibrant and being used at a rapid pace. Every muscle and bone is tender and pliable. Leaving a baby on the floor is probably the best thing to do. She discovers the various functions of the body through this and begin new actions every day, something that a parent delights in. The twitch of the mouth, the opening and closing of the eyes and every nuance and bhava is noticed and appreciated lovingly. This potential in the child ought to have been tapped for designing early teaching methodology. Unfortunately, somewhere in the journey of regularizing educational methods, the world of adults chose to ignore this. They introduced 'the word' as a tool instead and chose to blunt and sometimes even deaden this sea of creative potential in the child.

The artisan's child is truly blessed. He discovers the texture of clay by putting his little hands into it even before he can crawl. When he can, he moves to the wheel and is fascinated by its regular perambulations. Even as a little child he can create with his hands a small mug that has its use in the house. By comparison, what book can teach you the feel of this craft? How much longer does it take for a less privileged child to read the story of that potter? And this is only possible if such a book exists that captures the colour and joy of the potter's life! It is the same with a child who grows up on a farm or one whose parents are singers or performers or in any other trade where the hands and bodies are used inventively and sensitively.

I had the good fortune to go to a 'different' school that encouraged the study of Indian art and served as a focus for the regeneration of all that

was vital and eternal in our country's culture. Rukmini Devi, the founder of Kalakshetra, of the Madam Montessori Teachers' Training School and of the Besant Theosophical High School in Adyar, believed in the essential unity of all art and life. She also believed that to work for the arts was essential to individual, national, international and even religious growth. When she called her arts school 'Kalakshetra', it did not in any way trivialize the importance of world art or world culture. It merely emphasized a belief that creativity is born of a certain personal acumen, in local conditions, woven into a very particular and often very traditional culture.

An appreciation of life could be universal; but art creation must be indigenous – so basic is it to who one is.

In my own experience as a student and a teacher, what matters most to a student is the motivation of a teacher, his or her parameters of tolerance and understanding, an apparent or visible love of the subject and of course, 'how' the knowledge is transferred. What is gained is knowledge of the subject of course; but much more is to be had from the manner in which it came to the learner; who delivered the goods and how. Teaching is a blessed career. It teaches while it is experienced. Everyday one learns to weigh the expressions and instructions one uses for the transfer of a skill. Imperceptibly almost one can see the progress a child is making, not solely in the subject being taught but in the character of his very being.

When teaching deals directly with the human body, this greatest of instruments given to us, this most beautiful gift of expression, then sensitivity in teaching is of the utmost importance. how much to emphasize and when not to, how much intensity of feeling or how much energy to invest. One teaches the nuance of sahitya or verse, the appreciation of colour and form, the dignity of the body and the precious nature of other instruments of expression such as the voice or the eyes. But more than these, one has to first have and then transfer to the pupil a belief in a philosophy, without which his every future choice will be a difficult one.

In the traditional arts of India, especially in the early stages of learning, a high premium is placed on 'repetition' and on 'copying' or 'parroting' a teacher's instruction. A non-questioning, 'simply absorbing' attitude helps. Doing something again and again is what half of the world does—with greater

and sharper skill every time that action is performed. Honing one's talent, sharpening one's skill, doing regular riyaz or practice, becoming more and more attentive to detail each time – these are not to be brushed aside merely because they tend to become mindless exercises. All repetition, all exercise must become meaningful.

Although unqualified repetition is contrary to all modern, 'healthy' thought on education, it is not the same as learning by rote. It matters whether the student is also being taught the 'how' of it and if not immediately, then at some point of time this must be transferred as well. Also important, is the nurturing of individual thought, of the expression of the individuality and keeping the creative processes open through the long journey of repetition and mastering of form and composition. When one does that, is important to the process. Some children will take that freedom early and ruin their skill, as in life itself. Others will take it gradually, never really de-linking from the master and allowing a natural 'becoming-a-master' to take place. Some others will never have that nerve, or perhaps the skill required to make an individual statement. It takes all kinds to make a world.

It is not always possible to find joy in repetition. It is a valid process though, and an important one. You miss and hit. You fall, only to find your feet again. It is after all, the most natural way of learning. Expecting 'newness' in every step must come from within the learner. A discovery of the personal effort required to 'taste' a thing, to partake of it, is the responsibility of the learner. This is a difficult lesson to learn and in today's clime a child wants to be entertained all the time. Reflection upon the subject, personal introspection and taking responsibility, becoming accountable for one's progress or lack of it, is also something that the teacher must inculcate in the child. In fact, this must be underscored by the parent or the teacher. For the teacher to assume complete responsibility is not necessary. Every individual has to be given the space to discover the intrinsic beauty of a thing. In many a child lies the seed of great opportunity. After an appropriate time, it is not for a parent or a teacher to assume they have the final say on the subject. The most beautiful moment is when the teacher and the taught become equals, sharing in their love for the subject and discovering together, new parameters and vistas in it.

I quote my guru when she said, "Without art, no education can be a true education. Art should not only be a subject in the school curriculum. Its spirit should pervade every other subject." It is perhaps true to say that

there is far greater influence on the development of the character of a child from sources other than the usual academic subjects taught in school. A child responds naturally to rhythm, music, movement, color, animals and insects, trees and flowers, rivers and the vast open sea, the sunrise and the setting sun – to everything that is beautiful in nature. At first the reaction is unconscious, but gradually a ‘conscious understanding’ takes over. The problem with all teaching and with adult attitude is the insistence on form. Form is in fact not important at all! What is important is the spirit of that form. Learning or experiencing art can be so much a thing of joy that we are not quite conscious of the amount or depth of the learning that is taking place.

The varied expressions of nature, the feelings of people, the nature of discord, the differences between men and the love of man for the world around him – this is the preoccupation of art. You cannot separate art from life.

The value of art in education cannot be underestimated. Art reflects an interest in the varied expressions of life and nature. The power of observation has to be encouraged in every child. A child will express himself freely, without norms, in ever-new ways if given the opportunity. Digression from the norm has to be enjoyed, not merely tolerated, however strange it may seem. For a child is an inspiration and nearest to all that is natural, unconscious, joyful and free. In fact, children are nearest to what we know to be divinity. It does not always seem so, but it is true, if only for the shortest period of their lives!

Perhaps one definition of learning art is to make a child conscious of the physical form of things and then, of the spirit in it. The line of an object, its shape, its texture, colour, density, the attractiveness of it, its use in our lives and its message to the observer have to be understood and appreciated. But art also has a past, a present and a future. It has significance in the collective memory of the past of people, a clan, a family or an individual. The future need not feel burdened by the past yet has to be informed by it.

Perhaps it is a grace of ‘being’ that has gone out of our lives. How do we inculcate this in children, especially if it is non-existent in our own lives? Most often, teachers and parents are bad examples. Nature screams out its sense of harmony, its centering and balance, its tolerance, its grace of being. We want exceptional children, in spite of ourselves. We have a tradition of the highest culture. It is not enough to pass exams, to excel in various skills, to

be able to keep up with a world culture. It is also important to be a cultured person, to be tolerant and to be able to see a unity in all human aspiration. To possess a sense of dedication is the backbone of the religious impulse and vital for a creative life.

Currently the Director of the Kalakshetra Foundation in Chennai, Leela Samson, trained in dance at the same institution. She was deeply influenced by its founder Rukmini Devi. She left the institution in 1975, as one of its lead dancers. Thereafter Leela started a Bharata Natyam department in the Sriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, Delhi where she taught for fifteen years. She is known as a teacher who integrates traditional practice and theory of the dance with broader perspectives on fitness, attitude, awareness and technique. For thirty years she has held the stage both as a dancer and a teacher, as a writer and a choreographer.



Building a Cathedral: An approach to teaching poetry

SIDDHARTHA MENON



There is a parable of a passer by who encountered three workmen cutting stones on a vast building site. He asked them what they were doing. The first said that he was cutting stones to a certain shape and size, the second that he was going to build a wall, and the third that he was building a cathedral. Without meaning to denigrate the chiseler of stones or the erector of walls (they know that their tasks are necessary and are not ashamed of them) I find myself drawn to the third reply. Its sense of vast possibilities in a humble task, and the optimism that underlies such a conception, are salutary and inspiring.

I ask myself what I might be doing when I teach poetry. A simple – and perhaps the most honest – answer is that I am pleasing myself and thereby, I like to think, my students. This is not as frivolous, not to say irresponsible, an answer as it might seem. For now, however, I would rather not dwell on the merits of doing something for its own sake, and the pleasure that this brings. There are also solid aesthetic, linguistic and moral reasons why one might

want to explore poetry in a classroom. For the purposes of this essay I would like to embed poetry in a question concerning human relationships.

Recently I came across these lines, ascribed to the German composer Franz Schubert. He says,

No one feels another's grief,
No one understands another's joy.
People imagine they can reach one another.
In reality they only pass each other by.

This is a bleak view of human interactions. But it put me in mind of a verse, similar in length and in style, that I learnt in primary school. It is the first stanza of a song:

No man is an island,
No man stands alone.
Each man's joy is joy to me,
Each man's grief is my own.

This reads like a companion piece to Schubert's lines, though it could hardly be more different in what it implies. A more evocative version is to be found in John

Donne's poem from which the opening line appears to have been borrowed. Donne begins:

No man is an island,
Entire of it itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.

Then he goes on to say, strikingly: "If a clod be washed away by the sea, / Europe is the less." And he returns to this idea is a more personal way, by claiming, "Each man's death diminishes me, / For I am involved in mankind."

The question is—who is right, Schubert or Donne? Are human beings separate or connected? Are we irredeemably isolated, in spite of our webs of relationship, or are we linked inextricably by our common humanity? The evidence provides no simple answer. However it is a question worth holding, as I hope to show, when we consider the scope of poetry in a classroom.

In the first two of Schubert's lines quoted above he speaks of feeling another's grief and understanding another's joy. Why is there this distinction with regard to grief and joy respectively? Are the words "feels" and "understands" used interchangeably? Whether or not, it seems to me useful to distinguish between them. I would suggest that understanding another is different from, and possibly less than, feeling with another.

"Empathy" is a term that spans both understanding and feeling. In fact one

dictionary defines it as "the ability to understand and share the feelings of another". But there is a paradox in this definition. What does it mean to "understand and share" feelings? One might understand concepts and events, or why someone feels in a certain way. But what is it to understand feelings themselves? Feelings, like music, are of a different order.

It seems that the closest one can come to "understanding" a "feeling" is to experience it oneself. It might even be true to say that there is no way to understand a feeling without, in some sense, having shared it. If so, my dictionary's definition of empathy contains not so much a paradox as a redundancy: to understand another's feelings is to share them. But what is it to share feelings? Not merely to recognize that the feelings exist, nor even to sympathize with them, but to actually share them? Can this happen at all?

The limitedness of our own experience, and the degree to which our feelings have been "educated", might well determine the extent to which, and the circumstances in which, we are capable of empathy. We are, however, gifted with imagination. We also possess the extraordinarily rich legacy of work by creative artists, poets among them, who have felt deeply and been able to translate their feelings into artifacts that continue to move us. I would suggest that these play a role in educating our feelings because they stimulate our imaginative experience of them. By

educating the feelings I mean, with an eye on the root meaning of ‘educate’ (which lies in ‘educare’: to lead out) the drawing out of them. To educate the feelings is to make us aware through experience that they exist.

This leads me to look afresh at the teaching of poetry. The bedrock of poetry is feeling, and it seems to me that poetry can, over time, educate our feelings in the sense in which I have defined the phrase, and thereby nurture empathy. This is true not just of poetry, of course, but of all literature – and of the arts generally. I shall, however, confine myself (more or less) to poetry.

First I would make the general points that literature extends the range of our experience and that it establishes the universality of experience. Donne’s poem sets this out, when he says that each man’s death diminishes him. The poem concludes, poignantly, “Therefore, send not to know / For whom the bell tolls, / It tolls for thee.” Hemingway borrowed these lines as an epigraph to his novel set in the Spanish Civil War (the penultimate line supplies its title). His purpose may well have been to show that brutality and war are terrible wherever they happen, that man’s need for companionship and love persists regardless, and that the loss of freedom anywhere diminishes freedom generally. Thus a creative work extends well beyond its immediate context.

A similar sort of extension happens whenever we are moved by another’s

experience. My dictionary clarifies that to be moved, in this sense, is to be provoked into “a strong feeling, especially of sorrow or sympathy”, a sort of transference of feeling that is clearly related to empathy. In real life it tends to be diluted by factors such as, to name only three, the humdrum nature of most events, some prior knowledge or experience that hardens us, and, commonly, some reluctance to get deeply involved in the life of another. More can be said about all of these, but two general points will suffice.

The first is that all the three stated factors reduce the “exercise” of our own feelings and might, in the long term, cause them to atrophy, or, in any case, to be buried under layers of indifference that become increasingly difficult to penetrate.

The second is that our feelings are sometimes more intensively engaged by a work of art than by the “real” world. This happens both because art concentrates experience for us – by eliminating the quotidian or by showing us that the “quotidian” is remarkable in its own way – and because, to put it uncharitably, it engages our feelings without necessarily engaging our commitment. Our emotions are stirred, they spill into our real lives with sudden intensity, but the experience is usually pleasurable and transient.

Nevertheless, the experience can stir us deeply. In the movie ‘The Pianist’ based on the real life survival of a Jewish pianist in war torn and Nazi occupied Warsaw, there

is a scene where the fugitive is discovered in his hiding place by a German officer. The officer clearly disbelieves his claim that he is a musician and asks him to play on an upright that happens to be in the abandoned house. This is probably the climactic moment of the film. The pianist, unkempt and near starving, fearful for his life, sits at the out-of-tune instrument, and begins to play. You see the pathos of his existence reflected in his eyes, though he seems increasingly unaware of his situation, abandoning himself to his playing, while the officer's face is inscrutable but seems to soften. It is as if all the suffering and desolation that the pianist has been through and witnessed finds expression in that scene, in a music that establishes a connection between sensitive individuals on opposite sides of a manmade and apparently impassable barrier. At that moment, it seemed to me, the music carried the burden of all individuals who have, through time, been victims of their fellow men. But it also carried, implicitly, the relief and "redemptiveness" of expression, a point that I shall return to; by "redemptiveness" I mean not quite redemption, but a movement towards it.

A movie makes use of a panoply of effects to bring about an epiphany of this kind – sensitive acting, stark visuals, evocative music, and so on – but it seems to me that poetry, with quieter and possibly a more limited range of devices at its command, can also do much the same thing. Wilfred Owen's poem 'Futility', for

instance, is a poem whose subject is a "still warm" casualty of war, a man who was once woken habitually by the sun, so that, as the first of two stanzas concludes, "If anything might rouse him now / The kind old sun will know." The tenderness of these lines offsets the horror of what has occurred. But the second stanza reiterates its cold finality: "Are limbs...too hard to stir?" (i.e. by the sun that has awoken all life) so that the poet finally asks, with something like indignation – or is it despair? – "O what made fatuous sunbeams toil / To break earth's sleep at all?" The significance of the poem lies not merely in the question with which it concludes, stark as this question is, but in the fact that even if the sun can do nothing to stir the young man, prematurely and so pointlessly dead, something in the poet himself has been awakened by what he has seen, and because he is moved so profoundly he finds words that touch us as well. This stirring of both artist and audience mitigates, to some extent, the horror, because it makes us emotively aware, as Owen phrased it, of the "pity of War".

Poetry arises out of a response, a deeply felt response, to life. The poet is moved by something and is attentive not only to the thing itself but to his own responses to it. The poem seems to emerge from a dynamic interplay between the two, an interplay that is so importunate that it drives the poet into articulating it. In fact the interplay often takes place through its articulation. Perhaps this is merely to

restate Wordsworth's dictum that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". But I would emphasize the alertness, the attention and the capacity to respond which together ensure that there is indeed something to overflow.

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However, the poem that results is also a crafted object, what Auden, perhaps slightly but not entirely tongue-in-cheek, called a "verbal contraption". Poetry, like other creative forms, is a craft that demands the practice and mastering of diverse technical skills. Possibly the skills are more accessible than those involved in, say, film making or the composing of music, but if poetry is to be good it demands a conscious process of shaping that makes for coherence and beauty. This work is primarily at two levels: there is the need to translate a response, an emotion, something felt and observed, into thoughts that are faithful to it, or at least as nearly faithful as possible (a process akin to Wordsworth's "recollection in tranquility"); and there is the business of articulating the thoughts effectively, of finding the best possible arrangement of words for them. The two levels are not necessarily sequential: they often happen simultaneously, but taken together, to borrow a telling phrase from

Seamus Heaney, they allow the poet to "raid the inarticulate".

In other words, poetry is a matter of both heart and head. Arising out of this there is a third point: the finished poem is impersonal. A poet is implicitly concerned with examining experience, perhaps drawing lessons from it and universalizing it. This happens not so much because the poet consciously philosophizes, as because the act of unraveling a complex of thought and feeling takes the poet to levels of perception that run deeper than the accidents of personality. Thus a chord might be struck in any sensitive individual who encounters the poem.

One is saying, then, that while it arises from a closely observed individual response, a poem is an intelligible artifact whose appeal is universal. It seems to me that the teaching of poetry should enable students to experience the "process" of poetry; to experience, that is, the process that underlies it, by, in some sense, emulating this process. Just as a Math teacher would not only teach students how to solve problems but might also give them the experience of what it is to 'do' Mathematics (for instance by requiring them to attempt open ended investigations) a teacher of poetry can approach it in a manner analogous to the writing of it.

How might this be done? Poetry begins, as I have said, in observation and response. Students should first have the opportunity to respond to a poem

directly, to encounter it without having been fed much information about it. They should be asked, as they read or listen to a poem, to also listen, inwardly, to their own responses to it. These initial responses are valuable because they generally are authentic. Students must be encouraged to express them – “I like this part...”, “This is a contradiction...”, “This is stupid...”, “I don’t understand this...”, “This reminds me of...” and so on. The discussion of the poem should emanate from these responses, and the alert teacher will find ways of both addressing them and bringing in whatever else she feels is necessary to appreciating the poem.

Just as the poem examines and shapes response into something intelligible, the discussion of the poem should enable students to examine and articulate their own responses – to test them, to understand how they arose, and to refine their expression. The students must be taught how to weigh evidence and how to substantiate their impressions. This requires not only close attention but as rigorous an application of reasoning as in law or Math. The examining of poetry must begin in feeling, however inchoate this might be, but shouldn’t remain woolly. It needs to mediate between subjective responses and dispassionate analysis. It must, like poetry itself, involve both heart and head.

But a poem is not merely a coherent amalgam of feeling and thought: it is also a beautiful object, made deliberately so by

the poet’s craft. Whatever the subject of a poem, the act of shaping experience into a well formed entity is inherently concerned with beauty, for instance in achieving harmony between its constituent elements. Among other things, as Coleridge put it, a poem is “the best words in the best order”. It is important for a student to understand how this is so.

It is also important for a teacher to explore, with the student, why this is so. This is not to imply that the creation of something beautiful needs justification; only that it seems essential for students not to see the beauty of perfected form as mere self indulgence, secondary to the Grand Themes that teachers sometimes cloak poetry with. Students must be enabled to discover that a poem’s aesthetic and technical features – its structure, imagery, rhythm, and so on – are central to what it communicates, not peripheral. Poetry is not philosophy dressed up in finery.

There is another aspect to this, which is what I have referred to as the “redemptiveness of expression”. The question arises how it is that in difficult times a poet can be concerned with creating something beautiful. Much poetry – like other forms of creative expression – arises in extremis, when the artist is going through personal turmoil or when things seem to be disintegrating around him. Is it not perverse, or morally bankrupt, to write, paint or compose at such a time? It might be, of course, but it seems to

me that when expression is true to the poet's experience, it is both natural and necessary. At a certain level it provides relief when feelings are painful. But why such expression should acquire form and beauty requires a more careful answer. Azar Nafisi addresses the question succinctly (in her book 'Reading Lolita in Tehran'): "Every great work of art... is a celebration, an act of insubordination against the betrayals, horrors and infidelities of life. The perfection and beauty of form rebels against the ugliness and shabbiness of the subject matter." A little earlier she has said that in the great works "there is an affirmation of life against the transience of that life, an essential defiance." Whatever the experience that underlies it, artistic expression makes an implicit stand, not politically (politics makes for bad poetry) but aesthetically, on the side of existence. A poetry class must serve as an occasion for students to begin to understand that great art is not incidental to the life of man. It is redemptive, and when it is stifled by censorship or repression, mankind is, in Donne's sense of the word, diminished.

Poetry, then, provides an opportunity for students to respond, with all their faculties – sensory, aesthetic, emotional and intellectual – held in balance. It becomes thereby a means of refining the sensibility, of sensitizing the student so that she is able to distinguish between emotionalism and deep feeling. Her capacity for imaginative understanding, for empathy, is stimulated by fine instances of its expression. In other

words, her feelings are being educated.

It is possible that some of this refinement will inform her everyday life, at least to the extent that a quality of attention to her own responses enriches her relationships with people and objects. It might enhance her ability to experience

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another's feelings, through her imaginative understanding of them, and thereby make her less prone to judging people by quirks of behaviour. It might also make her more capable of responding actively to the various crises that afflict the world, because if she can feel the ugliness of environmental degradation, the sad absurdity of poverty in a world so full of resources, or both the pity and horror of war, it might make her more likely to act than if she relates to these issues merely through her intellect. It might make for a more compassionate society, in which individuals truly feel "involved in mankind".

It might, of course, do none of these things! Some words of caution seem necessary here. We do not completely understand how or why our feelings are touched. Nor can we create an agenda for the teaching of poetry, in which empathy

and compassion are regarded as well defined goals. An attempt to do so would move against the current of poetry (which is at its finest open ended rather than agenda-driven) and is likely to founder on its own self consciousness, not to say its self righteousness. We are speaking of latent possibilities in the teaching of poetry, while remaining humbly and cannily aware that these possibilities might not always, or ever, be realized. Even if they are, we might not know it. Further, there are experiences other than that of great art that can touch a person's feelings radically, even transformatively. Life teaches us more than art, though it is possible that art can make us more receptive to learning from life.

In the teaching of poetry it seems necessary to hold the two quotations in the epigraph to this essay in a dynamic balance. Pope's playful irreverence about his own breed is not only a corrective to any placing of poets or poetry on a pedestal, it also reminds us that enjoyment, a quality of appreciative delight, is central to the poetic experience. This is perhaps especially true where young students are being exposed to poetry. On the other hand, as we've seen, poetry is potentially far reaching, and much may be lost if it is approached in a perfunctory manner. Though we might hesitate to use it ourselves, we need not be altogether dismissive of Shelley's use of the word "legislators".

It seems to me that this balance between legislation and absurdity is held

with delicacy in the Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska's poem 'Poetry Reading'. It is a short poem in which the poet humorously (with the despairing refrain, "O Muse") bemoans the fact that boxers enjoy large and raving audiences, while she has to "start this cultural affair" (her public reading) for an audience of twelve, who are divided evenly between relatives and seekers of shelter from the rain outside. This is how the poem concludes:

In the first row, a sweet old man's soft snore: he dreams his wife's alive again. What's more, she's making him that tart she used to bake.

Aflame, but carefully – don't burn his cake! –we start to read. O Muse.

I am struck by the understanding and gentle irony with which the poet regards the old man snoring in the first row. She is able to imagine her way into this widower's dreams, and there is, it appears to me, some tenderness in her concern to not disturb them. She is not indignant that at least one twelfth of her audience is deaf to her words. Her response to the old man will provide matter for another poem. But now, in spite of the size and quality of her audience, she is impelled ("Aflame") to start to read. We are shown empathy at work, as well as the artist's determination to do what she must, regardless of the world's indifference. She is the legislator of her own destiny; and her situation, of reading to an unenthusiastic audience, is slightly absurd – as she recognizes. A combination of seriousness

and absurdity is perhaps endemic to the human condition, but the capacity to express it and to laugh – or at least to smile – at it, is redemptive. I would want students of poetry to experience this.

