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JOURNAL OF THE KRISHNAMURTI SCHOOLS

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An Educational Journal

This is a journal on education that is brought out annually. It is an anthology of writings by educators, teachers 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 J Krishnamurti's principles of education. It will be of use to teachers, parents, educational administrators, teacher-educators and any individual interested in education.

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Dear Reader,

Kindly share this Journal with a school nearby, or a teacher who you feel will benefit from this, after your perusal, so that it could reach a greater number of educators.

Many thanks,
The Editors

Question: ***What kind of education should my child have, in order to face this chaotic world?***

Krishnamurti: This is really a vast question, isn't it, not to be answered in a couple of minutes. But perhaps we can put it briefly, and it may be gone into further afterwards.

The problem is not what kind of education the child should have but rather that the educator needs education, the parent needs education. Do we not need a totally different kind of education?—not the mere cultivation of memory, which gives the child a technique, which will help him to get a job, a livelihood, but an education that will make him truly intelligent. Intelligence is the comprehension of the whole process, the total process, of life, not knowledge of one fragment of life.

So the problem is, really: can we, the grown-up people, help the child to grow in freedom, in complete freedom? This does not mean allowing him to do what he likes, but can we help the child to understand what it is to be free because we understand ourselves what it is to be free?

Our education now is merely a process of conformity, helping the child to conform to a particular pattern of society in which he will get a job, become outwardly respectable, go to church, conform, and struggle until he dies. We do not help him to be free inwardly so that as he grows older, he is able to face all the complexities of life—which means helping him to have the capacity to think, not teaching him what to think. For this, the educator himself must be capable of freeing his own mind from all authority, from all fear, from all nationality, from the various forms of belief and tradition, so that the child understands—with your help, with your intelligence—what it is to be free, what it is to question, to inquire, and to discover.

But you see, we do not want such a society; we do not want a different world. We want the repetition of the old world, only modified, made a little better, a little more polished. We want the child to conform totally, not to think at all, not to be aware, not to be inwardly clear—because if he is so inwardly clear, there is danger to all our established values. So, what is really involved in this question is how to bring education to the educator. How can you and I—because we, the parents, the society, are the educators—how can you and I help to bring about clarity in ourselves so that the child may also be able to think freely, in the sense of having a still mind, a quiet mind, through which new things can be perceived and come into being?

This is really a very fundamental question. Why is it that we are being educated at all? Just for a job? Just to accept Catholicism, or Protestantism, or Communism or Hinduism? Just to conform to a certain tradition, to fit into a certain job? Or, is education something entirely different?—not the cultivation of memory, but the process of understanding. Understanding does not come through analysis; understanding comes only when the mind is very quiet, unburdened, no longer seeking success and therefore being thwarted, afraid of failure. Only when the mind is still, only then is there a possibility of understanding, and having intelligence. Such education is the right kind of education, from which obviously other things follow.

But very few of us are interested in all that. If you have a child, you want him to have a job; that is all you are concerned with—what is going to happen to his future. Should the child inherit all the things that you have—the property, the values, the beliefs, the traditions—or must he grow in freedom, so as to discover for himself what is true? That can only happen if you yourself are not inheriting, if you yourself are free to inquire, to find out what is true.

Excerpt from the Second Public Talk in Amsterdam
19th May 1955

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Editorial

Krishnamurti questioned the schools constantly about why they were producing mice instead of lions and gazelles. Occasionally, in an interview or at a public question and answer session, he would in turn be queried about the purpose of setting up the schools and on what was happening in them. Obviously, these were not questions in the sense of a factory manager reprimanding his quality control supervisor, who has to ensure that goods are produced according to clearly laid down standards. Such questions call for a great deal of reflection on the part of the questioned before an adequate response can be given.

Likewise, is it time to ask ourselves about the 'aim and purpose'—to borrow Krishnamurti's phrase—of the Journal, now in its seventeenth year?