To return, finally, to Schubert and Donne. Who was closer to the truth, regarding human relationships? It seems to me that the issue here is empathy. Where it is absent we do, as Schubert's lines suggest, pass each other by in mutual isolation. But we also know what it is

to feel deeply and to be touched by another's feelings, which implies that these capacities might be enhanced. The experience of great art – including poetry and, incidentally, music (it is surely ironic that those lines are Schubert's!) – can help establish a connectedness between people, because it touches us at levels where our apparent differences do not matter. It seems worthwhile, therefore, to attempt building an edifice founded on empathy, for which the chiseling of stones can begin in the classroom.

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Confessions of a Science Teacher

COLIN FOSTER



I would like to share my concern for the teaching and future of my subject, as also to suggest the basis of the way that I would proceed, should I get the opportunity to teach again.

I taught physics at the examination level at Brockwood Park School, England, for 18 years. By examination I mean the standardised national school leaving test, which in the UK is called the “A” level. Despite most students passing the exam, I finished teaching with a very strong feeling of dissatisfaction with my classes. It was true that I was getting a little stale with teaching the same content for so many years, but it was not this that was bothering me. Although I had a good relationship with the students in and out of class and I was basically happy with my contribution to the place, something was wrong in class. Partly it was the lack of engagement of the students with the subject and consequent lack of understanding, and partly my feeling that, even for those students who were engaged, I had failed to convey what relevance outside of passing the exam studying a subject like this might have. Apart from a small minority that went on to study the subject at college level I had the feeling that after the exam the students would very quickly forget what they had accumulated or even understood. Although they may have enjoyed the class to some extent they were basically turned off the subject, which would then be pretty much a closed book for them after they left school. Of course they don’t need physics to go on to lead creative lives with integrity and, for most, the specialised knowledge they learn will be irrelevant in the world of earning a living and dealing with the issues of life.

I tried to rationalise the situation to myself by saying that in my class they were just accumulating the knowledge that they needed for the exam, but outside of class in other activities their education was more to do with the intentions of the school. I saw my classes as part of a pretext that allowed the

students to be in the more meaningful environment of the school community and beautiful countryside. This worked to some extent, but ultimately seemed like a source of fragmentation and fuelled my dissatisfaction. When I left Brockwood I resolved not to teach physics again, unless I could get a better understanding as to how to teach it more meaningfully. I thought about teaching General Studies instead. In an article in an earlier journal Dorothy Simmons is quoted as saying “you teach what you know but educate what you are”, and in this sense I was happier with the important “education” that involved my direct contact with the students.

Science at its most meaningful is basically a creative human process and education that leaves this out takes the heart out of what the subject could be.

For young people in this country there is a general trend away from the study of physics, maths and chemistry (but not biology, interestingly). The students are voting with their feet. If by doing this they are saying that the subject, as it is taught in schools, is not relevant to their lives, is not attractive to study or inspiring them, then I understand and agree with them. This trend may not be the case in other countries but I feel it does point to a basic issue with these subjects. I have come to think that my subject needs a complete rethink, re-creative effort and reinvention as a discipline. Otherwise it may experience a terminal decline (a number of UK universities are closing their Mathematics and Science departments due to a lack of students). Science at its most meaningful is basically a creative human process and education that leaves this out takes the heart out of what the subject could be.

To reinvent a discipline might sound daunting but the solution may well lie with what K described as “the true scientific mind” in his book “On Education”, and on many other occasions when he talked in similar terms. To pursue this we need to look at the curriculum of the subject, which, as articulated in the exam syllabus, has the implication (sometimes called the hidden curriculum) that science IS its content; in particular physics is its formulae, laws and theories. This content in physics has not changed much in decades. However, science at its most meaningful is basically a creative human process and education that leaves this out takes the heart out of what the subject could be. This emphasis on content detracts from what I call the process values of the true scientific spirit that K valued as “an attitude to the world”, such as clarity of perception, precision in observation, factual objectivity, an open questioning outlook, intellectual clarity and rational thinking.

The emphasis on content can also lead to a distorted and confusing implication that the content of scientific knowledge has a fixed and final relationship to what nature actually is, rather than being a limited representation that in some areas works extremely well. This in turn leads to a view of scientific knowledge as being a fixed and final body of knowledge that has been proved to be true because it works, and all a scientist does is to follow the procedures robot-like, preferably in a white coat, to get results.

Another aspect of the hidden curriculum is that knowledge has meaning without a context, so that formulae and laws can be presented in class in a meaningless vacuum. However, without a context knowledge becomes isolated statements with no meaning as a human endeavour. These statements are then understood superficially as just a bunch of words or equations. The only meaning being conveyed is that they need to be remembered for the exam; consequently many students will remain unaware that a science class could have more significance than this.

All this inhibits the creative flow of a young mind, and sooner or later it is registered by the student and, for the majority, deadens her mind to the subject. All teachers should be aware of the hidden curriculum of their subject, otherwise they may be, unwittingly, teaching often false and damaging implications such as these.

It is relatively easy to see all the above implications of the curriculum but to do something different with an exam class on a Monday morning (or Friday afternoon, even harder!) is another matter. I have sometimes wondered if it is even possible and how the schools would be now if it had been made clear from the beginning whether exams should be taken in K schools at all, especially in science subjects with their large knowledge content. Now that the schools are established it would be difficult to drop any exams; those responsible would see it as too risky. At Brockwood we did manage, however, to drop the tenth grade GCSE, a national exam taken at age 16.

The issue around the compromise with K's intentions that exams demand is a problem that has to be addressed. So, how would I address it now? I would rewrite the syllabus in digestible quantities, in terms that the students can understand and work with, supply them with one of the many competent textbooks that treat the content of knowledge they need. I would only teach students who are willing to learn the content knowledge largely by themselves. Students will need support at first, particularly the weaker ones, and although they may resist, it is a study skill they should learn anyway. For students to

learn how to learn is by no means a new idea; in fact I think most teachers at K schools come to it fairly early on, as K often emphasised the importance of learning for its own sake (another process value). However, for me it would now have a new urgency, because if the students can do this, then I can teach the process values, the heart of the subject.

I would find ways for the process values to manifest in simple tasks, for example an accurate measurement of the period of a simple pendulum requires care and precision, the detailed characteristics of interference patterns can be observed with, or without, systematic objectivity.

I would also work on the issue of context, in terms of the process values, such as the historical background to the knowledge content, for example who were people like Newton and Einstein, what were their strength and faults as human beings, their successes, the failures and the mistakes they made that, by the way, do not diminish them as great scientists. Another important example would be the prejudice and difficulties faced by Copernicus and Galileo in proposing the Sun, and not the earth, to be the centre of the solar system, and part of this context would be the questions that Kepler and Newton had in their minds when they made their discoveries. Another fascinating area would be the insights out of which the knowledge emerged. Newton's gravitation law for example contains the insight of Galileo and Kepler that the order in nature can be expressed mathematically, a mystery that remains unexplained to this day. Topical ethical and environment issues such as using nuclear energy in response to global warming should also be included, as could the prejudice and lack of clarity that caused the Chernobyl and Challenger disasters.

Covering these topics in class would not make the teaching easier, neither would it mean less work for the teacher, but some such change is necessary to meet the concerns expressed above and for the teaching of science to be the creative, relevant and meaningful activity, for both teachers and students, that it should be.

Colin Foster was at Brockwood Park School for a number of years as a physics teacher and Academic Director. Apart from Krishnamurti, he has a strong interest in the work of David Bohm. He is at present living in London and running Krishnamurti video showings and dialogue groups.

Igniting Minds: With Science On Wheels

NEERAJA RAGHAVAN



Like the wandering minstrel of yore, Agastya International Foundation's Mobile Laboratory (ML) trundles in and out of schools in villages of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Just as the storyteller was received eagerly in the olden days, today, the sight of the mobile van evokes shouts of excitement from the eagerly awaiting school children. When the van pulls to a stop outside their school, children line up eagerly to watch what will come out of it. From within the van, the ML Instructor pulls out a number of planetary models as well as simple, every day objects and sets them up in a curious array before the children. The latter seat themselves happily below a tree. He then proceeds to demonstrate scientific principles with the help of inexpensive and familiar objects: a corrugated plastic tube, a trough of water, a candle, a brush, etc. One after another, the demonstrations, (which are followed by hands-on participation by children), excite the curiosity of the children: why, for instance, is this mixture of chemicals causing sparks and fire? Why is the water

coming out of the inverted conical flask only in spurts?...

It was with the intention of sparking creativity in the young minds of rural India that Agastya International Foundation was founded in 1999. Troubled by the pervasive lack of creativity in Indian education, Agastya launched the mobile laboratories to take science to the doorsteps of rural children. Today, Agastya has reached nearly 1 million children in rural India. In addition it has also trained about 50,000 teachers.

For these rural children, Agastya's ML sessions have transformed Science into a journey of enquiry. Young rural teachers have been trained by Agastya to help the children see Science as a world of wonder and magic. Their training at Agastya transforms them into effective story tellers. One of the remarkable aspects of this programme is that these ML instructors are not necessarily Science graduates: yet, they manage to stoke the fires of curiosity in the fertile minds of the children, through their lively demonstrations.

Take, for instance, the demonstration of the principle of resonance in vibration. The apparatus is simple: on a horizontal wooden rod are nailed three pairs of strips of three different lengths. Each pair of equal length is painted in the same colour, as shown below.

The ML instructor now plucks the black strip and lets go: and lo and behold, the other black strip begins to vibrate in unison with its black partner! All the other strips stand still, showing the principle of resonance when the natural frequency of a strip is matched with the frequency of vibration of the 1st strip that has been set in motion. As children come up and try this out for themselves, the instructor explains to them why this happens.

When Agastya found that the fire of questioning had been stoked sufficiently in the children, the instructors began to document the questions asked by the children who witnessed the ML sessions. Agastya gets around the language barrier by having the children ask in their mother tongue, then translating the question to English and e-mailing it to its panel of scientists. The latter think about the questions and mail in their answers, which are then translated back into the regional language and ferreted back to the questioner. The relaying of the answer back to the questioner is done in as personalized a manner as possible (names of students and questions asked by them are recorded) so as to encourage sustained asking, thinking and answering.

Some Sample Questions (asked at any time, not necessarily during a ML session)

- How is the soil formed? What is its cause?
- How were animals formed?
- Why can't a penguin fly?
- When we go high up, there will be less air. Why is this so?
- Why don't gases have any particular shape?
- Why are elements made up of similar atoms?
- Why can't we land on the Sun?
- We cannot simply write the first letter of the names of elements as their symbols: why?
- How did they find out the boiling point of water?
- Why is a rainbow arc shaped?
- Why can't atoms be created or destroyed?
- Why does the earth rotate around the sun?

Such questions are bubbling, alive, floating in the fertile young minds. Teachers of science (not only in Agastya) are concerned with keeping the questioning spirit alive so as to allow the child to clearly articulate his/her doubts. Agastya is particularly focused on addressing the following: What impedes a question? What provokes it?

Agastya's simple demonstration of experiments provokes questions, that are often of a different quality altogether. The

nature of questions asked immediately after a ML session is markedly different from those aired in a structureless setting. This is evident from just a glance at the following set of questions (asked after an ML session):

- How can we measure the distance between two heavenly bodies?
- What are the uses of full moon and new moon?
- How did they find out the core temperature of the sun?
- How were heavenly bodies formed?
- Why does the sky seem to touch the earth at the horizon?
- Why does the earth revolve around the sun and not the sun around the earth?
- Why does the right side of the brain control the left side of the body and vice versa?
- How do we measure air?
- What would happen if we did not have a diaphragm?

Here, the ML session has provoked a curiosity about the actuality of what is being shown: be it the solar system, the nervous system or the respiratory system. It is doubtful whether a mere textbook would have provoked similar questions. It must be tantalizing for a child to be told of astronomical dimensions, and the tremendously high temperature inside the core of the earth, without being given a clue as to how these were estimated or arrived at. To elaborate on some questions asked:

- What are the steps we have to take while measuring something?

This question provides an opportunity to the teacher to bring home the whole field of measurement within the ambit of the child's attention. How is comparison possible without any measurement at all? What is the purpose of measurement? These, to my mind, are some of the aspects which a teacher must not fail to touch upon, even while addressing the central question posed above, by the child.

- How do we measure air?
- Why can't we see air?

It is quite likely that the child is asking more than what is emerging from the above string of words. One's senses seem to declare that air is intangible: or at least, not as tangible as solids and liquids. Perhaps the child is also asking: If we cannot see something, how else can we be sure of its existence? What are the immeasurables of life? In responding to the question, the teacher would do well to go as much around the central point and also touch upon (seemingly) peripheral issues.

Peering into the values/feeling beneath the question asked

What are the uses of full moon and new moon? Is heat useful or not?

The need to have a use for everything (including a full moon and a new moon) speaks of the utilitarian nature of today's lifestyle: such a questioner needs to be acquainted with the beauty of

purposelessness, as well as our motive for seeking a use for everything. (Of what use are we?) This is perhaps best illustrated to a child by asking the child to name a few things he/she finds beautiful and then to list the uses of that particular thing. We need to find use for that which does not inspire us—simply, by its very existence. As teachers, we tend to veer towards finding a use for most things and away from simply basking in their beauty: perhaps this child’s question is meant to alert us to that!

What is the use of symbols and formulae?

A child who is questioning the use of symbols and formulae is obviously irked by the need to memorise them. The child has not been shown the cumbersomeness of dealing with long names of elements and compounds, and the practicality of abbreviations.

I would like to draw a parallel from my own experience. I am reminded of a remarkable lesson in the use of axes and coordinates, given by my Math teacher. She first asked the entire class to visualize our having to build a wall where our blackboard stood. Holding her arms above and below it, she said, “Let’s mark the ground level as our base, our zero.” Vividly describing the need for us to plan the length, width and height of the wall, she then slowly led us to calling the horizontal and vertical measurements as X and Y axes, respectively. Then, she posed the problem of deciding how far below the ground it would have to

go. To this day, I recall the excited feeling of recognition that flashed within me: “Oh, so a negative axis is necessary!” even before she articulated it. The subsequent lesson on coordinate geometry* was easy: none of the jargon was deemed unnecessary, I had no doubt as to its utility.

- If seventy per cent of the earth is covered with water, why do we save water?
- If blood donation is life donation, why do they sell blood?

Children who ask questions like those above offer an opportunity to question economics, values...the way society is structured. Here, the value of unleashed questioning and pulling out contextuality or a framework, is revealed. Further, the “questions’ relay” that is being set up in Agastya relieves the instructor of feeling obliged to know all the answers: as he/she is merely collecting questions, and is not burdened with addressing each and every one of them, then and there.

Encouraging urgent questions: making each question URGENT

Questions borne of experience are the most difficult to let go of: and a teacher of science would do well to latch on to those.

For instance, a child who is asking:

- Why does elephantiasis come?
- How can we control weeds?
- Why do we fall sick if we eat lots of sweets?

- Why do we respire more immediately after running?
- Why is it better to cook in a pressure cooker?

has probably encountered that particular situation at home. This offers a rich possibility of sustaining the questioning spirit, as a child who wants to understand a problem will not let go of the question until the problem is solved. Many teachers employ the technique of bringing remote things into the ambit of the child's own experience. This is a time tested way of having the child sustain the fervour of asking questions: once something is in my field of experience, I simply must know more about it! [What does it matter if Robert Boyle discovered a gas law governing pressure and volume? When I fill air into my cycle's tyre, I need this law!

Interestingly, Descartes was idly watching a fly buzzing around in a corner of the room, when he suddenly realised that the position of the fly at any point in time could be represented by three numbers. The nature of his insight is now known to every school child who has learnt graphs: yet, his process of discovery is seldom revealed!

Is science always right?

Science has, too often, been linked with certainty. In the minds of many, it is synonymous with that which is irrefutably right and proven. What is frequently missed is the process of (often erroneous) trial and error in scientific conjecture and reasoning.

"We assent to experience, even when its information seems contrary to reason."

Robert Boyle

Too often, our reaction to a line of reasoning is based upon what we deem "common sense". In fact, some of the questions listed above could well be dismissed by one who is firmly grounded in common sense. It was 'common sense' to believe that heavier bodies fell faster than lighter ones, so that was the belief held by all, from the time of Aristotle until the sixteenth century: when it took the courage of a Galileo to show that, in fact, they fell at the same speed! The idea that the earth could be moving around the Sun did find some speculation even in the centuries before Galileo, but it failed to find favour largely because it flew in the face of 'common sense': how could the 'solid' earth be moving?! Even Descartes rejected the idea of a vacuum or void, not because of any other reason save his own abhorrence of the idea! It went against his own 'common sense'. That scientists, too, err when they get too attached to an idea, is something we are seldom taught. Perhaps, the teaching of this would go a long way in altering our perception of science as static, irrefutable and certain.

In fact, it is interesting to trace the journey of scientific thought and how until the sixteenth century, Western scientists/thinkers worked by first forming a beautiful idea and then going about looking for evidence to support it. It was

not until Galileo and Francis Bacon (16th-17th centuries) that the scientific method found the place in the world of Western science, that it has today. Isn't this the familiar journey within each of our own minds, as we grapple with our dearly held beliefs and attachments? The tussles that ensued between those with evidence to refute pet hypotheses and their proponents (the ancients, the Church) are amazingly illustrative of the tussles within the mind of each human being, when forced to take a look at his/her own bias or prejudice. Why do we deny this step in our own learning, as individuals trying to learn science and develop a scientific temper?

Does science ever say: 'I don't know'?

To focus on the (seldom spoken of) limitations of science, the teacher must emphasise that science only seeks to explain observed phenomena through Nature's laws, not explain the basis of the law itself: Why, for instance, is there a Law of Gravity? Science does not claim to know the answer to that. It only seeks to explain that the apple fell because of this law.

Why can't atoms be created or destroyed?

Because the Law of Conservation of Matter says so! In responding to a curious child, a teacher would do well to keep alive the questioning spirit by pointing out that while science may not have an answer, philosophers and scientists have been asking this question through the ages. Further,

the inherent beauty in laws and the order that is consequent to the existence of these laws, is well worth dwelling upon. Until mankind knew of the existence of these laws, how was life different? What are the things that have become possible to do after discovering the laws that govern motion, for instance?

Having explained a 'miracle', does it become less wonderful?

Why do fingerprints differ for every one?

How were heavenly bodies formed?

Inherent in the first question above is the miracle of ubiquitous uniqueness: what a marvel! Too often, in explaining a miracle we dispense with the wonder it formerly evoked. McLuhan² has called it 'label and libel': meaning, by merely naming a phenomenon, we close the door on looking at it more deeply. Feynman has described³ how his father taught him the meaninglessness of just naming a bird, and how it was far more important to look at the bird with all one's attention. We tend to do this in our own way, in science. Simply because we are able to explain a phenomenon in scientific terms, we need not lose our sense of awe at the sheer magnitude of its sweep. Contrarily, there is an example of a 'miracle' where it appeared, from common sense, that we were 'getting something for nothing': the pulley. The 'miracle' of a pulley was explained by Galileo when he spelt out clearly how pulleys work. Having spelt out

the law of levers and the consequence of its application in a pulley, a teacher of science could either leave the student with a feeling of having closed the mystery, and tucked it away in the files of 'known' phenomena, or with a lasting fascination for the profundity of this law.

- 'What if...' questions
- What would happen if we did not have a diaphragm?
- Why can't we use water in a thermometer instead of mercury?
- Why can't we use the clinical thermometer to measure the boiling point of water?
- Why do plants not have nerves?
- A seed will not be formed if a pistil is removed. Why?

Questions like those above indicate a potential for imagination and refusal to being bound by what is, in the mind of the questioner. A teacher of science would do well to encourage this: this is the stuff that a creative mind is made up of. [We are all well aware of the powerful ripples that were caused by one of the first "What if..." questions asked by young James Watt, as he saw the lid of his mother's kettle bob up and down due to the pressure of steam! Entire countries have been connected across their length and breadth thanks to the steam engine that resulted!

- Inventions: questions and responses
- How did they invent the pencil?

A child who wonders how the pencil was invented has obviously looked more deeply into something that many take for granted. I have found that asking children to come up with what they would like to discover or invent unleashes non-linear thinking in a way that few other questions do. It also empowers the children into feeling the possibility of discovery/invention in themselves.

- Who invented the telescope?
- Who invented the microscope?

An interesting spin off of a seemingly linear question like: 'Who invented the telescope?' is the way in which people's perception of the universe was completely transformed after this invention. Being able to see far into the sky meant that one could no longer rest on what one would like to believe about the way the universe was structured. It suited the thinkers of yore to imagine the earth to be at the centre of the universe, all orbits to be of the most perfect geometric shape (circular) and so this is precisely what they propounded. Galileo's telescope caused their entire perception of the universe to change: something few took to kindly. Inventions, therefore, have the power to change our lifestyles, our aspirations, our abilities to perform work and effect change, and finally, our own thinking. So, the teacher would do well to probe into the layers beneath the invention and the thought that went into it.

Science needs to come close to the mind and heart of the learner. For, lurking

in those grimy hands of the village child, there could well be the dexterous fingers of a future master technologist or scientist.

One wonders how many scientists down the ages began with questions similar to those being asked by these children. As the Agastya van leaves the village children after an absorbing session, its wheels raise clouds of dust on the 'kuccha' roads, while its experiments and demonstrations have

raised a host of questions in the pulsating minds of the rural children. "I used to think," confessed a child, "that discoveries and inventions were possible only for some. But now I think it's not so difficult... maybe I, too, can make a discovery or even invent something!"

It is towards such a horizon that the wheels of Agastya's vans are slowly but surely moving.

Dr. Neeraja Raghavan completed a doctoral programme in Chemistry from Princeton University and returned to India where she then divided her time between industrial research and development, and education. Author of a couple of books, she now consults with NGOs in the field of education of which Agastya International Foundation is one.



School Administration: For Humanness and Vitality

G GAUTAMA



It is not bigotry to be certain we are right;

but it is bigotry to be unable to imagine how we might possibly have gone wrong.

G. K. Chesterton

The minority is sometimes right; the majority always wrong.

George Bernard Shaw

Administration —

The process or activity of running a business, organisation etc.

The people responsible for this, regarded collectively

Performance of executive duties

Webster's English Dictionary

What is School Administration?

‘Administration’: the very word carries with it a ring of authority, aloofness, an antiseptic flavour. Starting with the word is therefore a poor start. Let us try a different starting point.

Schools have structures and processes. Some are intended, the product of thinking by the governing body or staff of school. Others grow out of nowhere, they are not planned. But they are equally real and tangible.

It may be possible to say that administration is ‘attention to the intended and unintended’ structures and processes. Particularly in schools, thanks to designations such as ‘Headmaster’ and ‘Principal’, the term ‘administration’ suggests that one person is in ‘control’. Nothing could be less true. If

administration could also connote the ‘culture’ of a school, the way things are done, then it becomes abundantly clear why it can never be in the hands of just one person.

Changing times and some implications for schools

We are now living in times of tremendous outward change. Cities are being reshaped. Work places are being transformed, and mobility is easier now than ever before. ‘Life-long learning’ as a metaphor and a reality is here. Access to information on the Internet, reaching across the globe with email & video conferencing, is giving new meaning to knowledge and understanding. Rather than demonstrate erudition, we are being asked to show our ability to learn and reorient as well as collaborate. Rather than remain with the assurance of established practices, we are being challenged to move away from old ground without the security that this is necessarily an improvement.



Our times wrench human beings from the known certainties of earlier times, even as new insecurities surface with painful regularity – terrorism, nuclear and biological warfare, and destruction of the natural environment. Society is in upheaval. Tomorrow promises inevitable change and demands reorientation at each step.

Flexible working hours, learning anywhere and anytime, are two important features of the new workplace, and these have immense implications for schools. The structural edifices of classrooms and timetables are under question, for they are being rearranged by these new possibilities. No school management can thus be blind to these shaping forces of our times.

A culture of consultation with colleagues is unavoidable. No one person can say that he has the best idea or the best solution. Questions of openness, prejudice, collaboration and shared intentions arise, and need to be addressed. Any proposed move comes under question – is it one of many, is it the best, or is it needed at all? In all shared journeys, such as that of educating students

in schools, it is necessary to clarify intentions constantly. Patience is required to meet new views, difficult views and outrageous, exciting views. Our conditioning is continually challenged.

One may add that:

- New ideas increase levels of individual discomfort, while holding out some promise.
- New ideas have to be welcomed, in spite of difficulties in implementation.
- Institutions need a culture of support & appreciation despite human failings.
- It is vitally important to stay away from blame in our communications with each other.

Authority, as traditionally understood, has lost its momentum and efficacy, and is now recognized as a sign of backwardness. On the other hand, questioning as equals has gained acceptance. The computer age has ushered in the age of irreverent questioning in the traditional temple of success, the Organization. The new technologies, particularly the Internet, are making traditional intolerance for 'the other' view almost impossible. If dissent is not permitted, or is discouraged, it will find expression through other media, and the Internet can reach any corner of the world. The successful organizations are not the sweatshops, reeking of exploitation, or cracking the feudal or colonial whips to subjugate their workers; but those that proudly wear transparency and equality as shining principles of respectful human interaction and transaction.

Authoritarian principles are well established and well known; egalitarian principles are also well established but less well known. Schools, as crucibles of learning, need to be ahead of their times, anticipate the future and strongly embody these principles.



Before one moves further we must recognize that egalitarian functioning still feels strange in most places. Our individual personal history and mankind's history makes it difficult to trust it fully. Nevertheless, it is the only way ahead.

‘Common Sense ’ in school administration

In attempting to speak about school administration, perhaps the best thing is to follow common sense. It seems obvious that any administration must be constructed on a foundation of **respect, fairness** and **transparency**. All three may be put under the umbrella of care.

It should be remembered that lack of fairness in an institution weakens the fabric irreversibly. And fairness is to be seen by all, and felt in the air.

Working together is inevitable in shared spaces, such as institutions and organizations. Schools are no exceptions. The processes of school are not fundamentally different from those of any group working together, anywhere. The difference is in the way they meet situations. In his book *Education and the Significance of Life*, Krishnamurti writes:

“There must be unstinted co-operation among all the teachers in a school of the right kind. The whole staff should meet often, to talk over the various problems of the school; and when they have agreed upon a certain course of action, there should obviously be no difficulty in carrying out what has been decided. If some decision taken by the majority does not meet with the approval of a particular teacher, it can be discussed again at the next meeting of the faculty.

No teacher should be afraid of the headmaster or feel intimidated by the older teachers. Happy agreement is possible only when there is a feeling of absolute equality among all. It is essential that this feeling of equality prevail in the right kind of school, for there can be real co-operation only when the sense of superiority and its opposite are non-existent. If there is mutual trust, any difficulty or misunderstanding will not just be brushed aside, but will be faced, and confidence restored.”

If this one statement is taken into the consciousness of individuals in a school, and becomes a part of the institution’s way of working, a very special culture will manifest. Unfortunately we usually approach this possibility with some apprehension, some trepidation, some uncertainty.

Some corollaries and elaborations of this statement can be stated.

- 1 When different individuals work together there will be different perceptions and ideas. While these need not become barriers to a healthy mode of working together, most often they do. Institutional movement and capacity to move ahead depend on the strength of processes for handling these differing perceptions.

- 2 For a functioning participative culture, it is important that differing views are welcomed and stated. At the same time, decision-making requires the putting aside of views.
- 3 Thinking, discussing, questioning are important attributes of a healthy culture and all must experience this as a fact at all levels. Without watchfulness barriers tend to develop.
- 4 Behaviour leading to exclusive group formation, particularly among decision-makers, while it may yield short-term results, weakens the institutional fabric in the long run. All too often there are barriers in institutions. Some are included, while others are excluded. Some are 'in' and others 'not in'.
- 5 Encouragement is usually sustained through rewards and punishments. But, listening carefully to everyone seriously and respectfully is the only real avenue to creating an alternate culture.
- 6 Some impersonal and widely distributed norms & principles help spread the intended culture. Some articulation of these can be avoided only at risk to institutional health. However, the danger of articulation is that, in the absence of sustaining processes, they become clichés. And empty clichés make hollow institutions.
- 7 While espousing the notions of plurality and diversity, most institutions, at core, are extremely rigid and hierarchic. This manifests itself in how decision-making is carried out.
- 8 Growing institutions may need to pick up or discover different 'tools' from time to time. Institutions often find themselves embroiled in the question: 'Is the adoption of new tools a 'betrayal' of institutional history?'
- 9 Distinctness of a culture is always under assault from the dominant Culture. If an institution does not actively concern itself with intelligent leadership, it begins to stagnate or lose distinctness. By intelligent leadership, I mean the skilful and wholesome navigation through that which is given; finding and taking the next step.

The key processes of sustenance, regeneration & handing over are required for building leadership. Leadership building is actually an effort at sustaining a valuable culture, not merely survival into the future.

In 1995, Asha, a young, new colleague, was most alarmed at a certain decision that was being taken. After 3 rounds of meetings the school staff had decided that we

would conduct a series of meetings with the senior-most students of the school. She voiced her objections: "I think things are quite ok and there is no reason for such a series of meetings." We could not move ahead without dismissing her view: that would imply that "you are new and young, and your view is therefore uninformed", or, "while we can listen to you, we cannot take you seriously." This was an institutional crisis.

My colleagues and I looked hard at the fundamentals. We said to Asha, "Thank you for speaking your mind. This is valuable to us as it means there is space for people to actually voice what they feel. It may be uncomfortable for us to hear this, but that is not your problem. Second, please hold your reservations, they are valuable. No one is going to try and convince you to change your mind. Third, how shall we move ahead? We have been discussing holding a series of meetings with senior students. You have an objection and think it is a bad idea. Can we consider holding one meeting and then reviewing our decision? Surely others would pick up your misgivings if they are evident." Asha agreed and we were together in the decision. After the first meeting she said, "All my misgivings have vanished. Let us go ahead."

Is it possible for colleagues to say to each other:

- a. I will not try to convince you.
- b. Let us listen to each other carefully.
- c. As we discuss and listen we can together come upon what is the right thing to do.

Is it possible for teachers to say the same to students?

10 How dissent is located in an institution is crucial. Space for dissent is vital and cannot be denied. Each organization & institution experiences some struggles in this area. The culture of an organization, its humanness, its strength and character, are most defined, by the space and processes for engaging with dissent within its fold. Agreement on all but the most trivial matters is not easily found. Recognition of this fact and the manner in which colleagues, friends, teachers and students navigate this terrain is critical.

Krishnamurti indicates that:

- a. Views are not important, fact is.
- b. Decisions are made, not through authority, but 'thinking together' and
- c. There is a collaboration that is not around an idea.

Krishnamurti's teachings clearly move away from 'convincing' another,

‘coercion’ or use of ‘authority’. The space defined by him as ‘collaboration, not around an idea’ is truly a transformational challenge, not just for the individual but for the institution as well. It may be interesting to ask if such a position is tenable in the ‘day to day’ running of a school or any organisation. The ‘day to day’ metaphor assumes that there is an urgency in the matters to be decided, a hurry, a ‘cannot wait’. Is this really so?

Decisions are made at all levels. If something resembles what was done earlier, we don’t call it a ‘decision’. However it is one – it is the decision to ‘continue’ as before. Most decisions are made through the need for fairness and consistency. In fact most institutional problems relate to

- i. Not doing in letter and spirit what was done yesterday.
- ii. Doing the same thing as yesterday, mechanically; not recognizing the need for a fresh approach.

A genuine invitation to express, followed by a careful hearing, is a vital, and yet often elusive, feature of human communication. In the daily life of institutions and organizations, people communicate hastily. Often the listening is inadequate, and the move ahead is unsatisfactory. It is thus not surprising that the shared space in institutions and organizations most vitally lives these challenges.

The challenge before us

The premise defines all else. The orchestra needs a conductor and the military a commander. Even in groups that practise democracy it seems extremely difficult to move away from ‘dominant’ or ‘overriding’ influences. Can schools and modern institutions conceive of vibrant alternatives? Can the working space in institutions such as schools carry a deeper quality of intelligence, and not a tussle for power and influence, obvious or subtle?

G. Gautama has been Principal at The School KFI in Chennai for over fifteen years. He has a background in engineering education from IIT Chennai, has worked as a research scientist and independent consultant and has held a directorial role in a school for the underprivileged. He has been exposed to the teachings of J. Krishnamurti from an early age. His thrust while working in school has been to seed sensible processes and to sustain them - finding the small steps that can take one far.

Krishnamurti's Letters to His Schools

Introducing a new edition

RAY MCCOY



It is a great privilege to be involved in editing Krishnamurti's works. Obviously, there is the opportunity to study the insights of his teaching, but there is also much to learn from seeing his manner of teaching, the way in which he does it. We know that, for him, this is not contrived from thought, but our thinking can benefit from working even with his language. His use of words is dramatic, penetrating, speaking to something beyond the conscious mind, despite—or perhaps partly because of—the simplicity of his vocabulary.

This involvement with the teachings has been especially rewarding during the past two years' work on a new edition of 'Letters to the Schools'. The new version combines the original two volumes in which the letters were first published; but it also has seventeen additional letters, so it has been given the title 'The Whole Movement of Life Is Learning'. The letters published in the first volume were produced between 1st September 1978 and 1st March 1980, and those in the second volume between November 1981 and November 1983. The additional letters were created by Krishnamurti between January and May 1968 for nine of them, and between 1st March and 1st July 1973 for the remaining eight. The earliest letters were originally headed "Conversations with the Schools". All were dictated, then typed, mimeographed and sent to each of the schools, where they could be studied by teachers and read to students as they arrived.

There have been other books from Krishnamurti about education. 'Education and the Significance of Life' (1953) was the first. (He denied authorship of the much earlier booklet 'Education as Service', which had been attributed to him.) Education and the Significance of Life, for which, strangely, no manuscript has been found, speaks generally of the importance of right education and the atmosphere that should prevail in schools. 'Life Ahead' (1963) and 'This Matter of Culture' (1964) are in the nature of homilies, in

the most positive sense, pointing out the right function of education and our responsibility to children. 'Talks with American Students (1970)' and 'You Are the World' (1972) are collections of addresses to young people in colleges and universities. These two collections are very like the public talks, although their focus is the education and future of those being addressed. 'Beginnings of Learning' (1975) and 'Krishnamurti on Education' (1974) comprise discussions with students and teachers, at Brockwood Park and Rishi Valley, respectively. These last-mentioned books are more closely related to the topics discussed in the letters, concerned as they are with the atmosphere in Krishnamurti's schools and the ways in which that will bring about a total education. 'A Flame of Learning' (1993) is unique in presenting conversations with a small group of Brockwood teachers in 1974. Although the discussions are centred on Brockwood, they show Krishnamurti's emphasis on right relationship between the students and the teachers, which is a concern for all educators.

But it is in the Letters that we have the essence of Krishnamurti the Teacher, as educator speaking to teachers and students in the schools bearing his name. Writing about the letters in an introduction to the second volume, Krishnamurti asked that they be studied "as you would study a flower". As we do so, we discover that these letters are remarkable for their directness and clarity of expression, revealing insights that can make us pause in wonder as we read. His words stop the thinking mind in its tracks: "Ideals corrupt." "Yield without losing integrity." "Capacity is limited by desire." "Imitation corrupts the mind." "Education is the cultivation of total responsibility." "The word prevents actual perception." "To live with clarity is not a value." "Freedom is sane living in daily life." He returns often to the theme of freedom and the beautiful phrase "the flowering of goodness" upon which we might meditate endlessly. Our lives are enriched as we ponder: "You have to be good because you are the future". Something in us responds to these striking aphorisms with the sense that the significance and validity of what is said are already known; and there is great delight in that recognition.

Ray McCoy was born and educated in Canada. He worked there in manufacturing, government administration, experimental psychology, and education. He became involved in the Krishnamurti work in 1980, teaching at the schools in India at Rajghat and Rishi Valley. From early 1981, he taught at Brockwood Park School and was later to become the Secretary of the Foundation. Since 2004, his work has mainly been editing and taking care of the publications programme of the Foundation.

Children and Reading

USHA MUKUNDA



*W*hy do we want our children to read? I refer to the wide range of books in fiction and non-fiction, which are perused by children and young adults from ages six to eighteen. This reading is done, by and large, of their own volition and interest and with a resultant satisfaction. By this simple act, they are expanding and enhancing their sensibilities. In reading, they are also learning to read between the lines, pick up nuances and complexities, which the author has embedded in her writing. They are responding to strong themes, to evocative language and are being exposed to issues they cannot afford to ignore. They are also picking up the skill to be critical of content and form—to discern when there is insincerity or condescension, for instance.

A Reason to Read

So, why do children read?

- 1 Interest, bordering on passion: This interest is already nurtured from early childhood by the home environment and/or furthered by the school library's approach and activities.
- 2 'Time-kill or time-pass': This reason for reading does not last, as other 'time-pass' attractions will tend to intersect and overshadow this fleeting interest.

However, with sensitive intervention by parents, teachers and librarians, a lukewarm attitude can be converted into a more enduring relationship.

- 3 Motivation and enforcement: This is probably done through classroom reading demands or the use of competitions and prizes. Most of the time these do not lead to a more sustained engagement with reading. Once the carrot or the stick is gone, so has the child!

Young children are drawn to stories and are full of curiosity and wonder. Usually this moves naturally into a love of reading. But we may uncaringly or unwittingly dam this natural surge. Very little encouragement to read, both in the home and school environment, too many other occupations, unmonitored television-viewing, addiction to computer games, and academic pressure can dry up the imaginative flow. What are some ways by which their relationship to books can be strengthened? When children of age eight or so come into the school library, I make them aware that there is a live person responsible for the story, the characters, and the illustrations. I do this to further the link between the reader and the book.

After a few years, I like to expose them to themes and issues that are contemporary and relevant to them, as well as to myths, legends, and tales of magic and mystery. The former may help the young person grow aware of issues of gender, discrimination, conflict, love and so on. It helps her to face them squarely and be more questioning as well as accepting of different shades to every situation. The latter, I feel, enables the child to retain an element of fantasy and wonder. This may sound contradictory but in fact for a child the factual and the miraculous go together and she can seamlessly move from one to the other.

Availability and Access

There are children's writers, and writers who write for children. You may wonder at this distinction, but it is an important one to keep in mind. In the first category are authors who touch upon themes of great sensitivity and draw upon their own childhood experiences. The second category, unfortunately, consists of writers whose ideas are predictable, characters stereotyped and the language pedestrian. I refer here to series like Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew, and even the books of Enid Blyton. Authors to look for are Ruskin Bond, Roald Dahl, E.Nesbitt, Subhadra Sen Gupta, Min Fong Ho and E.B. White. Established authors of adult fiction who have also ventured into writing for children are a rare breed, but they have proved that they have the quality which appeals to children as well. R.K. Narayan, Mahashweta Devi,

Mulk Raj Anand, Mark Twain, and J.R.R Tolkien are some names you must include in your library collection.

When J.D. Salinger wrote "Catcher in the Rye" in 1951, it was a breakthrough of sorts. Suddenly, it seemed as if the angst of a teenager could be conveyed and empathized with. Similarly, Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mocking Bird," written in 1962, introduced young readers to racial tensions, prejudice, rape and other disturbing issues. "The Diary of Anne Frank" looks at the Holocaust through a young girl's eyes but it is also the story of a teenager's moods and feelings. Now, there are a host of books for young teenagers that explore bold themes and are written in a language they can relate to—Madeline L'engle, Ursula Le Guin, Judy Blume and Sue Townsend.

As for non-fiction, Scholastic has brought out good biographies and science books for children National Book Trust and Children's Book Trust also have good titles. Tara and Tulika come out with some outstanding non-fiction. How- to- make books are very popular. Arvind Gupta, and Sudarshan Khanna have done yeoman service in making such reading material available to younger readers.

For children of fourteen years and above, there is a dip, both in the young person's reading and in the availability of suitable literature. Apparently, issues of adolescence coupled with greater academic pressure makes them go off reading. Some schools and parents drive the last nail by

eliminating the weekly library period from their timetable or by frowning upon reading as a wasteful occupation. But I have seen that after a few hiccups, this age group moves into varied and very different reading interests. Some books I have found popular with this age group are Nelson Mandela's "A Long Walk to Freedom", "Seven Years in Tibet" by Heinrich Harrer, "Into Thin Air" by Jon Krakauer, and books by Primo Levi (thanks to a passionate introduction by a teacher), books of general interest by Jared Diamond, Bill Bryson and others. "Sunlight on a broken column" by Attia Hossein, and the works of award winning writers such as Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Yann Martel, to name a few, have all ensured that our teenagers have plenty to keep them anchored to books.

The Content of Reading

The six to nine year olds are drawn to myths, magic and fairy tales. They accept these elements without question. Soon this inclination turns a bit ghoulish and they are looking for fantasy with a frisson of fear. As a result, ghost stories and horror stories are much in demand. Well-written books in this genre for a younger group are hard to come by. I read out the finest ghost stories to enable them to see for themselves the difference between cheap thrills and genuine, spine-tingling horror! From ages ten to twelve they become interested in stories of adventure, tales of heroism, school and friendship, stories from other cultures, fiction with a historical

base, real animal stories, as well as all the themes which enchanted them earlier. The world outside is already nudging its way in and this age group is faced with added responsibilities, their own growing independence, relationships that ebb and flow...! Small wonder that they chew up whatever they can find to read.

Non-fiction most read at this age is about lives of extraordinary people, wildlife, scientific discoveries and poetry. From age thirteen up, their awakening emotions and tendency to rebel against what they see as more and more do's and don'ts, demand special care from us with regard to their reading. A combination of "tough teenage fiction," with sensitive treatment of themes close to their hearts resonates well with this age group. War stories, light romances, mysteries, and historical fiction, along with real-life narratives are a few more of their favourite reads.

As a librarian and teacher, the content of books has thrown many questions at me. What is appropriate and what is not, for any age group or reading level? Can the choice be made by the adult objectively? Is the readiness all? What does it mean to preserve innocence? Does one deliberately expose children to violence, hatred and injustice to get them better prepared for reality? I think the answers might lie in the thought and care put in by the author to be authentic and sincere. In a recent interview, Beverly Naidoo, author of "Journey to Jo'burg," a poignant story of children caught in a

distressing situation of racial prejudice and political inhumanity, says, “Books for children reflect values present in adult society...Fiction is a means of exploring what it is to be human. I hope by doing so, I excite, engage, and encourage my readers to make their own journeys of imagination into the lives of others.” In the same issue of the newspaper is a review of a book, “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas” by John Boyne. This is the story of the holocaust from a child’s perspective. The author says, “I do not believe there is any subject that is inappropriate to discuss with children.” Now here is the crucial point he makes: “It comes down to how we as parents, teachers or society—decide to introduce these matters without trivializing them or patronizing our audience. As a writer, there is a responsibility to tell an emotionally honest story, that should ideally resonate with children and adults alike.” On the other hand, I can’t help recollecting Robert Benigni’s award winning film, “Life is Beautiful”, where the protagonist is sent to a concentration camp. He smuggles his young son in and tries against all odds to preserve his innocence and happiness by making the whole experience a series of tricks and games. Whether that was the right thing to do makes for an interesting discussion.

Another book, “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time” by Mark Haddon is a coming-of-age story of a 15-year-old autistic boy who embarks on

a detecting quest a la Sherlock Holmes. There is strong language but it goes with the theme and is an outstanding book. “Angela’s Ashes” by Frank McCourt has been a big hit with our fourteen year olds and above. The story describes the deprivation and despair of an Irish Catholic family. Frequent babies, infant mortalities, squalor, and later the sexual stirrings of the adolescent boy are all portrayed with sympathy and taste. Here too I had no qualms about it being a suitable book. Khushwant Singh’s “Journey to Pakistan” is frank and brutal. The older students who read it were shaken but I had let them borrow it after talking to them about what they would encounter.

In an open library, how do you keep some of these books away from younger readers who may be able to read and even comprehend the words but not much else? T.S. Eliot describes it well, “...had the experience, but missed the meaning.” One approach I have found that works, is to have frequent chats with the children about interesting and appropriate reading. I also try to keep them challenged and happy with excellent books written at their level and with issues pertinent to them, pointing out that a wealth of literature awaits them, which they will doubly appreciate in just a little while from now.

How do you deal with the best-seller syndrome? We have generally responded by bringing up such issues for discussion in the library periods and letting the children speak and listen to themselves. When the

last Harry Potter book was to be released at the witching (!) hour, we encouraged children to give us their take on Harry Potter-mania. You could hear discussions over lunch, in the bus and in the library. All of them were thoughtful and unencumbered by the euphoria accompanying the books. Umang felt that some authors write because they have something they want to say while others write to an already fixed readership and cater to their desires! He placed Rowling in the latter category. For ten year old Shruthi, the books were not as appealing as the Narnia series by C. S. Lewis, where children lived in a familiar world but were transported for a while into a magical one, from which they returned and found they hadn't missed any part of their own lives! So while all these readers found the Harry Potter books reasonably enjoyable, they could think of many other books they found far more riveting.

For older students, Dan Brown's "The Da Vinci code" might have been a big draw. Surprisingly, only one had read it fully and was persuaded to present a book-talk on it. I sat back to listen. After the initial presentation, questions came at him from the others. Had any of the major characters grown at all during the novel? Was the author relying too much on violence to hold the reader's attention? Did the narrative jump too fast for the reader to stay connected? Did the language and style of writing make you feel you wish you could write like that? It was quite a

discussion and would surely have made Dan Brown think a little.

One thing I do ask students is to be aware and observant about their own reading interests. They see that some books they want to keep and read over and over. Others are boring when read again. They realise how easily they can find a John Grisham or a Tom Clancy at the pavement shop but have to look much harder to find a genuine treasure. They are very responsive to such clues about what makes a book a classic, an award winner or a best-seller.

One of my biggest questions is about reading in other languages. Why is it so abysmally different? Being in a milieu where English is the chosen language for almost all the academic subjects, for daily interaction and for newspaper reading, there is only so much one can do to bring about the same facility and depth of reading in other languages. This is the sad reality. Even in a small school like ours, where enormous energy and creativity is poured into the teaching of Indian languages and there is genuine appreciation and enjoyment of plays, poems and songs in Hindi and Kannada, it has still not resulted in large numbers of children reading in these languages for pleasure! In the few cases where this happens, parents play a crucial role or the child comes from a strong foundation in one or more of these languages. Our teachers read out classic short stories, encourage children to read and express their response and do projects

on authors. Often they bring the children to the library to help select books for them. Nevertheless, the reading is rarely sustained. We tried to shelve storybooks in all three languages together, author-wise. While this had a novelty value, it too did not make a great impact. While buying books, a conscious effort was made to buy interesting books only in one of the two vernaculars so that the book would be new. But, as our language teachers say, the students' facility with the language is not of a high order and so the interest wanes. I wonder what the scenario is in other schools where English is not so all pervading and the librarian has a strong base in one or more Indian languages.

The End

To conclude, we may say with assurance that children from a young age, through adolescence, and on to young adulthood, can and do read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction provided there is good support, encouragement and guidance from parents, teachers and librarians. The fear of the

electronic media taking over completely from books appears unfounded. While many children prefer getting information and doing reference online, they are not yet reading books in that format.

The recent entry of intelligent, thought-provoking material for young teenagers is another welcome sign. The fact that many regional language classics have now been translated into English makes them accessible to those who are not familiar with other languages.

The content of the stories is also more layered. Qualities like understanding, compassion, and psychological resilience are the new badges of courage. The characters in these books are not sugary sweet Pollyannas, but ones who may meet adversity initially with fear and uncertainty, and then recoup and fight back.

Being responsible for and related to our children, we can help them explore a wide diversity of books. Let their responses (and ours too), meaningful, enriching and enjoyable as they are, be our guide.