Interestingly, we came to know recently that it was Krishnamurti himself who desired that a journal be brought out by the schools. He stated that the purpose of the journal would be to bring and hold together the schools so that it would not be Indian, English or American. He spoke of how each school should not only evolve a high academic standard but bring in the teachings while educating children. He felt that it was important for each school to develop something original in its academic approach, community living and relationship to the environment. He pointed out that the schools should become places of understanding the world and the society we live in, to develop in the young a comprehensive and global outlook, not a parochial one. Any original work schools do in these directions should be shared with others by way of contributions to the journal. This need not, however, preclude their writing about other matters of wider educational interest.

As we know, just over a decade after Krishnamurti's passing, the Journal of Krishnamurti Schools came into being in 1997. You are holding the seventeenth issue in your hands. A look at the contents pages of the issues down the years indicates that the exhortations Krishnamurti made seem to be

at work. Does this mean we pat ourselves on the back for the good job we have done and continue to do in our schools? Obviously not. Krishnamurti made his formidable demand on teachers again and again, not satisfied with what was happening in the schools. It is therefore essential that—collectively, as a teacher body—we keep exploring 'life at school' as it were, in all its manifestations. In an individual mode, through this exploration within herself and in her relationship with the students, the teacher/educator may come upon a proper response to Krishnamurti's challenge.

This issue is remarkable in that it contains contributions from all the schools in the extended family of Krishnamurti schools. Looking at the wholehearted participation of the schools in making the journal so rich and various, it does seem that we are thinking together as 'one school'.

The sumptuous collection of articles that await the reader covers a vast area of school life: deep ruminations; critical examinations of the concrete and the abstract; classroom practices; and creative and thoughtful ways of teaching specific areas of a subject, the environment and the arts. In them, we have young teachers rubbing shoulders with others who have been 'in the business' for long years. A constant theme that runs across several articles is the relationship between the teacher and the student, expressed in a myriad ways by teachers of varying vintage. One remarkable strand in the thinking of a young teacher is the troubled questioning of her predicament: Am I exercising authority even when I am trying to reach out to the student to help her work through her academic and psychological problems? Is there an element of coercion in the relationship? Am I merely transferring knowledge to the young? This leads us to ask: As the years roll by, does the fire still burn?

Going back to Krishnamurti's reference to lions and mice, yet another zoological metaphor comes to mind—that of the hedgehog and the fox. I would suggest that many students emerge from our schools equipped with the simplicity and clarity of the hedgehog (which only needs to keep out of harm's way with its one weapon) as well as the wit and resilience of the fox in negotiating the treacherous territory of the large predators.

Meanwhile, have a whale of a read!

P RAMESH

The Next Step

Stephen Smith

We are probably all familiar with Krishnamurti's statement, 'The first step is the last step', but what preoccupies teachers on a daily basis is how they will approach a particular student; how they will make their teaching 'not boring'; and whether they have the tools for the job, both in terms of knowledge and psychological readiness. It may seem also, particularly in these schools, that there exists a gap between the founder's vision and classroom practice. What application? Where? Too often, perhaps, it is the syllabus that dictates and not the intention to 'awaken intelligence'. The immediate, real need to take the next step overhauls and subverts the first and the last.

To the present writer, there is a dangerous division—only infrequently and partially healed—between the vision and classroom practice. The demands of examination and syllabus are too strong, the pressure from parents and society too great. We don't exactly cave in; rather, we have little or nothing of our own with which to meet these strident 'necessities': the nerve-tense Exam Room, OFSTED at the door. In such a situation, it becomes a running battle to keep the flame of the teachings alive and it is perhaps surprising that so much of real value, such 'first and last' value, has been sustained. This is largely the work of a heroic few who, unwilling to compromise where 'the flame' is concerned, have kept it alive and even helped it spread. For, like all revolutions, it is the work of the few; and, like all revolutions, it engages the many.

Is there not, then, some thread or strand, some connecting link between the subject and the teachings? I think there is, and its name is *inquiry.* By this, I don't mean *dialogical inquiry,* which is, in any case, more of an adult occupation. I mean an inquiry-based approach to learning, which incorporates

both the acquisition of knowledge and the instantaneous act of perception, that 'seeing in the Now', which is Krishnamurti's definition. It is actually quite a complex matter, but let's begin with questioning. This may sound simple, even obvious, but by questioning I don't mean what usually happens (asking questions to elicit answers) but questioning the nature of the subject itself. Having taught languages for twenty-seven years, could I answer the question, What is language? Do I have an original insight into what it is? Or, have I simply absorbed what was on offer—no doubt, instructive in itself—without understanding the phenomenon in depth?