Usha Mukunda completed a B.A. in English Literature from Kolkata in 1962. Later she completed her postgraduate degree in Library Science from Bangalore. She worked as a librarian at The Valley School, KFI and has been at Centre For Learning, Bangalore for sixteen years. She is deeply committed to education and the open library approach. She has greatly enjoyed interacting with children and young adults in activities, discussions and projects involving books, reading and library use.

Creating Books Without a Formula

GITA WOLF



Children in India traditionally grew up listening to stories. Although most of the tales were generic, each experience turned out to be unique. Tellers of tales embroidered the details of character and circumstance in their own particular way, adapting the story to the audience. As the child entered a fictional world, her imagination filled out what she heard, and she was left with an experience uniquely her own.

Today we live in a world where grandmother's tales have all but disappeared. Even more seriously, the value of fiction and imagination in a child's life is itself eroding. Our world has become so competitive that we prize information above all else, and devalue anything that does not appear to lead to a linear and predictable result. So the nurturing of imagination – which is an active, participatory and creative quality – is no longer considered important. If there is any free time at all for children, it is usually filled with the passive, consumption-led fun called entertainment.

For all that, children's books are

probably the closest link we have in today's literate society to the older form of storytelling. Sadly, however, children's literature in India is a rather unevolved genre. With very few exceptions, children's books often carry the worst pressures of our time – they tend to be largely geared to acquiring information. This kind of didacticism is not limited to communicating facts, but stretches to preaching morals as well. The need to impart a moral in every children's story could partly be a legacy of the oral grandmother's tales. But without the complex dialogic interventions of the earlier form, and combined with the need for 'usefulness', the didacticism we are left with is flat and, even to an adult, unimaginably tedious. Unsurprisingly, most children consider reading a boring activity. A more child-friendly 'fun' approach has come up in recent times, but there is too little of original thought here—it tends to be dominated by books which are in one way or another derivative of Western children's literature, and sadly, not the best of it either.

So it is more useful to discuss children's literature in India in the form of a manifesto rather than anything resembling a history. Although there are a number of good children's books in the market, especially in some Indian languages such as Bengali, children's literature in English as a convincing genre is still in the process of evolving. Clearly, the challenge for publishers in India is to continue to find forms which are attractive, relevant and contemporary. In a society that values only that which helps children 'get ahead in life', what we need urgently is a healthy dose of subversion. We need to provide children with a variety of books that have ostensibly no immediately useful purpose—other than the pleasure in reading. We need a whole body of literature that is absurd, exciting, or pure fun. This is what attracts children to reading, and making readers of children should be the primary aim of all good publishing. Such books also accomplish something else: they communicate to children that fun and excitement can happen here as well as anywhere else. If at the same time, such a book succeeds in dealing with complex themes, characters or situations, then it becomes the stuff of great literature.

The first step in getting children interested in books is to provide them with

In a society that values only that which helps children 'get ahead in life', what we need urgently is a healthy dose of subversion.

reading material they enjoy. But obviously, that is not all that children's literature can offer. Problematic or difficult themes do have a place here, and among their best qualities is the fact that they question one of the great stereotypes of children's literature: that the world is the best of all possible places. This is something we will look at in more detail later. But for now, let's consider ways in which painful topics – like the plight of working children or the degradation of the environment – can be approached without heavy handed didacticism.

If there is one clue to a sensitive approach, it lies in understanding that there need be no direct pedagogical link between reading and action. Books need not be 'useful' in an immediate sense, or change children overnight. They don't necessarily work that way. There are some things that children read that remain with them, and either grow slowly into a perspective, or acquire a reality at a later point in life. Obviously, children need to experience life in order to understand it. But from about the time they are nine, their minds are able to absorb laterally and widely, so complex texts and images which deal with difficult issues encourage this movement, even if a child does not understand everything in the first reading. In a sense, to become aware of the inherent complexities of the world we live in is just as important for her growth.

The real world is interesting and raises a host of questions – and good

A young reader is able to forge... a connection with a fictional character, and this creates empathy... the most crucial step towards a humanistic way of viewing the world.

books can help children to be observant and comprehend the contradictions of the world we live in. It is true that children need not be protected from the harsher realities of life, but they are natural optimists, and this makes it all the harder. How can the myth of a just world be questioned without making the child reader directly responsible for a situation she has not created, and in which she is powerless? One way is to make sure that the material does not offer pat solutions so much as provoke questions and point to choices. The second important insight is to keep in mind that children are capable of absorbing emotion as well as information. So fiction – which has the power to lead us into the lives of people vastly different from us – becomes an effective way to explore complex themes in a nuanced manner. The more varied the characters and their circumstances, the more points of view they represent. A young reader is able to forge an emotional and imaginative connection with a fictional character, and this creates empathy, which is perhaps the most crucial step towards a humanistic way of viewing the world.

So genuinely changing the point of view from which a story is told becomes a highly political act. But this voice must be

an authentic one, not just loosely imagined. One test of authenticity is to see who the protagonists of the story are, and who they claim to speak for. For instance, is a middle class, urban, boy child speaking on behalf of all Indian children? Only a genuinely different point of view has the capacity to show us the world from another perspective, and question the one we take for granted. The value of the insights this offers the child is enormous. Making available this multiplicity of voices should be the agenda of committed children's publishing. In a country like India, this richness is not difficult to find, and there are a multitude of worlds waiting to be explored.

Again, the variety of material India offers needs to be taken up without the impulse to iron it out to an acceptable homogeneity, or some imagined universality. All good literature is based in a particular context. But universality is achieved not by smoothing this over, so much as transcending it. Good literature achieves this transcendence by allowing readers from other contexts to identify and empathise with alien characters and situations. So an Indian setting has to be more than merely a backdrop which adds local colour to well-worn and unexamined genres. There is little to be gained from taking the stock English schoolboy story and changing the names to Indian ones. Put another way, being true to context is to actually change the point of view, and

with it, the perspective. So to come from a particular context necessarily implies being unselfconscious – yet questioning – about it.

The reason why there are so few books of this kind is not difficult to understand. One of the greatest obstacles to creating books that actually allow for different viewings of the world comes from the dictates of the marketplace. Most publishers are unwilling to risk putting out anything that is new and daring, and the children's book world remains a largely conservative one, content with duplicating and multiplying winning formulas.

Interestingly, one of the arguments used by publishers and writers for maintaining the status quo is that they are only providing what children 'naturally' like. So books with animals dressed in human clothing or teen heartache stories come to stand in for acceptable literature for particular age groups. But do we really know enough about children's tastes?

Books and styles that are successful in the market tend to be repeated endlessly, narrowing the variety of experiences open to the child reader

It is actually adults who control the writing, illustration, publishing and finally the buying and consumption of children's books. What children like or dislike therefore largely becomes a question of what they are exposed to. Everyone – from publishing

professionals to parents and educators – has decided opinions on what is suitable for children. This is partly formed by notions of what sells, what is permissible for children and how to preserve a child-like innocence in the reader. At the same time, adults themselves are influenced by the media and contemporary views on child rearing. So despite the debate on children's tastes, it is not the actual responses of children that finally determine how and which books are made. Books and styles that are successful in the market tend to be repeated endlessly, narrowing the variety of experiences open to the child reader. The Disney style of illustration is a case in point. Over time, it has come to represent children's taste in visuals, and few people take the risk of offering alternatives to it.

Admittedly, there is no way of knowing whether a new or radical form is suitable, or will succeed in a children's book. The only way to find out is by trying. The chances of any style working well are higher if it has the ability to engage and communicate to young readers.

It is also a common misconception that children's tastes are a uniform block, and that all children will like or dislike the same things. Like adults, children also have a variety of personalities – some are serious, some like humour, some are capable of abstract thought, some are sensual. Children's books ought to represent this variety, and account for a difference in tastes, rather than curtail it or aim to find

a simple common denominator. Only by offering these alternatives can the definition of what is 'natural' or 'normal' be brought under question.

Alternatives can be found by looking around and examining the wealth of creative material and talent that exists around us, which may or may not have been used in books so far. One of the greatest resources we have in India is the richness of our narrative and visual traditions—from the vibrancy of folk and tribal art, to the energy of sign painters. Using tribal art in a children's book probably works against established notions of what is acceptable for children. But in fact children themselves seem to come to such art with far less preconceptions, enjoying the forms and colours without worrying too much about their source.

There are really no limits to what can be turned into successful children's literature. Unusual talent can be found in children's own writing, in looking at the lives of ordinary people we encounter, in art on the street, in the stories that take place all around us. All this is the raw material that we have available to us.

There are no set rules that apply to creating children's literature, as

with all good literature. A few general guidelines are helpful: a strong concept, age appropriate vocabulary and an insistence on communication can make even radical experiments succeed with children. It is important that writing that does not talk down to children, is not clichéd, arch or coy. Publishers and writers of children's books need to be very conscious of their own prejudices and stereotypes, particularly when it comes to gender sensitivity or the endorsing of violence.

On the practical front, creating books without a formula is a challenge, and they need to be accepted by at least a section of the reading public for the venture to be a success. Publishing in India often simply means a fight for survival in a tough industry, and the book in today's market is a product like any other.

Committed publishing, on the other hand, needs to look beyond the market. It has to make room for innovation, question existing norms and succeed in informing and changing tastes. Ultimately, the decision to communicate forms that open up perspectives rather than enslave the reader is one that every children's book writer and publisher must take for themselves.

Gita Wolf started Tara Publishing in 1994, and is now the director. She was an academic by training before she moved into publishing. Her special area of interest is in communication, both visual and literary, and she is particularly interested in children's picture books. Over the years, Gita was joined by other writers and publishing professionals who were drawn by Tara's vision. Tara now functions as a creative collective which creates its own books, as well as work with a range of adventurous writers and artists around the world.

Trans-personal Growth

DEVDAŚ MENON



Pre-conventional, Conventional and Trans-personal Stages of Development

Recent psychological studies in human development suggest an interesting three-stage model of development: pre-conventional, conventional and trans-personal (or post-conventional). Most people successfully reach and settle into the second stage, conforming to accepted patterns of social conventions. The third stage, which reflects authentic individual maturation, is relatively rare, and is generally not supported by society.

As children, we are born innocent into a bewildering world. We are gradually conditioned into accepting the ways of the world, and we begin to derive a sense of identity and security in society, based on how well we conform to the accepted norms. This process of enculturation is so overwhelming that the maturation from the pre-conventional to the conventional takes place automatically, and is considered 'normal'. It operates in all kinds of informal and formal ways: at home, in the neighbourhood, at school, through the newspapers, TV and movies, at the workplace, and in practically all our social interactions. The indoctrination is so strong and complete that we generally end up believing in the accepted worldview and treat it as a true representation of reality. Society supports and encourages this, and in fact, blocks the stage of trans-personal growth in individuals, because this often implies breaking out of or going beyond accepted conventions.

There are many things of considerable value in the conventional worldview, but ultimately they are limiting and cannot satisfy the evolutionary quest for self-actualisation that lies dormant in every individual. The primary limitation of conventionality, as many wise people have repeatedly pointed out, is that it tends to be deadening, inauthentic and essentially unfulfilling.

In a spiritual context, it is a kind of 'collective hypnosis' or 'consensus trance', from which we need to break out if we are to discover for ourselves, first-hand, authentic fulfilment, aliveness and sacredness, all of which is ever-present in the core of our being and in the universe.

Dimensions of Trans-personal Growth

Every individual has the potential for development to the trans-personal realm, and there are many dimensions in which this development is possible, not just the spiritual. Those who have advanced considerably in one dimension (say, cognitive brilliance or meditative awareness) may be at a rudimentary (pre-conventional) stage or a conventional stage of development in other dimensions, such as the interpersonal or psycho-sexual. Even within one dimension (say cognition), there is a fairly wide spectrum of areas (such as the humanities and sciences), all of which cannot be developed to the same depth by a single individual. Hence, persons who may be 'masters' in certain areas of specialization will find it difficult to understand deeply in other areas, or feel compassion.

It is not always that we have the self-awareness and humility to acknowledge: I really don't know; my understanding in this area is rudimentary. It is more common to blunder forth blissfully, talk authoritatively, and make sweeping generalizations on issues that we have little understanding or appreciation of. It is neither necessary nor possible to accomplish development at a trans-personal level in all dimensions. But it is indeed desirable to discover the trans-personal in those areas for which one has an aptitude, to recognize one's own limitations in other areas, and to discover the space and grace to accommodate all viewpoints.

Evolutionary Progress

Growth into the trans-personal (post-conventional) level is evolutionary in nature, in the sense that it progresses from the pre-conventional and through the conventional. The progression into the trans-personal is usually triggered by a strong dissatisfaction with the conventional, and is realized after significant inner transformation that varies from person to person. The trans-personal is unconventional; but being unconventional per se does not imply being trans-personal.

The trans-personal contains within its realm the conventional and the pre-conventional. This is what enables an individual at the trans-personal stage

of development to understand deeply and empathize with the conventional and the pre-conventional.

The trans-personal can often appear to be bewildering to the conventional and pre-conventional. It begins to make sense only when the individual has ripened to a stage where he or she, troubled by the limitations of the conventional, is ready to move on and transcend. It may be perhaps possible, in some rare cases, for someone at the pre-conventional level to bypass the conventional and reach the trans-personal.

Trans-personal Spirituality

Trans-personal growth in the spiritual dimension is recognized by the wisdom of the ages to be a realization of the ultimate purpose of human life. Elements of the spiritual dimension, such as a sense of blissful oneness with nature, do manifest in earlier stages, and in particular, in the pre-conventional stage, but there is a significant difference in the type of realization.

During infancy, there is barely any clear awareness of a separate self, and the world is a part of oneself. The child, in fact, often refers to itself in the third person. As the child grows and begins to discover its own urges which run into conflict with the outer world, awareness of a separate ego-self begins to emerge. The fragmentation into the separate ego-self becomes full-blown in the conventional stage of development. Subsequently, if and when the individual advances into the trans-personal stage, there is a growing realisation that the ego-self is but a false mental construct, and liberation lies in its dissolution.

Being in the pre-conventional stage, the child largely experiences things from its own point-of-view and is unable to comprehend or feel compassion for the needs of others, whereas in the trans-personal stage, there is a deep understanding of and compassion for others. Trans-personal spirituality is inclusive in an absolute sense, without fragmentation.

Role of Education

Education is the flowering of the individual from the pre-conventional to the trans-personal stage of development. It is a life-long endeavour.

Formal education in today's society is limited to the initial period of one's life, and its primary objective, as viewed conventionally, is to enable an individual to earn a livelihood. Conventional formal education in schools and colleges is aimed at enabling a maturation of the individual from the pre-

conventional stage to the conventional stage. Individuals may subsequently, out of their own interest and initiative, unlearn and learn afresh, to progress further into the trans-personal stage. Self-education is a powerful and sure way to trans-personal growth, provided there is sincerity of purpose and a strong inner drive. One then discovers the beautiful inter-connectedness of the universe, and marvels at the way one is led onwards, through trial and error, and through teachings and insights that appear and disappear endlessly.

But there are schools where education is more enlightened, and these are schools that are either founded by great educational thinkers who have delved deeply into the trans-personal dimension, or schools that are inspired by their teachings (this includes the Krishnamurti Schools). The education here is less formal, more natural in its evolution, and certainly positions the student better for trans-personal growth. However, the conventional stage of development cannot be bypassed or wished away. Students must also be prepared to understand and meet the ways of the world; otherwise, the transition from such a school to the real world can be extremely difficult and bewildering. Hopefully, the trans-personal flavour of the teachings will sustain in the individual through the turbulent period of dealing with the existential problems of the real world, and make it possible to be in the world, but not of it.

Freedom or Bondage?

However, it is not easy for any system of education or any organisational set-up to realise trans-personal wisdom. The very nature of an organisation, and the fact that it is set up to promote or propagate some value system or teaching, no matter how noble or evolved, pushes it into a conventional mode. Although the values adopted may be completely different from others, and far more enlightened, they can, and often do, end up as conventions. There is the danger of becoming institutionalised, of the original vision losing its vibrancy and becoming static and authoritarian. And this is perhaps as true of Krishnamurti Schools as any others. This is something that the teachers and administrators need to be aware of and try to guard against.

Perhaps in the Krishnamurti Schools the teachings have truly resulted in a fundamental change in attitude. But is this the radical transformation that Krishnamurti was pointing at, something that was clearly reflected in his own life? Or, over the years has there been a plateau in the transformation process, and instead of freedom from the known (which includes the teachings or the

vision), there is bondage? In which case, is there not a need to till the soil of the psyche again and again, to root out the weeds of dead insights, and to allow for the fresh and the new to take birth and flower? The fresh and the new may spring from within one or be inspired from outside, but this is possible only if the mind is open and free from enculturation and bondage to any teaching. Enculturation of the mind manifests in going around repeatedly through the same old familiar grooves of thought and enquiry, without breaking through to that which is beyond thought.

It is not easy for individuals within a system to see whether or not they are falling into the 'consensus trance' that is characteristic of the conventional realm, unless they are very alert and self-aware. Typical tell-tale signs are a cult-like adherence to conventions, in terms of ideology, style of discourse and even choice of words that seem to be an echo of the original founder. These may be good conventions, but their 'goodness' is suspect when they tend to be binding. The beauty of authentic trans-personal realisation is that it cannot help but manifest in original, spontaneous and creative expression, which is not cultivated, but is born from first-hand living experience.

Century after century, and sage after sage have pointed to the trans-personal realm. It is that which they are all pointing to which is of vital importance, not the particular finger (teaching) that points.

Remaining awake to our major purpose

Imagine Krishnamurti to be reborn, unknown to all, including himself! Imagine him as a student in one of the present-day Krishnamurti schools.

How would such a person respond to the 'teachings' that are encoded in the structuring and running of the school? Would he or she simply accept and follow them? Or would he or she rebel, and brilliantly blaze an original trail to the trans-personal? More importantly, how would the teachers and school authorities respond to the student's behaviour? Would they have the wisdom to recognise the potential emergence of the trans-personal in new forms? Will they do their best to encourage and facilitate this emergence? Or, will they, acting in good faith, do their best to thwart it and 'correct' it? Are these not crucial questions to ponder over?

The exceptional boys and girls in our schools and colleges may evolve to the trans-personal, with, or in spite of, our help. Our task in education is to facilitate this in as many individuals and in as many ways as possible. To

make this possible, we need to make our own journey to the trans-personal the major definite purpose of our lives, and allow it to unfold in ways that are not pre-determined or conformist. We need to be awake and alert to entrapments that lull us into a false sense of security.

We will do well to assess whether our current stage of development is authentically trans-personal or merely the conventional in a different guise. Our hearts will reveal the truth and guide us, if we would but let them.

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A Gently Socratic Enquiry

THOMAS E JACKSON



A paramount objective of education is to help children develop their ability to think for themselves and to learn to use this ability in responsible ways. Much of current schooling falls short of helping children achieve this ability to think. Frequently, by the time children reach third grade, the sense of wonder with which they entered kindergarten—wonder out of which authentic thinking and thus thinking for oneself develops—has begun to diminish. By sixth grade it has practically disappeared. Children’s thinking focuses instead on what the teacher expects. A major contributing factor to this loss of wonder is the failure to properly nurture the true voices of children. Due to a variety of pressures, both internal and external, the typical classroom teacher does not appear to have time for children’s genuine wondering and questioning, from which structured inquiries can grow.

This apparent lack of time is exacerbated by the fact that most teachers simply have never been exposed to this type of inquiry. If teachers are ever to do this

successfully in their own classrooms, they need time and guidance in learning how to conduct such inquiries.

The art of ‘gently Socratic enquiry’ is an educational initiative fostered jointly by the Philosophy Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the State Department of Education. It has been inspired by the work of Dr. Lipman, who was deeply concerned about his students’ inability to reason and make sound judgments. His concerns led to the development of a philosophically based curriculum and methodology. As Director of the Philosophy in Schools Project, I have been working with pre-school, elementary, middle and high school teachers and their students, assisting them in creating intellectually safe communities where philosophical inquiry can flourish.

What is gently Socratic inquiry?

The ‘gentle’ in gently Socratic inquiry involves highlighting both a connection and distinction from what Socrates and the Socratic method too often have come to represent. Socrates is often

portrayed as the consummate lawyer, cleverly questioning and manipulating his adversary into an “Aha! Got you!” position of contradiction. The Socratic method is construed as methodical questioning and cross-examining, peeling away layers of half-truths, exposing hidden assumptions. It becomes an almost algorithmic, step-by-step procedure.

The term “gently Socratic” is meant to distance the nature of inquiry presented here from the method described above.

...gentleness must be foremost in one's mind if one hopes to be privileged with an authentic response from a child.

The first connection with Socrates in ‘gently Socratic inquiry’ is dialogue. A salient feature of dialogue is not questioning (let alone cross-examination) but listening. Dialogue’s first interest is not to counter, debate, disagree, lead, or expose, but to genuinely and simply listen. This quality of listening requires setting aside one’s own thoughts in order to be truly open to what the other is saying. This is especially important because the “other” in this case will most often be a child, and gentleness must be foremost in one’s mind if one hopes to be privileged with an authentic response from a child.

Many factors in contemporary teaching and teacher preparation work against the kind of listening essential for genuine

Socratic inquiry. A central tendency is the idea that the teacher is the one who is “in the know” and the student is the “learner.” Too often the teacher focuses her listening on hearing an expected answer or on probing the student’s understanding of a particular idea or concept. “Has the student understood what I am trying to teach?” is a stance that precludes the kind of listening essential for the success of gently Socratic inquiry.

The focus on dialogue means that a particular relationship must develop among the members of the classroom community that is quite different from standard classroom practice. The teacher provides ample time for students to express and clarify what they mean, to understand, to respond to what others have said, and to delve further into what other students intended. The teacher becomes a co-inquirer in dialogue with the children, rather than their guide or sage.

To develop the classroom community and the needed skills, the teacher needs to deliberately set aside time for both. A minimum of two sessions per week is highly recommended. As the children internalize the skills and procedures that emerge from the inquiry sessions, these ultimately appear at other times of the school day and in other content areas. The children begin to ask qualitatively different sorts of questions; they persist in seeking to scratch beneath the surface of a text or lesson, or personal situation.

An intellectually safe place

Gently Socratic inquiry begins by developing a context within which dialogue and inquiry unfold. Certainly, classrooms must be physically safe places. For dialogue and inquiry to occur they must be emotionally and intellectually safe as well. In an intellectually safe place there are no putdowns and no comments intended to belittle, undermine, negate, devalue, or ridicule. Within this place, the group accepts virtually any question or comment, so long as it is respectful of the other members of the circle. What develops is a growing trust among the participants and with it the courage to present one's own thoughts, however tentative initially, on complex and difficult issues.

Anyone who knows how to pretend they understand something even though they don't, or who has been in a context where they had a question but were afraid to ask it, has felt the influence of a place that was not intellectually safe. Intellectual safety is the bedrock upon which inquiry grows.

An important detail relevant to intellectual safety is proper acknowledgment of the diversity of views that emerge in the course of various inquiries. This is not the same as saying there are "no right or wrong answers" or "any answer is okay." Sometimes a student will fail to present reasons, or well-thought-out reasons, to support his answer. Over time, the group begins to understand that it needs to take

these criteria into account in considering a proposed answer. Mere unsupported opinion does not suffice.

Equally important is this: the goal is not to persuade anyone to any particular answer, but rather for everyone to reach a deeper understanding of the complexity of the issues involved and a greater ability to navigate among these complexities.

Creating a community of inquiry

The most favorable configuration for developing a community is for the class, including the teacher, to sit in a circle, on the floor if possible. Unlike the more traditional configuration with students in rows, the circle allows all members of the community to make eye contact, to see each other. In the ensuing dialogue, participants are better able to hear what others are saying and also to see how they are saying it; in other words, the facial expressions and mannerisms of those who are speaking. The circle also facilitates seeing the impact on each other of the interaction. What is the impact of acceptance or rejection? Of careful listening as opposed to indifference?

An early objective is to establish a protocol whereby students feel empowered to call on each other, no longer relying on the teacher alone to hold this responsibility. The teacher may initiate the group into this practice by selecting a simple question that she thinks will draw out the children, such as "What is your favorite food or music?" or "What do you like best about school?"

Each child then gets a turn to respond to this, before the turns get passed on in a more random fashion. One caveat is that if a person has not asked to speak or does not wish to speak, she has the absolute right to pass. If the community seems bogged down in a topic and is not getting anywhere, the community votes to see if the majority would indeed like to move on. If a minority still has interest in the topic, they can pursue it at a later time.

Developing an understanding of inquiry

Perhaps most basic to successful inquiry is the clear and shared understanding that “we aren’t in a rush to get anywhere.” In other content areas there is pressure to cover the material, to get on with it. The dialogue and inquiry sessions have a different feel.

Co-inquiry: In gently Socratic inquiry, no one, especially not the teacher, knows either “the” answer to the question (if the inquiry begins with a question) or where the inquiry will lead. Any effort to guide an inquiry to a predetermined answer or outcome corrupts the process from the start. The dialogue develops its own integrity, its own movement, going where “it” wants or needs to go. At various points it may bog down and need an occasional nudge but in the main, the inquiry emerges from the context.

Gently Socratic inquiry is co-inquiry in the best sense. The teacher is not a privileged knower. In such inquiries, the

children are not infrequently ahead of the thinking of the teacher, leading the inquiry down unexpected paths. Indeed, what the teacher knows can interfere with participation in the unfolding inquiry.

The source of the inquiry: Whenever possible, the inquiry arises out of the questions and interests of the children and moves in directions that the children indicate. Even very young children generate sophisticated lines of inquiry from deceptively simple beginnings. One kindergartner; in response to the question, “What do you wonder about?” answered: “The other night, while I was gazing at the stars, I wondered whether anything came before space.” In the discussion that ensued, the children’s exploration ranged from dinosaurs to God. Other inquiries have explored such topics as “Could there be a greatest number?” (3rd grade); “What constitutes a right?” and “What is the purpose of rights?” (5th grade); and “What is more important - friends, fame, or fortune?” (6th grade) Once children realize that the topics can indeed come from them and be pursued along lines they are interested in, the quality of their thinking is truly astounding.

One strategy for finding a trigger to set the inquiry off, and then giving it shape is described below.

Step 1. Read - A paragraph or two, an episode, a chapter, or a whole story. In the primary grades, the teacher may do the reading, or she may write the story on

chart paper for everyone to read together. Alternatively, students could look at paintings, especially those by the students themselves; watch a video; read a poem; listen to a piece of music; or select a topic from a 'wonder box' into which children have placed things they wonder about.

Step 2. Question—Ask the children for questions or comments they have about the story. Write them down on chart paper with the child's name next to their comment.

Step 3. Vote—As a class, the children vote for the question or comment they would like to inquire into first. Note the number of votes beside each question.

Step 4. Dialogue/Inquiry—Inquire into the question selected, using various processes of critical or reflective thinking (described later under 'good thinker's toolkit'). If the children lose energy for the question selected, the group can then vote to focus on the next question.

Step 5. Evaluate—Use the criteria suggested in this article, some subset thereof, or other criteria you select to reflect on the session.

Three types of progress in inquiry

One form of progress occurs when an inquiry reveals how complicated the question or topic really is. At the end of the session, things might well appear in a muddle, more mixed up than in the beginning. This muddle can be a form of progress when participants realize that the

topic was much more complex than they thought at first.

Another form of progress is when connections begin to emerge among the various ideas that present themselves in the course of the inquiry. For example, an inquiry that began with the question, "What does it mean to say, 'That wasn't fair'?" led a group of third graders to questions of whether it wasn't fair because someone was treated differently, and whether treating someone differently is ever consistent with being fair. The children thereby made a connection between "fair" and "how someone is treated."

A third type of progress is when the shape of an answer begins to emerge. In the fairness inquiry above, "how one is treated" might emerge as a criterion of fairness such that it might be proposed that "If a person is treated differently in a particular sort of way, then that wouldn't be fair."

A valuable exercise is to have students keep journals of inquiry sessions to promote an ongoing internal dialogue for each individual.

Moreover, various participants in the same inquiry may individually experience different types of progress. For some, it may just be a muddle. For others, connections may begin to emerge, while still others may begin to have an answer in mind. Each form of progress has value and merit. A valuable

exercise is to have students keep journals of inquiry sessions to promote an ongoing internal dialogue for each individual.

Certainly there will be days and times when it appears that students are not making progress in any of these ways. Yet there may be progress of a different, equally important kind. For example, in a given session, a particularly quiet student may feel moved to participate verbally for the first time.

In classrooms where inquiry has become an essential and ongoing activity, community members will change and develop their thought about a particular topic. “Before I thought..., but now I realize that” becomes an increasingly common comment in a maturing inquiry community in the course of a school year.

Scratching beneath the surface: The good thinker’s tool kit

Gently Socratic inquiry is more than a conversation or sharing of ideas within a group. It is characterized by an intellectual rigor that certain cognitive tools can facilitate. These tools comprise the “Good Thinker’s Tool Kit.”

Helping students and teachers internalize good thinkers’ tools of inquiry equips them with the ability to think for themselves in a responsible way. With sustained experience in dialogue, students become more adept at giving and asking for reasons, detecting assumptions, anticipating consequences, reflecting on

inferences they draw, asking for clarification and seeking evidence and examples as well as counterexamples. They also learn to seek out alternatives and to form criteria for the judgments they make. The phrases below represent the good thinker’s tools.

“What do you/we mean by ... ?” highlights the importance of being sensitive to possible multiplicity of meanings and ambiguity hence, a readiness to seek clarification when needed.

‘Reasons’ reflects that in inquiry one should expect that it is not enough to simply offer an opinion. Whenever possible, group members should support their opinions with reasons.

‘Assumptions’ represents the importance of making explicit, whenever appropriate, the assumptions that underlie the discussion during inquiry.

‘Inferences; If . . . then . . . ; Implications’ highlights the central role of inferences we might make, of possible implications of what someone has said, and of hypothetical statements such as, “If what Jody said is true, then ‘real’ can’t be just things we can see or touch.”

‘True?’ indicates that a major concern in our inquiry is the question of whether or not what someone has stated is in fact true, and how we might go about finding out.

‘Examples; Evidence’ points out the importance of giving examples to illustrate or clarify what someone is saying and of providing evidence to support a claim.

‘Counterexample’ represents an important check on assertions or claims that possibly cast too wide a net. For example, “always” or “never” frequently occur in conversations, such as “The boys always get to go first” or “We never get to stay up late.” The search for counterexamples is a way of checking the truth of such a claim. For example, “You get to stay up late if it’s a holiday” is a counterexample.

Reflecting on the inquiry

Finally, it is important that the inquiry community reflect on how well it has done on any given day. We suggest the following criteria, which the teacher can present to the group prior to beginning the inquiry cycle and again at the end of each session. The criteria fall into two categories, those dealing with how we did as a community and those dealing with the inquiry itself

- How did we do as a community?
- Listening – Was I listening to others? Were others listening to me?
- Participation – Did most people participate rather than just a few who dominated?
- Safety – Was it a safe environment?
- How was our inquiry?
- Focus – Did we maintain a focus?
- Depth – Did our discussions scratch beneath the surface, open up the topic, or otherwise make some progress?
- Understanding – Did I increase my understanding of the topic?

- Thinking – Did I challenge my own thinking or work hard at it?
- Interest – Was it interesting?

The role of the teacher

The teacher is absolutely pivotal to the success of gently Socratic inquiry. In the beginning it will be the teacher who introduces the ideas behind such inquiry. She will be responsible for establishing, monitoring, and maintaining the safety within the group. This will include calling on each other and seeing that members have ample opportunity to speak as well as permission to remain silent. With younger grades, for example, one problem that often appears initially is that boys only call on boys, girls call on girls, or close friends call on each other.

For most students and many teachers, “inference” and “assumption” are little more than vocabulary words. The teacher needs to spend time on developing deeper understanding of what these terms mean. Similarly, what makes a reason a good reason, how counterexamples function, and how one might go about finding out whether a given claim or statement is true may be areas where understanding is currently quite shallow.

The teacher begins to weave threads of conversation into dialogue, asking who agrees or disagrees or has other thoughts about the topic at hand, offering a counterexample, asking “If what Tanya said is true, would it follow that ... ?” or making some other comment to nudge the

dialogue along. This is especially delicate and challenging because a major objective is for the children to internalize and thus take over these skills and behaviors. They need as much opportunity as possible to try them out and providing these opportunities is the teacher's responsibility.

It is the teacher who brings a given session to a close and sees to it that the group conducts an evaluation. How long are inquiry sessions? With kindergarten children they last from 10 minutes to more than an hour. Sessions with older children tend to be more predictable in terms of length, but also more subject to the

time demands of the school day and curriculum.

Most importantly, it is the teacher, especially in the beginning, who sets the time for the group. "Not being in a rush" depends on a teacher sufficiently comfortable with silence and "wait time" beyond what is typical in most classrooms. It requires a teacher whose own sense of wonder is still very much alive and who is keenly interested in what the authentic thoughts of the children are on a given topic; one who is comfortable with uncertainty, not eager to push for closure, but willing to allow an inquiry to move where "it" and the children seem to want to take it.

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is the creation of Dr. Matthew Lipman, whose concerns led to the development of a philosophically based curriculum and methodology. P4C is now an international educational initiative in countries throughout the world which seeks to develop children's ability to think for themselves. One such in Hawai is that of Dr. Thomas Jackson, the Director of the Philosophy in the Schools Project, a joint effort between the University Department of Philosophy and the State Department of Education. Dr. Jackson has been working with pre-school, elementary, middle, and high school teachers and their students. He assists in their creating intellectually safe communities where philosophical inquiry can flourish.



Dimensions of Awareness

RAJI SWAMINATHAN



A distinctive feature of holistic education is nurturing the spirit. While progressive and humanistic education concerns itself with the intellectual, emotional, physical, social and aesthetic, holistic education centralizes awakening a sense of wonder and awe. The “big picture” for holistic educators is not the global market economy, it is an engagement in which attention is focused upon the present moment, an encounter with depth. For such encounters, holistic educators point to the importance of creating a culture that demands a slowing down of our busy selves, where we are not taken in by slogans of ‘time on task’ or ‘curriculum coverage’ that create an illusion of accomplishment. Instead, what is required is a culture of awareness and reflection. Parker Palmer puts it well – “teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness.” J. Krishnamurti, educator and philosopher, goes further when he advocates an education that “awakens intelligence.” Rather than a sole focus on academics, the challenge of awakening “intelligence” for teachers and students is best described in his own words,

I mean by that word [intelligence]—to be very sensitive, not to your own desires, to your own demands, but to be sensitive to the world, to what is going on in the world. Surely education is not merely to give you knowledge, but also to give you the capacity to look at the world... The function of education is to find out how to live differently... in a totally different, intelligent way, knowing you have to earn a livelihood, knowing all the responsibilities ... (1978).

He urged an awakening of critical consciousness through education that insisted on an attention to events in the world and simultaneously demanded we be aware of how we look, understand and live in the world. Education in

Krishnamurti's terms, is characterized by a "choiceless awareness" possible through a relationship of mutuality, evident in his question - "Is the educator getting educated as well as the student?"

In this article I discuss dimensions of awareness in the curriculum as practiced by holistic educators and share examples drawn from Brockwood Park School - a Krishnamurti school in Hampshire, England and Sunshine Day School, a school in the United States that is inspired by holistic philosophies. I present the promises and challenges of incorporating awareness into the daily life of schools.

Awareness: Awakening to an objective space of deep caring

It is important to clarify that the objective space holistic teachers and schools refer to is one of deep caring and much different from cultivating the faculty of neutral or objective observation. The "neutral observer" who is often lauded in mainstream education is devoid of feeling and compassion. Neutrality serves as a cover for the unfeeling language of official reports, where emptied of meaning, systems get precedence over people and numbers are preferable to the narration of human experience. By contrast, holistic educators draw upon the imagination and the arts to help learners see themselves as embodied forms of intelligence in action rather than as disembodied centers of disinterested reason. They seek to recognize love and imagination along with logic and rationality.

Teachers at holistic schools define awareness first as being "awake to" limiting patterns of thought and behaviour. This parallels the term 'care'—care for the environment, for the surroundings in which one lives, care for people we are neighbours of that involves a sense of responsiveness to the other.

Creating a space where one can be "awake" and "aware," students and teachers in one classroom asked a series of questions. Borrowing from Native cultures, they asked questions of themselves and each other that would in their words "reveal blocks to the heart and mind." The questions they put to themselves were those that involved music, dance, stories and silence. Sample questions included – when did I stop listening to music, when did I stop being enchanted with stories, when did I grow uncomfortable with silence, when did I stop dancing? These questions, according to Native wisdom, enable us to look our own life stories and become awake to a space of caring.

Awareness: A space of silence

Silence has been regarded as a medium for practicing awareness, releasing ideas and images (Zen) or watch thought (J. Krishnamurti). Listening promotes clarity and discernment. As Mark Twain put it, “A better idea than my own is to listen.”

Psychologists explain that in a typical group, it takes 15 seconds for a person to break the silence. Silence therefore has to be consciously sought in our otherwise crowded world of sound.

To become aware of the discomfort silence causes teaches us to go behind merely taking in what we see and hear around us to what Krishnamurti means by awareness—“to be alert to the movement of one’s own thought,” or to be aware of our reactions to what we see around us — the movement of our likes and dislikes.

In the schools I observed, silence had a space in the everyday life of the school. Beginning with the morning meeting, there was a space for silence at the beginning of class, silent lunches were tried out and students discussed the meaning of silence. Perhaps the most important lesson from silence was the awareness that silence slows down our thought processes enough to be able to listen to our ‘inner teacher’ and reflect on our conditioning and its impact on our likes and dislikes.

Awareness of the inner teacher

At one of the schools, the teachers and students used a way to become aware and awakened to one’s inner teacher by drawing from the culture of the Quaker community. The Quaker community uses clearness committees to create an awareness of one’s inner teacher — the assumption is that answers and solutions to questions lie within oneself and therefore we only need a chance to be heard and to speak. The members of the clearness committee ask questions to support the inner journey of one person in the group. The members of the committee are not allowed to fix, save, advise or set the person straight. They are only allowed to ask open straight questions—questions that are not advice in disguise, not leading questions nor questions that have a hidden agenda. The clearness committee exists to help support the weeding of thoughts that get in the way of clarity.

Krishnamurti’s words with regard to awareness are particularly relevant here. He asks that we become conscious of our reactions. If there is either

justification or condemnation, there is little awareness. Chogyam Trungpa refers to the same state of clarity as “nowness.” “The way to experience nowness is to realize that this very moment, this very point in your life is always the occasion.” For teachers, this means having the capacity to let go, be willing to take risks and have the courage to step back and let things take their own course. It means becoming conscious of ‘teachable moments.’ Teachable moments are those unplanned times when a teacher recognizes that the encounter presents an opportunity for a dramatic shift of some kind, for a change to occur. They are times when a teacher and student can learn together, when a teacher can model curiosity or facilitate mutual learning. At Brockwood Park, a student who had worked hard on an essay, expected accolades and received none, went up to a teacher in annoyance. The teacher who could have responded in a number of ways, chose to listen deeply and seized the moment to say, “read your essay aloud to me.” The student read several long complicated sentences of the essay and listening to himself read, burst out laughing – “I cannot understand what I am hearing myself read, but I know what I wanted to say.” In this exchange, the teacher let the student discover the disjunction between the idea and its expression – the student’s defensiveness slid away and the teacher had learned to step back before stepping forward to work with the student on the essay.

Awareness: Letting go and being connected

Awareness at times for teachers could be a process of learning to let go or feeling connected to the community of humanity. Several teachers I talked with shared stories of how they became aware of their own teaching pattern and then were motivated to try a different response in the classroom. One teacher for example, rather than trying to steer the distracted student back, simply directed her attention to those whose faces were alive with attentiveness. She moved back and forth from those who seemed inattentive to the next attentive face. By being attentive to the group and to herself, she discovered that the level of attention in the classroom was energetic and alive. In addition, she had broken the pattern of interrupting the class to cajole and persuade the student back into an attentive state. Another teacher pointed out that he learned to step back and let students interact directly with nature. It was not necessary, he realized, to continuously pepper experience with knowledge. He learned not to distract or burden students with content and facts that de-emphasized experiences, restricted students’ space to make meaning or ask genuine

questions. Instead he now gave students the space to experience nature as if they were explorers, or strangers or even close friends. In this, he had been inspired by Rachel Carson who says, “I sincerely believe that for the child... it is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow.”

An aesthetic awareness

Dewey affirms that aesthetic education is the opposite of anaesthetic education. Anaesthetic education is that which deadens us, while aesthetic education utilizes imagination, experience and exploration to stimulate understanding and perception. Using dance or drama can create venues of empathy and liminal spaces of experience where possibilities of transformation exist. Liminal means threshold or a space that is betwixt and between, the edge, the place just before one loses one’s balance, a space to which one stretches and a doorway opens. Liminal spaces are new spaces that allow for the recovery of the senses from the assault and overstimulation of daily living and surrounding entertainment. I found such spaces in the dialogue groups at Brockwood Park, in Role Reversal Day where teachers became students and students taught and took charge of the school. Such events served to break down hierarchies and created an awareness of habitual routines ways of being in the school. For example, after a day of being students, the teachers realized how little they ventured into all areas of the school. They looked at school in a new way, both from the point of view of moving to different spaces in the school as well as from the perspective of a student. As one teacher pointed out, “as a student, the day seemed much longer and slower than it did as a teacher.” These activities develop the capacity to continually adjust ‘vision,’ and develop the sight that Seamus Heaney refers to in his poem “Seeing Things.”

Down between the lines...

In that utter visibility,

The stone’s alive with what’s invisible.

By this we are reminded that the aesthetic experience is about perception, it is about experiencing stillness and reading between the lines. It means being aware of what is not experienced or not fully understood through mere interactions, but may be intuited through awareness. For example, one student at Brockwood pointed out that despite role reversal day, it was

impossible for teachers to experience the anxiety of a teenager's life. In such cases, empathy and imagination helps us to read between the lines and intuit understanding.

Challenges to nurturing awareness in the classroom

For teachers, our first challenge is to be open to the wisdom of children. J. Robert Oppenheimer once said – “there are children playing in the streets who can solve some of the top problems in physics because they have modes of sensory perception that I lost long ago.”

A second danger is that of becoming prescriptive, of adopting courses and to-do lists and even scripts that teach awareness. This was the danger that Krishnamurti alluded to when he pointed out that there were schools that taught people how to be aware or how to be attentive. Rejecting method in this area, he instead urged an awareness that is meditative and holistic, one in which attention, energy and awareness are brought together to heighten sensitivity. I observed teachers and students engaged in dialogue about life and current events that brought together these elements. One example can be found in the Global Issues course at Brockwood Park. All students and teachers engage in dialogue on topical social and political issues. They go beyond investigating the global and local impact of issues and look at what gives rise to a particular point of view and the ethical implications of the same. A second example is a small group that meets every morning to examine problems of living in a community at the school. In both cases, teachers and students are examining their relatedness to the world or their relationship to the whole.

When Krishnamurti suggests that we be aware, he is referring to a choiceless awareness, one that is all encompassing and does not separate sensory perception from our responses to it. By this he means being able to see multiple and complex layers simultaneously. In the classroom this could translate as becoming aware of not only our responses to a situation but also being able to perceive the conditioning and pattern behind that response.

What can schools and teachers do?

Perhaps the best advice comes from Krishnamurti who says—“when one is aware of not attending, that is attention.” If we want students to be startled by new possibilities, and if education is an initiation into multiple and new spaces of seeing, hearing, feeling and becoming aware, then it is important that we create spaces for students that allow for “the faculties of the soul” to

speak (Steiner). As teachers in such schools advise,

- Be with students at least for some time rather than engage in activity all the time.
- Ensure there is free time for students and teachers
- Ensure there is reflective time for teachers and students
- Create opportunities for creative expression and for spontaneity

Conclusion: Bringing the inner life into school

Awareness includes caring, being awake, connected, listening and engaging the imagination and empathy so that we are led towards thoughtful considerations of what it means to be aware of the outer world and of our inner lives. Holistic educators concerned with developing the spirit of students and being attentive to life and relationships, bring into the classroom an engaged pedagogy of care that is radical in its intention to provide spaces for change. In an educational world that is increasingly obsessed with testing, accountability and standards, holistic educators offer an alternative space, an inviting space that nurtures the heart and soul of an education of integrity. Creating spaces in schools and classrooms for the practice of soul education such as awareness helps us to move towards a holism in education that focuses on going beyond conditioning while building an ethical way of life.

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Adolescent Angst

DR KARTIK KALYANRAM



As a teacher, house parent and a parent, not necessarily in that order, I have often wondered at the seemingly irreconcilable differences between an energetic, impulsive, complaining, ‘immature’, angst ridden adolescent and the staid, ‘mature’, orderly adult. Both adolescents as well as adults also quite unconsciously nurture this difference. We were once the same confused adolescent and now we are quite confused adults. Where do our sympathies lie – with the adolescent, without actually realising what the adolescent is going through (a harking back to the carefree youth) or with the ‘adult world/society’ we are very much part of?

At the risk of stating the obvious, one can see that adolescents are, developmentally, morally and psychosocially, in a turmoil. This turmoil plays itself out in front of our eyes. Yet we need to recognise the fact that these young adults are actually in the throes of growing up, akin to the labour pains a mother experiences as she is delivering. The pain is worth the end result, in most cases!

Adolescent angst, an acute feeling of anxiety or apprehension that is often accompanied by depression, is a frustrating, painful, and occasionally frightening dilemma for teens and parents alike. One needs to be aware of the difference between potentially harmful behaviour patterns and normal mood swings, which are so much a part of adolescent life.

The Norms of Adolescent Angst

There is a wide difference in normal behaviour at ages 12 or 16 or 21. Broadly speaking adolescence covers three stages each with its own variations in moodiness and interaction with parents.

Early Adolescence (females: 11-13 years; males: 12-14 years) Many children experience transient wide mood swings, moving from euphoria to sadness in minutes. In most cases there are no predisposing factors. These changes could last for hours or days and are characteristic to this stage of development.

This is the age where the peer takes on an overwhelmingly important role. Friends are in, and parents and teachers – forget it!

Quite often argumentative with a disregard for rules, they challenge parental authority and tend to test the different values systems of society and school. The importance of the school as a place where value systems originate cannot be underestimated. Same-sex best friends are crucial, and some early teens may engage in transient harmless homosexual experimentation. Sexual feelings develop in general, creating desires to watch sexually explicit movies or television shows, read sexually explicit magazines, tell sex-related jokes, and use foul language.

Teens are preoccupied with their selves and are intensely concerned with “being normal”. They are also chalking out their own spaces and quite jealously guard their own privacy. Young teens spend hours in front of mirrors scrutinizing their appearance and grooming. The changes of puberty cause them to become extremely body conscious, creating worries about acne, menstruation, nocturnal emissions, and body size. They become hypercritical of themselves as they compare themselves to friends and the unrealistic images portrayed in the media. Young teens can easily become confused and frightened by the changes they are experiencing. Emotional reactions may overwhelm their ability to understand and cope. They look for role models and it is not uncommon to find them in a fantasy world - daydreaming about unrealistic goals, being a hero, a pilot or a fireman, doing all sorts of ‘saving the

world stuff’. Celebrities are often the focus of their fantasies, whether sexual or as a role model. In fact it is a common sight to see adolescents walking around wearing T-Shirts with Che Guevara written on them. Most have no idea of what this iconic cult figure of the 60s/70s stood for. Football stars, Hollywood and Bollywood beauties and hulks could actually cover bedroom walls much to the disgust of the adult community. This interest, as well as their preoccupation with peers, may result in a temporary drop in academic performance in classes 5-8.