When a rattlesnake rattles, is that language? Your body knows it before you do! When the nightingale sings, trills and whistles all night, is it all explained by the drive of Nature? The sounds made by dolphins, porpoises and whales, though inaudible to the human ear, are without doubt a form of communication. With so much going on around us, so much stimulation for ear and eye, should we not put the emphasis here, rather than on brain-and-voice box reproduction? In any case, is not language as we know it one of the great 'system builders' of mankind, along with mathematics and science? Millions consider it the Word of God. Is it, though? Is it really like that? How can such an invention of thought ever touch the Ground of the Real? How have words and thought shaped human consciousness? Why do all tyrants burn or banish books? Reciprocally, why are the words in a holy book considered of more value than a human life? These are some of the questions you might ask.

The object of such questioning is not only to encourage inquiry in the students while actively participating in it ourselves, but also to challenge the definitions we have inherited. If we do not know fully what language is—or, at least, that its contour is constantly shifting—what about biology (*bios* = life, *logos* = study) or physics (*physis* = Nature)? The latter is a case in point since, at the beginning of the twentieth century, physicists of eminent repute held that there was nothing much else to be learned in that domain! Then came Relativity and Quantum Mechanics, two theories that turned the subject upside down and altered the world we live in forever. Einstein, at the age of fifteen, was already asking himself: What would happen to an observer looking in a mirror if the observer were travelling at the speed of light? It is the questioning approach that breaks down barriers, releases minds.

Is it too much to suggest that the *via negativa* of the teachings be replicated in classroom subjects, that we question not the content of the knowledge-

mind, but that we make the shift from accepting knowledge as it stands to questioning its basis and, by extension, its validity? Since the young person spends so much time acquiring the knowledge necessary for living, why not from the very first integrate that knowledge with a questioning approach? This would involve a different kind of mental process—that defined in the teachings as 'negative thinking'. By this we mean a kind of suspension, a non-assertion of the fact of the matter. For our whole mental structure is built on certitudes—that there is a God or that there is no God; that matter is everything, that spirit is all—and we seem incapable of breaking their stranglehold. But what if we began slowly, with small steps, to reconfigure this dominant mode so that we do not replace one set of 'Yeses' with another, but seek from the beginning to question knowledge's source and, hence, the source of our own strong selves. For surely, if it is true to say that the outer world is the construct of our knowledge both in terms of information and of who we think we are, then the questioning approach to the acquisition of knowledge must necessarily have an impact, a reciprocal impact, on us, the knowers. We do not have to wait for 'the wisdom of maturity' to start to watch this instantaneous unfoldment; indeed, it is already implicit in the teachings, which systematically never speak of 'first—then' but always of thought/knowledge acting in tandem with the instantaneous act of perception.

This, naturally, involves the question of the mind: whether it is a solid brick-building continuum, rather like the sense of who I think I am, or whether it is not, primarily, a place of silence, space and energy, open to the heavens and caring for the earth. It involves the ontology of humankind, the global sense of what the human being is. We can continue to exploit, as we have been doing for centuries, or we can turn around and look again. Questioning knowledge, like questioning authority, is one clear way to dismantle the structure with which we have been saddled since the moment we were born. It is not that there is anything wrong with knowledge as such, but since knowledge has been the tool of exploitation—the priest, the populace; the expert, the layman; the technocrat, the labourer—there is always the tendency to internalize knowledge as the measure and hallmark of superiority. Buildings get higher, brick by brick, but in space and silence there is nothing to be gained.

Will questioning knowledge suffice? you may ask. Again, there are pointers in the teachings themselves. One of these is to 'begin small'. No one

person can encompass all knowledge, or even the total knowledge in one subject, but one can pose the question: Why this, not that? One can introduce the questioning mode. The important thing is to convey to students not the utility value of knowledge, which is obvious, but, by teaching them to question, to help them discern the psychological structure based on fear and domination. For, as so often, it is subliminally and secretly that the psychological structure is conveyed—made manifest in mark lists, competition and control. We are crippled before we have learnt to walk.