Middle Adolescence (females: 13-16 years; males: 14-20 years) : At this stage rules get rewritten as never before. Adolescents start asserting their authority, their feelings of self and identity. Naturally this brings them into conflict with the ‘regulated’ adult world. Conflict with parents peaks, authority is consistently challenged and they are forever arguing and attempting to negotiate/re negotiate rules. Peers are the most important and all strive to conform, though in their minds they are rebelling against authority and conformity! Designer gear, outlandish hairstyles and a weird dress sense leaves many an adult gasping. The peer group dictates communication style and conduct, and nothing can be done without the peers accepting or okaying it. In fact many children find it difficult to stand up against the enormity of peer pressure, and though they would like to be different they often buckle under it.

This is also the age when sexual drives peak, leading many into dating and sexual experimentation, with intercourse starting earlier than ever before. In India, statistics are hard to come by, but a WHO document puts the age of first sexual contact (about 16 – 20% of this age band) at 15-16 years and sexual intercourse at between 16 – 18 years (about 20 – 30%). The latter figure includes those adolescents who have been married off, as is the case in rural India. Recent surveys of city schools tend to confirm this picture of early experimentation with sex. Risk-taking behaviors like experimentation with sex, drugs, and dangerous activities occur more often at this stage of adolescence than at the other two stages. These behaviors result from feelings of omnipotence and infallibility and a belief that “no one understands them.”

On the positive side middle adolescents demonstrate increased creativity, the start of lateral thinking, of the ability to process information in multiple dimensions. They start to look at issues not just in black and white but also in shades of grey. They could also show signs of settling into adult patterns of behaviour and thought, making career options. In short, the first steps towards being a “responsible” adult.

Late Adolescence (both sexes: 17-25 years) are on the verge of adulthood. Their level of peer relationships changes, and they rekindle their relationships with parents in a more adult-like manner. Many establish

their sexual identity and commit to an intimate relationship.

Reasoning skills are at an adult level, allowing them to understand the consequences of their actions, make sophisticated judgments, and comprehend inner motivations. Late adolescents are future oriented. They enter careers, start families, and pursue education or other higher goals. They thus tend to complete their developmental tasks in a supportive, structured environment.

When Angst Becomes a Serious Concern

Since there is a fine line between angst and problems like violence, depression, and substance abuse, we have to be watchful in our observation. We could suspect problems when any of the following or a combination reach worrying proportions.

- Lack of peer group or best friend (confidant)
- Moodiness that persists more than a couple of days
- Extreme mood swings
- Constant complaints of boredom or being treated unfairly
- Spending prolonged periods of time in their rooms or withdrawing from social contacts
- Lack of concern over appearance
- Decreased energy levels or fatigue
- Persistent defiance; lying; stealing, and other delinquent behaviours

- Gang membership
- Diminished ability to think clearly and make decisions
- Feeling worthlessness or hopelessness
- Self-destructive behaviours
- Unreciprocated romantic obsession
- Signs of substance abuse (paraphernalia, secretive peers, school failure or absence, aggression, apathy)
- Preoccupation with violence or death themes (thoughts, music, art, movies, television shows, video/computer games)
- Cruelty to animals
- Reliance on violence to solve problems
- Fascination with weaponry or explosives

Helping Parents Manage Adolescent Angst

In the domain of parenting research, it has long been understood that parents who are (1) clear about rules around acceptable behaviour but (2) accepting and responsive to the child are likely to raise children who are more psychologically healthy and socially competent. This parenting style characterized by clear structure and high responsiveness is known as the “authoritative” parenting style. This contrasts with parents who are “permissive” in parenting style (low expectations; high responsiveness), parents who are “authoritarian” in parenting style

(high expectations; low responsiveness), or parents altogether unengaged (low expectations; low responsiveness).

Although both authoritative and authoritarian parents may be clear about their values and beliefs about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, the authoritarian parent is more likely to engage in efforts to control the behaviour of the child through psychological techniques (eg, guilt, shame, coercion). Authoritative parents, on the other hand, are clear about their values and beliefs, but do not attempt to engage in psychological control.

Here are some tips for parents to respond constructively to their teen’s angst.

- Stay calm.
- Praise more than criticize.
- Overlook little mistakes.
- Use “I” statements —“I feel angry when you...”
- Listen carefully to opinions and foster decision-making skills by providing opportunities and choices, but set limits. Oppositional behaviours may relate to egocentrism and independence seeking, but they are not socially acceptable. Despite protest, most adolescents recognize discipline as a sign of caring.
- Respect privacy needs.
- Take your teens’ concerns seriously, no matter how trivial they sound.

- Encourage interaction with friends and get to know their teens' friends and parents.
- Tolerate peer-imitating behaviours within reason. Behaviours should be safe and permissible under family/house rules.
- Nurture independence and self-esteem by encouraging responsibilities, such as chores and volunteering.
- Spend time with them. Engage in mutually enjoyable activities. Have frequent heart-to-heart talks, letting them know that you're always there when needed.
- Do be watchful of them – children internalise the adults' watchfulness. Here are four simple questions to ask your teen when she is leaving the house.
 - 1 Where are you going to be?
 - 2 Who are you going to be with?
 - 3 Will there be an adult present?
 - 4 When will you return? Please inform me of any changes.

Understanding Adolescent Minds

Over the past few years there has been a tremendous amount of research into the adolescent brain. Much of this research has overthrown long held paradigms of why adolescents are so much more prone to “risk taking behavior” as compared to adults. In the following paragraphs I will try to outline some of the research work that has taken place.

Psychological Perspective

Sense of Invulnerability: People in general and adolescents in particular, quite often make incorrect judgments regarding risk. This cognitive bias has been found in early adolescents too and in part may explain why statutory warnings do not carry the weight that they should. Adolescents today are probably far better informed than we were at a similar age. However, adolescents tend to think, for example, unprotected sex is dangerous in general but not for me.

Temporal Influences: Adolescents may actually have a limited capacity to understand what they are doing, particularly the connection between present actions and long-term complications, or they simply may not place any value on these long range outcomes.

While considering sexual intercourse, long-term consequences of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and HIV probably do not even enter the consciousness as at that time they are probably more strongly influenced by the anticipated positive outcomes of pleasure, sexual gratification and self worth. Long-term risks are at best nebulous and the only reality is the present.

Relationships in Adolescence: The normative influence of peers cannot be underestimated. When an adolescent has a strong attachment to a group, she tends to blindly follow the norm that is emanating

from that group. However, parents also have a strong influence on adolescent behaviour. Children of authoritative parents are likely to have lower rates of risk taking behaviour than children of authoritarian parents or neglectful parents.

The Biological Perspective

Almost overnight a sweet, cheerful, obedient child mutates into a churlish monster, prone to recklessness and unpredictable mood swings. This statement reflects a sense of hopelessness and despair in understanding adolescent growth. Thus far “raging hormones” have been blamed for this change. Technological advances in brain research have yielded evidence that gives new perspectives on adolescence.

In the course of early adolescence, the grey matter thickens, peaking at 11 years for girls and 12.5 years for boys. Many new neuronal pathways open up, in a sense reflecting the influence of multiple environmental cues and also the choices that adolescents face. However, more pathways need not necessarily be more efficient, in fact they actually slow brain functioning. As the adolescent grows, these pathways prune down and the grey matter approaches adult size by about age 20 years. As the grey matter is lost, there is a simultaneous strengthening of connections (synapses) within the brain. In this important stage of brain development, what teens do or don't do affects them for the rest of their lives. If a teen is doing music, sports or academics, these are the

cells and connections that last. If on the other hand they are couch potatoes, playing video games or watching MTV, then these are the cells and connections that will survive.

Research at multiple levels (brain areas, neural connections and chemicals) has also indicated the following important characteristics of the adolescent brain.

- Adolescents have a poorly developed sensitivity to rewards. This prompts them to seek higher levels of novelty and stimulation to achieve the same results.
- They are more impulsive, choosing smaller immediate rewards over larger delayed rewards.
- They find it difficult to self regulate – i.e. interrupt a risky behavior pattern, think before acting or choosing a different course of action.
- The ability to recognize other people's emotions simply nosedives in early and middle adolescence, returning to normal only between ages 18 – 21.
- Teens are much more sensitive to emotion altering recreational drugs.
- Stress in any form during adolescence – particularly domestic, familial or social – could lead to greater susceptibility to substance abuse.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to weave in many threads which may further our understanding of this fascinating stage

of growth. Where does all this leave us? Confused? quite possibly so. Somewhat better informed? hopefully so. Nothing new? hopefully not. In spite of, or perhaps because of the amount of information available, one is still left in a quandary on how to deal with adolescents. One could refer to the ‘tips’ enumerated in the article as guidelines. Probably more important than tips is the recognition of the fact that brain changes can be subtly but definitely altered by the environment to which the adolescents are exposed.

Here I would make a strong case for opening up the atmosphere in our schools. I am concerned about the fact that our schools are too academic, caught in inventing and reinventing the wheel. For most adolescents this overemphasis may seem like verbiage and hot air rather than anything of substance. We should of course look at rigour and excellence in our teaching. Among other things, I would

also look at improving our dramatics, fine arts, music and dance programmes (this will counter the MTV onslaught!). I am sure that we all would like our children to be “wired correctly” and not go out with empty heads. Adolescents need a strong, supportive yet flexible framework within which to grow up. Let us move forward towards helping children grow healthily, allowing them to explore their limits through education.

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Health Education

SUCHITRA RAMAKUMAR



What does health mean to young people? They are active and energetic and rarely lack in physical vitality. So what can health education mean to them and how could it be thought of? Why do we need health education? It is important to

- Provide a sense of what good health is.
- Emphasize health and de-link it from disease.
- Introduce more than one way of looking at the above. This is vital to any learning; to keep an open mind, to understand from more than one perspective.
- Give a child the tools to work with his/her health and well being. Self-help in health was a reality of our culture richly interwoven into daily routines, celebrations etc. Today, self-help is almost non-existent.
- Help children cope with today's media environment and make intelligent choices in life style, for example the type of food they eat.

Health education can play a role in the following areas, which we will look at in turn:

- Knowledge of the body
- Awareness of body mind
- Understanding sex and safety
- Practices for healthy living
- Self Help
- Understanding Change

Knowledge of the Body

It seems important to understand the basic anatomy of the body – what it is made of, and the location and function of the various organs. Otherwise the body becomes a mysterious entity between head and foot! It also has an impact on our attitude to doctors, labs and investigations. Often there is a sense of helplessness born of ignorance!

In understanding the basic structure and working of the body two important perspectives emerge.

It is possible to understand the body in different ways according to different

paradigms. For example, in Ayurveda, the basic building blocks are the five elements- water, air, fire, ether, earth and the interrelationships between them. In Chinese medicine, the body is understood as energy flows and balances. It lends richness to a young mind to understand the body in these different paradigms. Understanding that “How you look is what you see” is a major step in understanding the very nature of thought itself, besides building an openness to different ways of looking at things. It would involve teaching about the human body in terms of western science (three levels can be worked on, for junior, middle and senior students), and also teaching basic structure and function in Ayurveda and Chinese medicine.

When the body is taught in terms of western science, it is necessary to keep the perspective of correlating structure with function. Understanding the human body as a marvel in “design” lends itself to a multidisciplinary approach as well. For instance levers can be taught using the muscles of the forearm lifting shopping bags!

Awareness of Body-Mind

Invariably, the textbooks of science compare the human body to a machine and there is a complete separation of the mind, feelings and the body. The body is seen as an instrument of action. Except for people who work with the body like dancers, games teachers, etc, this separation continues through life. It seems

an important role of a health course to emphasize the “oneness” of the being, that there is an integrity, connectivity and coherence at all levels that can be explored and experienced. Two perspectives that need introduction are –

- The concept of “well being” – even people terminally or seriously ill can feel well!
- Understanding that attitudes and feelings have a powerful influence on the body.

There is a wealth of literature available today in these areas. However one has to be careful to separate the obscure and even flawed from the genuine! For a teaching plan, these thoughts would translate into exploratory and coordination exercises —introspective, observational and physical —requiring alertness of mind.

Understanding Sex and Safety

In many homes sex and personal safety (preventing child sexual abuse) are rarely spoken about. Sometimes parents express a certain helplessness in knowing how to speak about this. This places a responsibility on school to deal with these issues. Young people need to have a space for discussion and also to hear sane adult voices. Information in these areas is vital for many important life decisions.

In terms of learning outcomes the following emerge:

- Awareness of personal safety and prevention of child sexual abuse- facts,

strategies, assertiveness training.

- Facts and information regarding of the sexual organs, sexual act, menstrual cycle, changes at puberty, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases. Also primarily, placing sex in the context of a loving and respectful mutual relationship.
- Discussion of associated issues like attraction, boundaries, marriage, homosexuality, self-image, beauty, media and gender stereotypes. It is good to start with concerns and questions that students have.

In The School – KFI, Chennai, we have drawn extensively from two resources. We called upon an expert from a child sexual abuse prevention center who conducted workshops for teachers and students. We also accessed a site on the net called ‘Advocates for Youth’.

Practices for Healthy Living

Health classes have a really major role here because health is not a single ‘event’. It is a result of regular healthy habits and practices. Habits of unhealthy eating, incorrect posture and breathing once formed are difficult to break. Simple techniques that enhance health and wellbeing can be practiced on a regular basis. There are five areas that can be addressed. These are described below.

Food

Areas that need addressing include:

- Understanding what is ‘wholesome’

food, about additives, preservatives, organic, chemical foods.

- Role of advertising and how it influences choices in buying (companies are increasingly using young people to sell their products and many products are targeted to capture young buyers)
- Planning menus
- Cooking practices

Invariably, composition of food is understood in terms of carbohydrates, proteins and fats etc. It is also useful to speak of a wholesome diet in terms of an Ayurvedic understanding. This leads us to the next point.

Dinacharya and Ritucharya

The Ayurvedic concepts of Dinacharya (daily routines) and Ritucharya (seasonal routines) add tremendous richness to an understanding of health. They are prevention and maintenance practices which relate humans to the weather and the seasons (for example, the oil bath concept). The food and other routines change with the seasons. Nature and humans are made of the same five elements whose configurations change with heat and cold and therefore with the seasons. Concepts of food and healthy eating are clearly spelled out—what to eat, when to eat and how much.

There are some differences in the way nutrition is viewed by practitioners of the Western model of medicine and in Ayurveda. These differences can lead to

interesting discussions, as they provide a good learning ground. Nowadays we are equally at home functioning in more than one 'paradigm' simultaneously. We drink a cup of jeera milagu rasam when we feel queasy, take a paracetamol tablet when we have a headache and probably have biochemics in our travel kit!

Breath

It's amazing how many young children breathe wrongly. The stomach moves in during inhaling when it should be moving out! This restricts the air entry. It is vital for children to learn to breathe right and set apart some time when they lengthen and deepen their breathing. Teaching basic Pranayama addresses this.

Posture and Exercise

Two areas need to be addressed.

- Understanding posture – both the physiology of it and the relationship to feelings and attitudes. This is vitally important because 80% of the body's energy is used by muscles, the postural muscles particularly.
- Learning to evaluate different kinds of exercises – aerobics, games, yoga etc. Criteria for suppleness, stamina, cardio-respiratory endurance and well-being can be evolved with students.

In understanding posture the Alexander technique is very useful. Practical and theoretical lessons can be worked out based on the technique.

Sustainable Techniques for Good Health

Other than the breathing, two techniques can be taught. They are safe, simple to learn, do not take time to practice and the gains from them are many. One is an Acupressure routine for good health and the other is the Surya Namaskara. They tone and energize the whole system and can be practised life long. It is a good practical learning for children.

Self Help

The basic philosophy is "I can help myself and others around me".

70% of ailments are self-limiting and simple remedies bring relief and comfort. First aid in emergencies can go a long way in improving healing outcomes. Learning to make simple herbal home remedies for hair lice, coughs and colds and other uncomplicated ailments, how to take care of a sick person at home, about basic sanitation and hygiene, and a first-aid course could be a part of this practical learning.

Understanding Change

Adults and students can gain an understanding of their development related to their phase of life. What are the major concerns of the age? What are the physical changes? What are the emotional changes? The perspectives are drawn from psychology and related disciplines (Erickson, Chilton Pearce and Hurlock) Students from classes IX and above would find it relevant. The greater relevance

however is to parents and educators who find these ideas valuable.

The Child to Child Health Course

This is both a teaching method and a programme. In this format, one class in a school is chosen and this class is trained to monitor and maintain the health of the rest of the school. This class takes height and weight measurements, looks after water purification and sanitation, maintains the school medical kit, imparts first aid when necessary and plans school menus. They can facilitate the learning of other children as well.

These are some ways in which health can be looked at in the context of a school curriculum. The course content can be modified based on the age group: elements of community health, reading literature on health, understanding research in medicine, visits to medical centres, a richer understanding of the different paradigms and issues of contemporary relevance can be added if a course is being considered for XI and XII students or for adults. One hopes that schools will see the significance of this area of education, and be willing to find the necessary time and resources to include health education in their curriculum.

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An Idea Whose Time Has Come

STEPHEN SMITH AND ALOK MATHUR



We are apt to feel, in the cut and press of daily life and in the fulfilment of our responsibilities to the school and to its students, that our lives are caught up in minutiae: ongoing lesson preparation, correction of papers, assessment, examinations, meetings and administrative decisions. But it behoves us at this juncture in the history of the schools—and twenty years after the death of their founder—to critically examine what we are doing and to ask that most fundamental of questions: Is the educator being educated?

When, back in the 1980s, the editor of the Newsletter of the Krishnamurti Schools—the modest precursor to the current Journal—asked Krishnamurti for a title, he suggested, “Schools—leisure.” Not only does this correspond to the etymology of the word (Greek school = leisure, spare time, ease), it also connotes a definition of learning not as something one does with an end in view, but as something that occurs within the space of leisure, the activity of free minds. The school might be a place, as he himself suggested, for multiple kinds of engagements: some writing, others studying from books, learning through listening and observation, or by working with one’s hands, and yet others discussing; for when this happens a different atmosphere is generated. From the outset, then, Krishnamurti’s definition—and probably deliberately he left it loose—was that of a community, adult and student, living and learning together not just academically, but as mirrors to one another, examining the psyche. Clearly such a definition, however loose, sheds fresh light on the role of the educator—defining it, in fact, anew. And, perhaps because this redefinition is so radical, we may have failed to grasp its implications.

Perhaps, for instance, we subscribe too easily to the notion that the psyche will take care of itself, that the undisclosed and unresolved sources of conflict will somehow dissipate if we “get on with the job.” But, what is the job

exactly? Is it to perpetuate the norms of society and, by our own complicity, strengthen them? Or is it to take a stand apart from the established grooves of society, expending our energies to find more innovative and unconventional methods of teaching and learning? Is our task not, rather, through self-inquiry to examine and challenge the basis of those norms and thus to begin freeing ourselves inwardly? Is it not in delving beneath the surface that we touch the source of fresh thinking.

Do we realise in our heart-of-hearts what is at stake? Or, perhaps we feel we already have too much to do, which unfortunately is the case with so many teachers and administrators. Then the moment of silence or self-inquiry is passed over, and the inexorable treadmill, with its weight of centuries, pushes us round on its predetermined course. We do not seem to notice, when this happens, what goes a-begging—the tragedy of it.

What, then, can we do? The voice of the treadmill says, “No time, no time.” We have to find a different solution—not try to become better at what we are already doing (which is more of the same) but find a different point of entry. What does it, in fact, mean for the school to become a place of leisure, a living, learning community.

The first principal of one of our schools once said, “You teach with what you know, you educate with what you are.” This puts in place and highlights the redefinition of the school. We take it for granted that knowledge increases with experience and that, the older we get, the more we accumulate. All well and good so far as teaching is concerned, but what about our role as educators? Is there an equivalent inward deepening, a mature comprehension of the subtle heart of things? Or do we remain stubbornly stuck in the various expressions of thought-feeling as the only, because tangible, field of endeavour? Do we even ask ourselves such questions, or are we already committed, because of our non-questioning, to what one modern author calls a “thought-tormented world”? Now is the time to open up that box.

Then again, perhaps we are reluctant to countenance the revolution that the teachings imply. We would rather draw a hazy continuum through Rousseau, Froebel, Montessori, A. S. Neill, even Indian independence and its educational offshoots in Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindo, than face the radical departure the teachings announce from all tradition and previous notions of freedom. This is not to denigrate the work of other educational pioneers—far from it—simply to state in plain & simple terms the specificity

and originality of Krishnamurti's work both as a pedagogue and as a religious teacher. For, surely, the combination is unique. No other religious teacher of world stature has interested himself so consistently and minutely with the painstaking task of educating the young; at the same time, no educator of note has been—or even claimed to be—an original religious teacher. Is it then, more than anything, this nexus that scares us? Nevertheless, the nexus is there, and the demands of the religious teacher as well as the pedagogue need to be met—or, at least, faced.

It is the religious dimension which is key. When another of our principals asked Krishnamurti what was the purpose of these schools, he replied: To generate a global outlook, to care for the environment and human beings in relationship, and to cultivate the religious mind. If, to an extent, we have succeeded in the first two, it is to the third of these purposes that we must turn. For, the education of the educator is essentially a religious matter. In these schools, as perhaps in no others, this is the defining quality; an atmosphere of affection, relaxedness and rigour conveys the incipient essence of the religious spirit. But, with this as a base, much more can be done.

Which brings us back to the educator. How does the educator see him/herself? Is he still, to all intents and purposes, the teacher of old, the “one who knows”?—which was certainly the case a hundred years ago. But, living as we do in the “global village,” surely our situation has changed: the teacher is no longer “out in front,” dispensing information to ignorant charges; he is “in among” them in the ambit of their learning, in many ways—given the access students have to the riches of cyberspace—no more knowledgeable than they are. We have been slow to learn from this dramatic turnabout; nonetheless, the call is upon us. It involves a radical reassessment of who the educator is and what he/ she is about. It is a shift from the what to the how of learning.

Many things are implied in it. One is the diminution of authority. Since knowledge is now universal and ubiquitous, the investment of authority in the “one who knows”—the priest, the mullah, the guru, the teacher—collapses, at the level of knowledge. In other words, the teacher must reinvent himself, become a democrat rather than an autocrat, a co-investigator and co-instructor of new knowledge acknowledging that in the realm of the psyche he/ she is a learner with other learners, the students. This does not mean he pleads ignorance, which is another way of shirking responsibility, but that he seeks &

finds ways of deepening awareness—initially, perhaps, within the immediate subject area—with a view to nourishing that inwardness which is the seed of flowering and the ground of freedom. Indeed, his love for, and immersion in, the subject already gives a taste of that inchoate state.

Seemingly small, the shift is monumental because the adult is no longer the “one who knows”; he has become the “one who learns,” along with others: it is the shift from instruction to participation. This is the second implication. Instruction may pass from A to B, but participation/ investigation is a work in common: it is the work of common consciousness. It is the most democratic of endeavours, in the sense that we begin with a deep feeling of equality. This lies at the heart of Krishnamurti’s teachings. We do not inquire for ourselves alone, but in our inquiry/ investigation widen the borders and plumb the depths not just of knowledge and thought-feeling, but of its generative matrix. It becomes the inquiry of consciousness in and for itself and thus is no longer strictly personal. This is the beginning of inwardness.

It is a change of attitude that is most called for, a challenging of well-established grooves. That it can be done, there is no doubt; whether it will be done is a different matter. Centres for teacher learning need to exist to galvanise change, to support the teacher in the classroom situation and to provide, by means of subject studies, a process of creative learning and reflection facilitating access to largely unexplored terrain. It is a raising of the level of the whole endeavour. It must seek to bring about a quickening of understanding of the role of the educator for him/ herself, the relationship between the educator and the student, and the interface between the teacher and the subject.

More than these, this idea of an “education for teachers” would seek to establish the school as a place of adult learning. The learning of educators for themselves and with each other would take an equal place with the learning of/with students. Obviously, in the general run of things, there cannot be an equal allocation of time, but in the context of a residential teacher education program within a school this is eminently feasible and highly desirable. It sets the tone for the future engagement of young teachers and militates against the “treadmill syndrome.” Even in the more workaday context, however, time can and must be set aside for this: for educators to explore on their own and with each other. It need not be a vast amount of time—in any event, an unrealistic proposition—but it must be in the forefront of the educator’s

mind if this indispensable transition is to be effected. For it is here, of course, that priorities are set, and if the educator is not himself on fire, no amount of flame-fanning will do the trick.

Whether we start with the external witnessing of all the violence and mayhem in the world or from the sense of our own inner turbulence and turmoil, it is the very witnessing, the seeing, that counts. At a time when schools throughout the world—like the world itself—are in crisis, we must for our own benefit, and the benefit of the world, move into the next phase of our endeavour. The crisis—both threat and challenge—is there. Nor are we merely talking to ourselves, generating a closed loop of elitist thinking. In India, in particular, many avenues of contact with the wider educational field are opening up, which means that the scope and impact of the teachings could be immensely greater than it is today. Naturally, however, we must begin with ourselves for it is we who enjoy the immense good fortune of living and working in a privileged environment.

This whole “shift of gears” involves a new ethos—new for most of the schools, at least—away from the “leadership of the one or the few” towards the full participation of all. This increases, not diminishes, responsibility. At the same time it is a dramatic turnaround, and the implications of it are huge.

At another level, even as we squarely face the “empty space” of modern consciousness—an inherited Waste Land which, if anything, it is emptier than a hundred years ago – we, as educators, must delve deeper and draw forth the full potential of our stock. We do have a remedy; we have good medicine in plenty; we can build on the strengths that we already have. We may even, perhaps, look forward to the day when the inner work will be so well established that the outer will begin to take care of itself—“without effort,” as Krishnaji said—and what now seems sometimes impossible will be the natural order of our daily life.

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Crossing the Great Divide

S. RAMACHANDER



Career Choice, a critical juncture

The choice of a career is and will always be one of two most critical decisions in the first few years of one's adulthood — rivalled only by the choice of a mate. Over the years I have seen many hundreds of students and young professionals through this interesting stage in life (right up to and beyond their first job). Indeed once we tried, with indifferent results, to launch a service that used more objective tests to determine, and counsel people on, what they might pursue as a career. The timing is significant because it occurs at a stage in life when typically the emotions are likely to be turbulent, the hormones are hyperactive and the personality (if there is such a thing!) has certainly not been fully moulded into shape. The 18-20 year old is therefore highly suggestible, prone to look for heroes and role models and a wide range of influences, and is still in a stage of discovering and learning about the world at large. Quite paradoxically, it is also the phase in life when the instinct to rebel and reject all adult advice out of hand is strongest. One way the adult world can certainly help is by providing objective information about alternative opportunities and perspectives, which is valuable and can be relatively value-free, i.e. not coloured too much by personal prejudice.

Finding one's own vocation

The most sensible and wholesome career advice to anyone in the 16-21 age group ought to be that the individual should look within herself, understand her aptitudes and interests, if not a passion, and so find one's own true calling or a vocation. Yet, a somewhat strange situation has been developing in recent years. The recent growth and the dynamism in the economy have thrown up a number of opportunities — even beyond the information and communication technologies (ICT). Young people can now

discover something after their own heart, which is off the narrow beaten track followed by their parents. Music, entertainment, small business and all forms of journalistic and performing arts—related professions have opened up. Still, the herd mentality is of course evident in all of the favourite ‘in-careers’. Left to themselves everyone would like to be an Indian Idol or a radio DJ, it seems! Nonetheless there is greater variety and scope for discovering oneself than ever before. On the other hand, increasingly, it is the older people who do not seem to believe in this kind of searching for a better fit between one’s own inclinations and opportunity. Could it be because they are not exactly splendid examples of such a principle in their own career choices? For, such is the power and magnetism of the “market-driven” mentality.

Must excellence be comparative?

For the young, naturally the most sought after source of advice is from peers and seniors of their own generation. Sometimes a favourite teacher can prove to be a great eye-opener, even an inspiration, if he or she has a way with the young and the required knowledge and empathy. Besides, the Internet is a real added source of plentiful information these days both as regards further education and for jobs and careers anywhere in the world. Along with this, what the young and their parents must recognise is a new element of heightened risk that we are not used to. Greater the variety, the greater is the uncertainty. For every success story of some outstanding achiever (be it Sania Mirza or Dhoni) there are little known talents at the above average but not exceptional level! Here lies the essential tragic nature of introducing the element of competitive success in every walk of life, which we are all guilty of. We have created a society, a system that only worships comparative excellence above everything else, whether it is in playing the violin or running a successful business. Strangely enough, while we might blame the Western concept of market economics and industrial society for this, the degree of such destructive competition in the choice of one’s adult occupation is on the decline amongst the youth of the Western nations.

Post-industrial India and the West

There is a big difference between the post-industrial societies of the West and Indian society when it comes to independent decision-making by the younger generation, as well as the prevalent attitude to risk. There are two sets of reasons behind this: cultural and historical. We shall go into both in sequence. In Indian society the choice of one’s career seems to be an

event of marked finality that seems to stamp one for life. There is no escape once you are typecast as a lawyer or doctor or teacher. That reason alone is sufficient for us to pause and think about how we handle this phase of a young person's life. For some however, the decision has already been taken out of their hands by the time they reach the final year of school. Parental ambition takes care of that, which in turn is guided by the prevailing urban consumerist culture's concept of what constitutes economic security or visible success or both. While what constitutes success might be a debatable issue, the craving for long term security is a very real one in our society.

Ambient Insecurity

I choose to describe it as almost a part of the atmosphere we live in, and prefer to call it "ambient insecurity" in the culture. Lack of resources does not explain it fully. One must go deeper to understand the paranoia and insecurity that haunts the Indian white collar urban classes and why aspirants seek very similar jobs as their neighbours, in the same few coveted organisations and professions, ignoring all other possible ways of living. This sense of acute insecurity, of skating on thin ice, is rarely articulated but nevertheless, in my view, not far below the surface. It is palpable when one talks to hundreds of students and young job seekers throughout one's career.

In tracing the origins and nature of this ambient insecurity, we might get some insights into many related issues such as: why is the entrepreneurship drive, and even innovation, limited to so few in a country that has so much obvious opportunity for it? As the President Mr. APJ Abdul Kalam pointed out recently, we must nurture entrepreneurs as the major driving force in the economic turnaround that we are clearly embarked upon in India. Yet, the knee-jerk response of many intellectuals is the usual: "India is a poor country after all" explanation. That doesn't account for the facts fully. Sheer absence of money never stopped the truly adventurous and imaginative persons, as innumerable examples all over the world would show. Infosys, today's most successful and highly regarded Indian corporation, was promoted by a few young Indian professionals less than twenty year ago, with only a few thousand rupees from their savings as capital – and is now worth billions and employs nearly 50,000 well educated young men and women all over the world.

Regional Differences in India

To go a step further, the instinct to make and save money seems to be limited even to this day to certain communities and regions only. For example,

back in the 'sixties, we as students used to find it a very remarkable feature of life in Ahmedabad that the local population was not at all enamoured of an MBA degree whereas the best and the brightest in the rest of the country would give anything to be admitted into the institute of management in the city. The typical Gujarat family, even where the father was a government servant, would naturally adopt a very business-like approach to everything in life. He would have a private trade of some sort going on in parallel. Young men (and now even women) would take to trading in shares and doing part time business like ducks to water. Just look at the evidence: there is a great range of new entrepreneurial businesses and new concepts such as Nirma in low-cost detergents and Lijjat pappads (produced by a women's co-operative as a cottage industry) and the women's Sewa organisation that ran all sorts of profitable services for the community, long before the term self-help groups became known elsewhere in the country.

As in America, it was common for many people in Gujarat to put themselves through college from their own earnings. Long before the business schools popularised the notion of summer jobs, school boys would double up as assistants in their father's shops or businesses during the holidays. Their spirit of independence was matched only by the innate sense of the value of money, and knowing a good bargain when they saw one. Families would buy paper (for school notebooks) and cloth (for uniforms) from the mill showrooms at wholesale rate for a whole year getting the lowest possible price for it, at the right season. And indeed they would insist on buying any grocery items that can be stored for months only in bulk and at far below retail prices! In other parts of the country such habits of thought were found only occasionally and mainly among other traditional trader communities such as the Chettians of the south. In one case of a famous industrialist family, fifteen year old boys (future managing directors all!), went through a spell understudying the cashier or accountant in their spare time. They were made to write dummy cheques for originals already made, just to get into the habit of it.

To return to ambient insecurity, then, it is a relative term of course—but what is amazing about the Indian urban society is the extent to which it cuts across the classes. At least in my generation there have always been poor relations either in the cities or left behind in the villagers. So when you know of a cousin, however distant, who is a clerk in a small firm and lives in a one-room tenement, there is (at least in my view) a pervading, if subtle, sense of

“there but for the grace of God, go I”. We, the educated urban middle classes (and the bulk of the readership of journals like these), are all only a step away from the uncertainties of an agrarian economy and rural way of life.

Urban society is recent

One must remember that it was only during the years between the wars that the bulk of the urban migration in India took place. At the beginning of the last century, more than 90% of Indians lived in small villages and hamlets. Take any family that you know of and you will find that some branches of it came into the big cities only in the 1940's or later. The earliest attraction to the urban movement was the prospect of a college education followed in most cases by a government or public sector job (the civil services, banks and the PSUs), which meant an assured, steady income every month unlike in farming or trading, a recognised status in society, total job security and to cap it all finally a pension for life. In the era before industrialisation and rampant inflation, this must indeed have seemed a godsend. You can well imagine why the upper echelons of the administration and the coveted Indian Civil Service was the ultimate dream though it came true only for the fortunate few. Look back two generations into the family histories of some prominent ICS officers themselves and you would find small farmers, clerks, teachers or priests. Small wonder then that the eager and ambitious parent with all good intentions yearned for greater things for their sons and daughters than they themselves dared imagine. And the way to ensure that was to take the children forever (as they saw it) beyond the reach of sudden reversal of fortunes or unemployment.

Today the preferred way to achieve this is to emigrate at least for some years to a more prosperous country; and the next is to choose a high stakes game such as investment banking, consulting and financial services sectors. Yet, I fancy that one can at times detect even in the most affluent a sense that this party might not last, unless one is very sharp and careful – and the plush car and flat might revert to their previous pumpkin state!

Changing trends

Slowly, the emergence of the software industry and the services explosion (both needing more brains than just capital and manpower) has begun to make a difference. Also, it is only in the past few years that there have been instances of educated men and women from professional, middle class families deciding to be on their own, striking out and away from the conventional trodden path;

some are business owners, others are professionals but not after a steady monthly pay packet. Still others have gone in for the NGO sector.

By and large, however, the nagging sense remains in some even relatively well off that they are only a few steps away from financial stringency; this will probably remain so long as they continue to see it all around. Some seem to be willing to bet on the trend of greater self confidence and self reliance which should certainly gather momentum as more such careers blossom and more children grow up with both parents in a number of different occupations, giving the divergence and diversity a social sanction and legitimacy. Already lifelong jobs in the same organisation are a thing of the past and part time jobs and dual careers are becoming more common. The young people born after the 1980's, one hopes, will be heirs to a mature society and evolved culture of personal career choice than hitherto.

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Facilitating Career Discovery

DR GIDEON ARULMANI



The meaning and purpose of work

Work is as old as the history of mankind. Work (as vocation, i.e., habitual occupation as a means of livelihood) occurs within a social context—a context characterised by patterns of beliefs and ways of thinking. Fixed mental attitudes (popularly called “mindsets”) engendered by social and moral frames of reference give a particular colouring and interpretation to the meaning and purpose of work. Psychologists use the term social cognitions to describe social patterns of thinking that have become habitual across social groups (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitions seem to have played a significant role in the evolution of work as well. Historically, ideologies that prevailed during particular periods created what we have referred to as social-cognitive environments (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani 2004). Examples of such periods are the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the Ashrama and the caste systems in ancient India. Within these environments, values are attributed to work and occupations. Social-cognitive environments thus foster the evolution of a work ethic – a conglomeration of mindsets about work—which could then guide and influence people’s work behaviour. For example, a certain work ethic may place a positive moral value on hard work based on the belief that work has innate value and must be pursued for its own sake. A different social-cognitive environment may promote a work ethic wherein some forms of work maybe attributed with a higher level of prestige than others and entire clusters of occupations may be infused with high value, or discredited as not valuable.

The birth of the notion of a ‘career’

It is with the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th Century that the issue of matching people for jobs first surfaced. The industry needed workers

with specific traits and abilities, while the potential worker needed guidance toward jobs for which he or she was best suited. It is in response to these needs, at this point in the evolution of work, that Vocational Guidance surfaced as a discipline. Frank Parsons, who is today acknowledged as the father of Vocational Psychology, developed for the first time a method to suit the new industrial work order (Parsons 1909). His approach assumed that persons could be matched for jobs on the basis of their traits, abilities and talents. People now began to approach work and livelihood as a field of activity within which they could follow a path of growth and reach for higher levels of personal development. Thus was born the notion of career.

The forces of industrialisation and mechanisation have had a somewhat similar impact on work behaviour in the Indian context as they have had in the West. The rapid changes in the world of work in the sub-continent especially since independence has led to increases in opportunities and the breaking down of the older social mechanisms for occupational role allocation. Today, the challenges of career decision-making for the young school leaver and college student are as much of a reality in India as it is in the Western world.

A career rarely however bursts abruptly upon the individual. A person's orientation to work and then to career is something that develops over a period of time. Facilitating the process of career discovery for the young person requires a perceptive understanding of these forces. The following section of this paper discusses the linkages between two of these forces.

Educational systems and labour market forces: Is a dynamic partnership possible?

The answer to this question is an unequivocal 'yes'. The educational system could prepare the young person to approach career development as a mechanism for learning, personal growth and potential realisation. However, a recent survey that we conducted in 15 different parts of India indicated that the reality seems to be quite different (WORCC-IRS, 2006). At the high school and higher secondary stage, educational systems are failing to facilitate informed career choices. Instead, career choice is often reduced to a response to the advertising, public relations and short term interests of employers.

The more recent trend of educational systems coming under the control of labour market forces is even more alarming. On the one hand it is commendable that universities are designing and mooted 'job-oriented courses'. On the other hand, subjects that are not immediately job-oriented

seem to be accorded increasingly lower priorities. While it is true that India is at last beginning to show sustained economic growth it must be remembered that education is not the handmaiden of the labour market. The purpose of education is not merely to prepare a qualified work force. Instead, the purpose of education is to facilitate the individual's development as a person and as a responsible and contributing member of society. Strong educational leadership at the school and higher secondary level would prepare students with skills to make appropriate decisions rather than allowing their choices to be inappropriately influenced by what is currently a boom sector in the labour market.

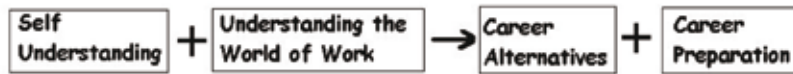
Poorly informed choices made at the high school and higher secondary level could have a cascading effect seen in the short run on the outcomes of higher education. The consequences of a certain course of study could belatedly dawn upon the young person after he or she has entered the course. In some cases this may lead to dropping out of further education. Where the family is able to afford an expensive alteration of the young person's career preparation the individual may begin a new course all over again. In families where resources are limited however, course completion would be reduced to assiduously 'completing what one has started'. The number of young people who do express dissatisfaction with career choices is reaching alarmingly high levels. It is often said that an important function of further education is to prepare the young person for the labour market by equipping the individual with knowledge and skills. A vital point that is often missed is that knowledge and skills for a set of occupational tasks that are not in some way linked with the individual's interests and talents would be sterile and bereft of a sense of meaning and purpose. It is here that the relevance of a comprehensive careers education programme becomes sharply evident. Careers education could in effect be the bridge between education and the labour market.

Integrating career education into the school curriculum

Career education is not an event, it is a process. Ideally, the career education service must be an integral part of the overall curriculum and implemented as a timetabled activity over the course of the year. Our research and field experience has led us to the development of the rudiments of a model for careers education in the Indian situation that we call the Career Preparation Process Model (CPPM). Interested readers are referred to our original writings for a more detailed account of the model (Arulmani and

Nag-Arulmani, 2004) while we devote the rest of this article to a sketch of how this model could be used to facilitate the young person's career discovery. The Career Discovery Equation, presented below, is a translation of the CPPM to the applicational level.

The career discovery equation



This is a framework that could guide the implementation of services for careers education within the Indian school and college context. Accordingly, careers education could comprise four interlocking components as described below:

Facilitating self-understanding

Self-understanding for effective career decision-making focuses on the following themes:

Personal interests and personal aptitudes

Comprehensive career education employs methods whereby interests and aptitudes are assessed and compared with each other.

Social Cognitions and Career Beliefs

These are strongly held convictions about the process of career choice and the world of work. Careers education would address prevailing career beliefs and highlight their impact on career development.

Tests as a mechanism to facilitate self-understanding

Using psychological tests to identify an individual's career interests and aptitudes has been and continues to be a topic of intense controversy. Such devices are useful when they are:

- standardised and statistically validated for the group for which they are intended
- age appropriate
- administered by a qualified psychologist / counsellor
- scored accurately
- interpreted on the basis of accurately developed norms

Tests are sometimes accorded (both by the counsellor and the client) a status of infallibility. A psychological test is merely a tool that could yield information. It is vital that careers education is not reduced to a variety of test taking exercises and that the career aspirant is not limited to the results of aptitude and interest tests.

Facilitating an understanding of the world of work

The world of work comprises all the different career opportunities open to the young person. Career choices are often limited to the careers that the young person knows or has heard about. Facilitating an understanding of the world of work widens the young career chooser's horizons.

Facilitating the development of career alternatives

Career Alternatives emerge from the information the student has gained about herself and about the world of work. Students sometimes commit the error of planning for just one career. Career Alternatives are a set of two or three options that provide back-up options should the first choice fail to materialise.

Facilitating career preparation

The career development plan

This is a clearly enunciated blueprint for career development that the career aspirant develops along with the counsellor. This includes defining careers chosen, developing a description of the path leading to these careers, listing of the eligibility criteria, entrance examinations, important addresses and dates and deadlines that the career aspirant must follow.

Skill Literacy and Work Experience

Promoting skill literacy is an essential aspect of career preparation. Skill literacy refers to helping the career aspirant gain work experience through internships and placements.

Conclusion

In the absence of effective systems for careers education, the young person's career decision-making could be thwarted by various psycho-social, educational and socio-economic factors. Without the insights of introspection and exploration, these influences could lead the individual away from suitable choices. Students who have gone through comprehensive careers education are far more discerning in their career choices. Research has also revealed

that individuals who make career choices based on personal interests and abilities show significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and are more productive workers.

No longer ascribed a position of under-development, India is perceived today to be a developing nation. At the dawn of a new era the opportunities in the world of work are immense. Effective methods of guidance and counselling could play a vital role in drawing the young person closer to these opportunities.

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A Philosophical Look at Modern Culture

VALENTIN GERLIER



Philosophy, perhaps more than any other academic discipline, is thought to deal with intellectual things, or ‘ideas’. In our culture we tend to separate the intellectual world from the practical and the useful, often with very good reason. The study of philosophy falls under the category of ‘impractical’ and is often critiqued in this way.

Yet it is undeniable that, in any culture and at any time in history, human beings are called to think on ultimate questions: what is it to live rightly, what is nature, truth, justice and so on. These questions are not simply resolved, but constantly challenge individuals and communities alike. The way a community attempts to respond to these questions, through its insights, ideas and values, determines what world that community creates for itself. For ideas, if they are genuine, do not merely influence a culture: they ground it. Philosophy therefore, more than a complacent pursuit of intellectual truth as it is often seen, refers to how humanity attempts to respond to the challenges of reality.

Modernity – the culture to which all of us belong – is a philosophy in its own right, and has its own specific approach to the questions cited above. One of the pillars of modernity is the search for impartial objectivity. To find out the truth of something, one needs to adopt an objective viewpoint. This is invariably the case, both in the sciences and in the humanities: only through the observation of ‘facts’, we believe, can a truth, a correct apprehension of something, come to light. And there is no doubt this objective, factual approach has been and continues to be highly satisfactory in that it produces measurable results. Hence it also fuels our idea of ‘progress’: the greater the amount of facts gathered, it is thought, the more human beings know about themselves and the world they live in.

Yet this method of enquiry, however convincing and universally accepted, is based on assumptions and ideas that are specifically modern, and which are so embedded in the culture that they are hardly noticed at all. In this article we will attempt to trace the development of a basic philosophical idea that inspired the beginnings of modernity, and present how this notion – no matter how critiqued – still has a strong hold on our thinking today. Likewise we hope to show that the study of philosophy is not a self-enclosed intellectual pursuit, but, if intelligently done, can provide profound insight into our culture, its ideas and its problems, and how we may address them.

The Beginnings of Modernity

Several key ideas of modernity are clearly expressed in Descartes' famous saying: 'I think therefore I am'. In fact, concealed in this little statement is a complete ideological turn from what had been thought for more than two thousand years.

'I think therefore I am', simply considered, means that thought comes prior to reality. Being, says Descartes, can only be deduced through the abstractions of the mind. In order to be qualified, 'truth' must therefore be measurable. A thing, to be held as real, must attain the same degree of certainty in the mind as a mathematical truth. Somehow this also means that the mind is more real than what it attends to, since only by submitting to the demands of conceptual thought can a thing be said to be true. According to Descartes 'truth' could be simply a project of the mind. It is not truth, therefore, that becomes the arbiter of what is true, but the mind itself, and through the mind, measurement.

This approach, which became universally adopted in the late 17th century, expressed the triumph of 'reason'. Yet, to illustrate the sharp distinction between Descartes' time and the previous, it is worth reflecting on what that word originally meant. For Classical and Mediaeval thinkers 'reason' (logos) referred to the intelligent and harmonious order of the universe. Since it was thought that mind and universe were in essence one and the same, the mind could contemplate reason, its order and perfection, because of its essential identity with it. This understanding of knowledge was not abstracting or measuring, but participative. The essence of things, as Aristotle held, was to be found not by the mind but in things themselves. True knowing was thus a contemplative act which united the knower with the known.

With the rise of rationalism as the new philosophy, however, this unity between mind and cosmos was discarded, and the measuring aspect of thought became the all-important factor. This allowed the scientific revolution to take flight; at the same time, however, it also created an unbridgeable gap between man and nature. Nature for the ancients had been the living pattern of intelligence; now, rather than what nature revealed, the new understanding stressed what the mind chose to acknowledge. The primary qualities of nature ceased to be metaphysical – truth, essence, or meaning – and became conceptual (extension, motion and mass).

This eventually resulted in Nature being relegated to the status of mere raw material made available to further human ends. From ‘What is the Essence of Nature?’ the important question became ‘How does Nature Work?’, followed by ‘How can I use it Efficiently?’. Man was now a ‘subject’ and the world around him the ‘object’ of his enquiry. ‘Facts’ – as units of measurable data - began to take hold as undisputable items of knowledge. Interestingly enough, the original sense of the word referred to the changeable appearances of material things as opposed to their eternal essence. At the beginning of modernity, however, the word ‘fact’ was equated with ‘truth’, as it still is today.

Descartes’ idea also enabled other dualistic ideas to take hold: the difference between reason and feeling, for example. Knowing oneself meant gathering facts about oneself and relegating what could not be analysed in this way to a status of unreality. Of course, this caused great psychological unrest. Because of the split between subject and object, clues to one’s inner harmony could no longer be found in one’s relation to nature (or to the church). Psychology eventually arose from this dualism and sought to use the scientific method to understand man’s subjective inner life – in an attempt to regulate and give meaning to it.

The Influence of Rationalism on Modernity

Retracing these ideas in the context of a history of philosophy is obvious enough. What is less obvious is how deeply these ideas are rooted, and how much they still influence our way of enquiry into ourselves and the world. Many of the disciplines that are involved in seeking to understand culture still grapple with the problems of modernity. When we study our own history, for example, we tend to consider it as a struggle between social classes, a striving which has for ultimate aim the complete affirmation of individual freedom.