The freedom to ask questions is a basic human right. As the coming move, the vital shift, from *homo sapiens* to *homo* ... gets underway, let us as teachers give the lead. Let's question the knowledge we have acquired, let's question the basis of knowledge itself, not with the intention of getting rid of it, which is in any case a futile endeavour, but to see if there is not in the very acquisition a parallel movement of 'letting go', an abandonment of the psychological factors of knowledge which have wreaked, and continue to wreak, such havoc. The key may not lie so very far away; in fact, it may be there in the door of your classroom. Why not turn that key? You have the right. Unburden yourself. Take the bull by the horns.

What is Academic Rigour?

EDITORS

'Academics' is a top priority in all educational institutions, for obvious reasons. However, in recent years, in educational discourse in the country, there has been a growing concern that an overemphasis on academics, particularly in the context of exams and rote learning, is distorting the growth of children and youth. We worry that educators may be losing sight of the overall development of students; we may not be producing 'well-rounded personalities'. Nevertheless, we would like to argue that rigorous academics, understood in its broadest sense, has a deep place in the life of students, particularly those in senior school. It is obviously too limiting to restrict the sense of academics to exam preparation. We must therefore appreciate the ways in which intellectual disciplines can help shape our sense of being human and potentially reach out to many vital aspects of a student's maturation.

With the understanding that academic intellectual engagement is crucial in the life of the senior school student, we have identified three broad areas that, in our view, largely define academic rigour. *Thinking clearly* (in ways that we will describe) is fundamental to our understanding of our world; without this, we are trapped in simplistic notions about how the world works. A rigorous engagement with academics also includes an *appreciation of the richness in both methodology and content* of various academic disciplines. Finally, we need to help students understand the discipline of *study skills,* which structure and deepen their ability to learn. We have also tried to convey a feel of the variety of challenges and potential approaches in multiple disciplines, while developing the overall framework that addresses the question of rigour as a whole.

Thinking clearly

The first step in 'thinking clearly' seems to be the ability to engage with

(conceptual) abstractions. By this we mean that students not only focus on specific observations or facts but also begin to learn to see underlying patterns and structures that may be invisible in everyday experience or thought. As teachers, we illustrate this through abstractions both in science and social science. For instance, a sociology student might learn about *class,* an abstract Marxist structure. Or a physics student might learn about *vectors* as a way of graphically representing several forces and their outcomes. From this initial appreciation, the student needs to understand how these theoretical constructs may be linked with others, according to the logic of the discipline. These linkages actually impact the way the world is perceived; but on the flip side, they also demand that students observe real world contexts and check their learning against their observation. The ability to recognize this rich interplay between the abstraction and its real world implications is, to us, an important indicator of rigour.

The collection of data and evidence, the ability to research questions to some depth: these also tie in with thinking clearly. But equally important, for a young student, is looking for evidence that might run counter to existing ideas. These are the testing points of rigour: not to be caught within an accepted interpretive framework (which in some cases might be a home-grown 'folk theory'), but to investigate and find ways to falsify propositions, not simply to justify them. Simple ideas of testing might have to do with, for example, the way objects fall (do heavier objects fall faster than lighter ones?); at a more complex level, they might have to do with notions of 'intelligence' (are boys smarter at maths than girls?).

A basic prerequisite for clear thought seems to be the ability to read closely and critically. Young people need to have the skill to identify core arguments from what they read and to summarize these arguments to various degrees of detail: capturing the key point in a single sentence, for instance, or expressing the gist in their own words. The paring away of supporting details and the ability to distinguish between various levels of argument are clear pointers to the depth of the student's understanding. Alongside this, students need to be able to express their understanding cogently, both in written and in spoken form, and to develop arguments using either examples or other subsidiary arguments that connect to their main point. An important issue here is the ability to logically structure written work: the development of an argument analytically and not merely descriptively.