What is seldom given much attention to is that the concept of freedom we use is thoroughly modern. The classical conception of freedom differed from it widely in that it was, again, a participatory idea: to be free was to be free to participate in the community or state, in the order of nature, and ultimately in the whole cosmos. The greater the freedom, the more the integration into reality, resulting in infinite freedom for those who lived in perfect harmony with the (deified) order of the cosmos. Freedom was therefore, ultimately, pure existence.

Yet the rational dualisms, granting complete autonomy to the 'subject', could not accommodate this idea. Freedom eventually became freedom for the subject to secure itself against fate and an unpredictable and meaningless cosmos. From an ideal of infinite participation it became a finite freedom: a freedom to be a subject in an objective world. The individual's greatest right is to give his own individual meaning to a universe devoid of a sense of its own. As a result, the idea of social order changed from a natural law that humanity seeks to align itself with, to a moral and juridical contract between individuals. Thus history was reinterpreted: its metaphysical significance was discarded to give way to a view that could account for the new theory of the individual.

The idea of freedom and social struggle, however, are very soon problematic: if taken on board, they present ancient history as a collection of strange events to be seen with great suspicion. If refuted, they cannot account for our notion of the individual subject. What is undeniable, however, is that they give us little clue into what those who viewed their lives in such profoundly different ways might think. This is not merely an academic problem, but is symptomatic of a culture that has little or no relation with its own roots. In other words, it suggests that modernity fails to reflect upon itself. For how are we to understand the fundamental ideas of our culture if we only apprehend it in its own terms and by its own rules?

Like all other cultures, modernity has a responsibility to become aware of itself, its values and limitations. Unquestionably, its key ideas are challenged on a daily basis: multiplying natural catastrophes, ever-increasing psychological fragmentation and profound misunderstanding between cultures all attest to this. As is suggested above, however, an 'objective' enquiry may fall short of what it wants to achieve, for in order to work it must examine a host of unspoken assumptions. Yet does not true self-reflection require that we

question our very method of reflecting? Can human beings, then, ever learn to think and enquire in a non-dualistic, non-fragmented manner?

In pointing out the great influence of Descartes' theorem in our thinking, one merely begins to probe at a very vast question. This question, however, is of no passing theoretical interest. As was said above, philosophical ideas have enormous implications: in them, as we see from Descartes, our whole relationship to the world, to nature and to ourselves is intimated. Bringing these relationships to light and attempting to address their challenges is the real task of philosophy. With this in mind, studying philosophy can then become what it truly should be - a springboard for true learning and profound enquiry.

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Physical Education: An integrated approach

ALOK MOHANTY



We see around us three kinds of attitudes related to the body. The first one can be termed body centric, the second mind centric and the third emphasises a harmonious relationship between the body and mind. The body centric approach is a preoccupation with the body, focusing on pleasing and indulging it. It is encouraged by the present consumerist trend where the media, along with multinationals, are promoting a lifestyle of more and more sensual enjoyment and excitement. In schools we have been noticing a plethora of costly sports equipment, kits and instruments giving an illusion of good physical culture. With this we also see a corresponding increase in aggressiveness, division and selfishness. It promotes an attitude to win at any cost, which shows itself in scandals of drug use and abuse in the sports fraternity.

The second approach is mind centric, where we see a strong mindset or a preconceived idea that denies the body or flesh its due share of attention. In this set of patterns, body is treated as an obstacle on

the path and either neglected or tortured to achieve the goal. In the name of quick success or development we justify a certain negligence towards the body. During examination time children spend less time giving rest and exercise to the body. In the pursuit of fulfilling one's ambition one ignores the needs of the body such as adequate nutrition and sleep, a tendency which can be noticed in the present life style. In the school context we see this imbalance in the tilting of the curriculum towards the development of the cognitive domain. Academics and securing a good percentage in the board examination take the major chunk of time. Perhaps doctors are right when they say that the common diseases that are major killers of human life are the life style diseases.

The ancient Upanishadic adage says, "Shariram khalu dharma sadhanam", which means the body serves as the basis of fulfillment of all the excellence one can perceive in one's life. In between the two extremes we can enquire about the true relationship between body and mind.

Perhaps while exploring we may come across a right understanding of the three words- 'physical', 'health' and 'education'. The word physical denotes the body and its role in the evolution of a human being. Health in its widest sense includes an overall growth and well being in an individual. It is crucial as it links the body with the learning process. When there is harmony between the body, the senses, feelings and the mind we can say that one is healthy. Perhaps to establish and sustain that harmony is the true pursuit of education. The right kind of education will enable the child to get truly oriented towards a qualitative life style and will help him/her to reestablish the harmony that is broken due to various inward and outward forces. This kind of education continues throughout life and is not confined to schooling alone.

In order to come upon a right understanding of the physical education programme we need to start our exploration from the observation of the body and an understanding of its patterns.

The body is a being of order and discipline:

If we observe all the systems in the body we find them functioning in an ordered and disciplined way. The digestive system signals for hunger in right time. Thirst and the evacuation of waste products come at the proper time. It appears that body has its own intelligence that takes right decision to carry out the necessary work.

The body has its own consciousness and its own memory:

Research and our daily experience tell us that the body can work without any command from the reasoning mind. It never forgets what it has learnt, for instance swimming and cycling. Somnambulism (sleep walking) also testifies to this. When we type, our fingers automatically sense the wrong key if pressed. The body instincts tell us what is to be eaten and how much rest is needed. When tampered with, this instinct is slowly pushed underground.

The body is a being of habits:

If we observe the body minutely, we see that it functions out of habit. Unconsciously, the body develops a style of working and follows it throughout life. If we want to change the habit, the body does not respond immediately because it clings to the known. It is slow to learn and once it learns, it is very slow to give up. It is as though the pattern is encoded in every cell of the body. So you see, for example, that different people have different habitual postures.

The body in time loses its plasticity and receptivity:

We have this experience that though the mind is able to figure out the skills involved in a game, it takes time for the body to master the skills. The mind seems to be more fluid, but the basis of this fluidity should be body. Until and unless the body is able to assimilate the processes perceived by the mind there is a gap. The body requires time and practice to assimilate and bridge that gap. As the body ages, rigidity creeps in. This is why we find young children learn more comfortably and quickly than adults. Yet, it is not impossible to overcome this rigidity in adulthood.

The emotions and mind influence the body:

The body reflects the emotions and mind. When we are going through intense emotional turbulence—mental agony or extreme joy—these states are reflected in the body. We have all experienced bodily lethargy and lightness as well.

After we have properly understood the tendencies and limitations of the physical body, we can be progressive as well as realistic and strive to achieve the right kind of physical health education. We need to work continuously to find solutions to overcome limitations. Therefore in setting the aims for the physical education programme, we have to take into account the larger picture toward which we are striving. Though our focus is on the body, we cannot forget the totality of which it is a part. The larger question is, can the body be a part of the enquiry towards a higher living? Can the body be a true instrument for expressing beauty and harmony of a higher order?

I would like to suggest, keeping in mind the larger intent, that we consider the following points for a physical health education programme.

- To make the body a ready and willing instrument for sane living.

Here we mean the body's ability to be able to meet appropriately and effectively the challenges posed by life. The body by its nature is full of 'tamas', or inertia, which works as a gravitational force against the progress one intends to make. Overcoming this resistance effortlessly is the challenge. The joy of learning prepares the body to respond appropriately.

- To awaken the body consciousness.

Here we refer to an awareness that sometimes manifests in the form of instinct, sometimes as a natural, apparently causeless repulsion for certain kinds of food or environment. This must guide the programme for each

individual. This consciousness of the body is usually sidelined by the conscious mind, which always tries to rationalize and find a cause for everything.

- To control and discipline the body functions.

It is said our body has nine systems that operate harmoniously. But due to various inner and outer influences the harmony among these systems gets affected, resulting in disease and malfunctioning of certain organs. If we develop an understanding about these systems and their relationship with mind and emotion, we can ensure a smooth and relaxed functioning of all organs and limbs.

- To develop holistically.

All aspects of body and its training need to be scientifically examined, implemented and evaluated. For example, if we observe children we notice that in the process of growing up they lose their suppleness and flexibility. The challenge then before us is how to allow the body to grow, yet retain the necessary flexibility. We therefore select activities to help us in our endeavour.

- To correct defects and deformities.

We should work on corrective measures to overcome lopsided growth and deficiency due to malnutrition and bad habits. When we observe the body we see that it has two kinds of needs: a 'growing up' need, and a 'deficiency' need. Sports programmes in general do address the former, but children with deficiencies do not get the right input. Corrective measures can be taken up in consultation with physiotherapists, doctors and yoga teachers.

- To strive for beauty and harmony.

This has to be the guiding principle for all the points mentioned above. It is the physical domain that provides the right kind of ground for the expression of beauty. The organization of materials in one's own home or in the work place reflects one's aesthetic sense. When a child learns to organize his things in an orderly way, he becomes open to appreciate beauty in his surroundings and in nature.

Thus the programme should envisage a body beautiful in its form, harmonious in its coordination, nimble and supple in its movement and resistant in its health. I go on to suggest four directives that will integrate all the possibilities in an individual.

Physical awareness:

Awareness in daily living of the functions and skills of the body. It includes an awareness of the body in rhythm and movement, in rest, relaxation and rest in action. There needs to be an understanding of cleanliness, sleep and bodily instincts.

Physical intelligence:

The capacity to see the demand of a situation on the mind, emotion and body, to understand the necessary skills and inhibiting patterns involved, adapt and respond to the situation appropriately.

Physical discipline:

Discipline in the functioning of the senses. The senses are windows through which all information enters the brain. Thus there is a need to sharpen the senses through training. There is also the need for correcting malfunctions or deformations in the system, heeding expert advice and therapeutic guidance.

Physical culture:

Designing activities to promote stamina, agility, speed, suppleness, neuromuscular coordination, balance, reflex, endurance, flexibility, and strength in consultation with the child. There must be scope for activities to face one's fears and limitations, and to explore one's relationship with teammates and with performance.

Finally, at the core of any physical education programme is play. Playing is a natural act. Through play, animals master many important skills and abilities for their survival. When we engage in any action playfully, we learn faster. Perhaps, and importantly, on this authentic 'playground' we can begin to learn about ourselves.

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Reality Isn't What It Used to Be

MICHAEL MENDIZZA



As Merlin was to young King Arthur, so every adult must become to every child. Intimate connection and authentic play are the teachers and the subject to be mastered.

Sitting across the table were three large natives, Maori from New Zealand, traditional healers. I asked about their roots, where they came from, about their ancestors, how they were trained, what spirit and soul meant to them. The oldest pointed to the stars, described a particular constellation. His roots were there, he said, and he has carried the essence of that constellation long before he was born. The actual place in the sky, I asked, or was he using this heavenly body as a metaphor, and if he was using metaphor, what was the metaphor pointing to? What was the essence or state of being that the metaphor represented? He smiled.

Six months earlier I had sat with a Celt from Brittany. He, like the Maori, talked of multiple realities. What you and I think of as reality is just one of many, perhaps an infinite spectrum of realities, each very real while in them. Sane or healthy in one reality may be mad or diseased in another. Documented cases of multiple personalities have shown the body of one covered in hives. When the other personality takes over the rash disappears. We might rename this phenomena a multiple-reality disorder. Why a disorder? Because the switch from one personality or reality to the other did not appear to happen by choice. But what if it did? Would we consider this ability to switch realities a disorder or enlightenment?

Imagine having poor eyesight in one reality, but 20/20 in another. Imagine being afraid of public speaking in one personality or reality but in another you were brilliant in front of a group. Switching from one reality to another would be a spontaneous remission. It may be that our real disorder is not

being sufficiently aware of the operating system of our spaceship, body and mind, to consciously and creatively surf realities.

Beliefs are realities. Beliefs predispose and organize the body and mind in predictable ways. In the Christian tradition being born again implies, does it not, shifting from one reality to another. Racial prejudice is a reality. The Nazis lived in a unique reality. Urban ghetto children have their reality. Politicians have theirs. All the categories we live our lives in are realities.

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In 'The Biology of Transcendence' friend and mentor Joseph Chilton Pearce describes how enculturation, parenting, religion, schooling, competition and other forces limit and constrain our vast potential into a tiny anxious self-centered cube we call ME, our self-image, what I call "the box." The box is a belief system. The category called ME, male, female, mother, father, black, brown, white, smart, PhD, dumb, CEO, are all realities, and while one is in them very real indeed. All realities are relative and each reality is real. After all, dreams are real while we are dreaming.

Reality appears in consciousness the way the northern lights dance in the evening sky. The difference between what we call dreaming and waking consciousness is the quality of awareness and attention present as our dreams splash in and out of the body and mind. Each memory is a mini-reality. We have ecstatic experiences, pure pleasure, beyond orgasmic. And we have suffered excruciating sorrow. Each, the pleasure and the pain, imprint their pattern or state in the cells of our body, in our DNA and perhaps more deeply in the energetic ocean that surrounds us. The patterns of the pleasure and the pain are there, in the cells and in the energy.

Some associative trigger, a sight, smell, that song on the radio, causes a remembering (a reconstruction) of the original experience, which was, at one point in time-space, very real. If we gave complete attention to that memory it would reincarnate in the present moment and again be real. But we don't usually give this complete attention. Most often our body and mind is preoccupied with the present reality while ghosts of projected pasts and futures ebb and flow throughout the system.

What we call normal reality is a composite of multiple realities, physical coming in through our senses, resonate feelings of present or past experiences,

thoughts, and stored memories. Perhaps, if we have retained our childlike nature, we may still connect with realities beyond our personal conditioning, the transpersonal realm physicists and philosophers call insight and shamans call spirit.

The human brain evolved over billions of years. As different brain systems developed so did corresponding realities unique to each brain structure. The sensory motor brain came first, providing inner images of the outer environment, so we could eat it, run away from it or mate with it. Let's call the inner images provided by the sensory-motor brain reality number one. Millions and million of years later grew another reality, number two, generated by the limbic or mammalian brain. This brain system monitors inner states, how we feel about chasing after, running away from or mating. Millions and millions of years later emerged a symbolic and metaphoric reality created by the neocortex, allowing us to represent the chase and the mate in symbols. All three brain systems create images, realities, or more precisely "resonate representations" unique to its slice of the experiential pie. Each system creates images but the images created by each are different in form, as different as painting is to music and music to sculpture.

What we call reality is a stream of resonate representations generated by the unique constitution of our different brain systems. Reality to a cat is very real and very different from that of a bat or fish.

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Reality to a cat is very real and very different from that of a bat or fish. Physicist David Bohm observed that complex systems imply or embody less complex systems. The more complex the brain the wider the spectrum of resonate representations or different realities that brain system may produce.

Recall how Merlin, in the Shamanic tradition, taught young King Arthur to soar with the falcon, not as an observer, but to share the falcon's reality and in that sharing cultivate deep empathic rapport with the spectrum of life we call falcon. Much of Merlin's magic involved 'surfing' realities and historically all of the realities were grounded in nature, plants, animals, human beings, rivers, and the stars; but not any more. Fish can't experience the rich diversity of human perception but human beings embody the stage

of evolution called fish and because of this embodiment can experience that stage, now. Perhaps it was from this perspective that J. Krishnamurti observed that “we are the world.”

Fast forward to today’s young Kings Arthurs. Who are their Merlins? And what realities are they sharing—animal, mineral, or technology? It took nature billions of years to create the sensory motor system, and what a marvel it is. Only with a firm and clear grasp of our sensory-motor reality can proper functioning of reality two, emotional intelligence, emerge. Improper development of the primary system distorts the reality generated by that system causing false or misleading messages to flow upstream. Responding to often misinformation, the mid-brain gets all excited and sends its distorted reality to the neocortex. How can we possibly expect thought, belief, society and culture to operate sanely if our physical and emotional systems are poorly developed or confused by their own processes?

The Buddhists proclaim an absolute, transpersonal reality uncontaminated by individual conditioning. They also describe a relative reality filled with all the images produced by past experience, memory and thought. In low states of attention the automatic, reflexive nature of the conditioned relative reality occupies our awareness. The critical question is: are we completely taken in by this conditioned reality or is there some energy, some awareness and attention that abides beyond the dream, what many traditions call “the witness” or mindfulness? Without this extra energy and attention we are enchanted, lost in an endless stream of dreams, floating in a bucket, heading for the Niagara Falls of our own creation, unaware that we are the river, the falls and the bucket. Our normal state is to be completely taken in by the image. It is quite another state to be aware that the image or reality we are responding to is of our own creation.

The message is very old, “Know thy self.” The self referred to is not the nervous egocentric self-image we have accepted. Using computer terms we might say “knowing our self” means gaining an understanding of the basic operating system, as a skilled car mechanic might know the design of an engine.

Many of us have skilled knowledge about our physical bodies. Eating vegetables is good. Smoking is bad. Regular vigorous exercise is good. Sitting too long in front of a video or computer screen is bad. So we walk, jog, ride bicycles, play golf or at least know we should. But what about emotional fitness?

In what ways are we nurturing and developing our emotional capacity?

What does the emotional gymnasium look like? What experiences do we find there? And what about imagination, reason, ratio, the critical and abstract capacities of the neocortex? We expect that school is the gymnasium for developing symbolic and metaphoric processes. But is this really what is taking place in our schools?

But what about emotional fitness? In what ways are we nurturing and developing our emotional capacity?

More abstract yet is attention. Attention is the critical capacity upon which all other capacities depend. Without attention our physical, emotional, and intellectual engines have no juice, no energy, no power.

We have different grades of gasoline for our cars. The same is true of attention, very low, low, medium, above average, high, premium and turbo. The quality of attention we bring to the present moment provides fuel for our physical, emotional and intellectual systems. The development of each system plus the quality of attention or fuel we deliver to that system, moment by moment, produces the ever changing display of resonate representations we call reality.

So-called spiritual traditions have known this for centuries. In these traditions are found all sorts of exercises for gathering attention, using imagination, understanding the emotions and moving the body. Most people, however, are so enchanted by the images they are producing that they walk by gigantic billboards like the sphinx, obelisks, pyramids, temples, churches, all forms of sacred geometry, completely unaware that these are invitations and gymnasiums for cultivating attention. They are certainly not invitations to get lost in the imagery painted on their walls.

For regular folk the images on the walls, mythology and story (all images) were ancient ways of helping us to know ourselves. Being stuck in images, sages used images to help us out. The field of psychology, of which I am no expert, gave this important task a new, often confusing, twist. Myth, story and very often psychology dealt with the images generated by the system. Rarely did these traditions deal with the image making process. Contemplation, meditation and a few other practices came close. The developmental goal of these practices is first to have an insight into the various ways our brains create images and second, to cultivate a quality of attention that is not totally consumed by these images. Only then do we have the capacity to see beyond

our own images and experience directly the face of God, as was so beautifully described in the 15th century by St. John of the Cross.

The Latin root of the word intelligence is to “read or see between the lines.” The lines to read between are images, thoughts, concepts, beliefs generated by the body and brain.

Intelligence is a state of energy and attention which abides outside the lines created by these images. The Latin root of the word intelligence is to “read or see between the lines.” The lines to read between are images, thoughts, concepts, beliefs generated by the body and brain. Intelligence is a state of energy and attention which abides outside the lines created by these images. The closer we focus on the present moment the less attention we give to images and the more our attention focuses on the state of the body and mind creating the image. We begin to see that images are resonate representations of “states of being” this present moment. This shift from image to state opens us to a breathtaking new reality.

Our disorder is a lack of development. We have not cultivated the attention and awareness needed to understand our own mental and physical process. If we do so, we can then go on to creatively use our vast innate creative power to surf image-realities and manifest in our lives health, wholeness and deep empathy for all of nature. How do we, and by implication our children, cultivate this energy and attention, especially in an era flooded by commercial images, a formidable challenge indeed?

Is the experience of watching an animated fantasy of Merlin pulsing on a plasma screen the same as the experience of a living mentor? Are Disney’s computer images of a soaring falcon’s reality the same as holding a falcon, watching it fly? What perceptual systems are involved sitting by the stream, holding the falcon, listening to Merlin weave a story that evokes a deep resonate representation of that amazing bird as it soars? What perceptual systems are involved in watching a computer image of the same? As wonderful and real as the counterfeit is, it is a counterfeit designed to produce the illusion of being real. In this act, by design, it is stunting and retarding, on a mass scale, the development of true capacity.

Flooding the many brain systems with counterfeit realities, especially those delivered through concrete imagery, is like feeding a developing body junk food, sugar filled sodas, empty calories. Empty calories create the illusion of nurturing nutrition when in truth the experience is empty of exactly what the brain and body need to grow whole, sane, holy.

In the film, 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest', a native, pretending to be retarded, breaks his silence and describes his father, an alcoholic. It appeared to most that the father was sucking life out of the bottle. The Indian flipped the image and described how the bottle was sucking life out of his father. The same is true of video based technology, especially for young children. Image based technologies deliver pre-fabricated substitutes or counterfeits of images the child would naturally create internally.

Failing to develop fully their own image-making capacity, children become addicted to image-producing technologies.

Failing to develop fully their own image-making capacity, children become addicted to image-producing technologies. What we fail to appreciate is that the act of generating and playing with mental images, realities really, matures into an insight of the image- making structure and function of the brain. And it is this insight, knowing ourselves, free of any image, which the Buddhists speak of as liberation, true freedom of the mind.

Adding insult to injury these same image producing technologies displace intimate empathic connection with living mentors, like Merlin, falcons, plants, rivers, and celestial constellations, the ancestral home of the Maori sitting across the table. Lacking intimate contact with the resonate representations shimmering in these living mentors the child's emotional intelligence remains undeveloped, often retarded.

In place of this intimate empathic sensory and emotional foundation we drill and test young children in premature intellectual constructs like the A, B, Cs. What use are abstract symbols if what they represent is powered by retarded physical and emotional systems? Isn't this what, in 1813, Mary Shelley prophesized in her classic tale of the mad scientist, Dr. Frankenstein?

Each of our reality centers, sensory, emotional, symbolic, and others require different experiences to grow and develop. The sensory system needs physical sensations to grow. The emotional system needs to experience safe playful intimate relationships to grow. The intellectual system needs a rich diet of symbols and metaphors to grow. Lifting weights, riding a bicycle or Pilates are great for the sensory-motor system but do little for the emotional and symbolic systems. Math drills or even great literature does little for the biceps or cardio vascular system. We all know that the physical body needs a balanced diet to grow. What we fail to realize is that a rich diet of emotional relationships, symbols and metaphors are essential nutrients for mid brain development and the neocortex.

Each brain system must be nurtured and nourished by the appropriate experience unique to that system. If this balanced experiential diet is not maintained, the reality produced by the various systems will be unbalanced, distorted by the malformed structures that give rise to the images we call reality. When the forces of change blow we will wobble and rattle like an unbalanced washing machine rather than spin like a gyroscope.

A new mind is emerging and with it a new reality. Our challenge is to recognize that balanced nutrition implies nurturing each perceptual system with developmentally appropriate experiences, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual, the unseen aspects of being alive and sentient. This can only take place when we as adults cultivate a quality of attention that lies beyond the images we produce.

Something beyond the image is required to bring the system to order. And this precious something . . . and then, like learning how to ride a bicycle, we will discover this mindful attention in ourselves, moment by moment, as we live our daily life in relationship.

If adults don't have this intelligent attention, how will children recognize and value it in themselves? We can't solve problems at the level of the problem. If a problem is being created by a misuse of our image making structures, we can't use those structures to solve the problems these structures create. Something beyond the image is required to bring the system to order. And this precious something, the attention Merlin cultivated in Arthur and the Maori elders evoked by their incantations will never be found gazing at a video or computer screen. It will be found looking into the eyes and feeling the hearts of people who see beyond the images and then we, like learning how to ride a bicycle, will discover this mindful attention in ourselves, moment by moment, as we live our daily life in relationship.

Michael K. Mendizza is an educational and documentary filmmaker. His varied projects have resulted in deep insights into complex issues such as cultural development, changing family structure, the roots of violence, the impact of media on learning and creativity, and the nature of intelligence. He has presented programs and written on the intelligence of play, the impact of visual media on human development and culture, bonding and belonging, and optimum learning relationships.

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