Some students have difficulties with reading and writing. While these specific problems need to be supported, they should not necessarily cloud clear thinking skills. All students have the potential for clear thinking. This is not a facility that only 'gifted' students are blessed with or even one that must await a good college education. Indeed, all children need support structures when it comes to learning good reading and writing skills. Children with 'learning difficulties' fall, like all of us, on a spectrum of ability; they clearly need imaginative alternatives to traditional text-based approaches. Then, clear thinking can be communicated systematically, and all students can come to value the skills they learn. Obviously there will be a distribution in ability, but the essence of the process is, we feel, a human ability to which all of us can respond.

Embedded within the above processes, ideally, should be the ability to make conceptual leaps in thinking about the world. Students need to make abstract connections within a domain (and perhaps across different domains) in order to solve a problem or approach an idea in a fresh way. Simple examples might include the ability to understand and create powerful metaphors, or to see the mathematical structure of a problem in physics. What might enable such creative potential? While there is no straightforward blueprint, it seems that rich, open-ended, intellectually investigative environments that engage the student's emotions facilitate this kind of ability.

Richness

Academic rigour implies more than the ability to think clearly. It also involves a deep appreciation of richness across disciplines. We can speak of two kinds of richness: a richness in multiple ways of understanding the world, and the richness in the content of a specific discipline.

We realize that there are different theoretical perspectives on the same phenomena. Even in the so-called 'hard' sciences, different interpretations of experimental data and predictive equations lead to very different models of reality. The field of quantum physics is filled with examples. In a discipline such as psychology, different perspectives on psychological health give rise to very different insights and approaches to illness. We should encourage the student to recognize that this plurality is not a weakness; rather, it is a reflection of the true complexity of reality. When we feel we have the one true answer, we are in intellectual trouble!

Within these different perspectives, certain rigorous methods towards understanding and validation exist. Close observation and accurate, conceptually coherent descriptions form the foundation of any model of the world. Beyond this, the experimental method and the testing of hypotheses is the most powerful in the natural sciences. Axiomatic and logical thinking are at the heart of mathematical understanding. The method of comparative analysis is particularly useful in the social sciences, where experiment is virtually impossible. This sense of methodological variety is crucial to appreciating academic rigour.

Quite apart from methodological richness, students can appreciate the diverse richness and beauty within disciplines themselves. The precision and power of literature in describing the human condition and evoking empathy; the elegance of a mathematical proof; the parsimony and predictive reach of a scientific explanation: it is only within the excitement at these aesthetic qualities that the specifics of a discipline may make sense. Within this broader emotional response to the beauty of a subject comes the sense of stitching the details together into coherent pictures, and of delving deeper into the field of inquiry. And of course as we go deeper in, we make subtler discoveries: certain themes repeat unexpectedly, the facts and theories hang together in surprising ways, disparate observations fit into an overall framework.

Study skills

The final thread in our rendering of academic rigour involves study skills. Study skills are important for mastery, and mastery may be required in different contexts, for different aims: writing a paper, making a presentation, or writing an exam. It is important for the student to keep in mind that study is limited and finite, for a specific purpose, unlike the process of learning, which is potentially deep and extensive.

The points below indicate important skills for all students.

- *Learning and using the terminology of a subject with confidence*
- *Taking notes and summarizing arguments from both live discussions or lectures and static text*
- *Using visual representations such as topic maps, webs, diagrams, trees*
- *Explaining concepts to others*
- *Knowing how much more study is needed*
- *Knowing what precisely one has not understood, and when to ask for help*

- *Re-doing work, incorporating the feedback of the teacher*
- *Coming up with creative techniques for memorizing: index cards, flip books, putting notes up on walls, quizzing others, repetition and drill*
- *Developing a style of regular work*

*

There need be nothing dry and dispassionate about academic study. Rather, it may be nourished by deep emotions of wonder, excitement and creativity. We repeatedly discover that we engage the emotions when we learn: we experience excitement, the thrill of discovery, and a love for a subject when learning (and teaching) something. The energy of discussion is palpable; there are also pauses and rumination during discussion, when students challenge others' views as well as their own, and share their learning with others.

For us as educators, it is vital that our own perceptions are born of a deep engagement with the subject matter of our various disciplines, as well as out of dialogue with each other, and that these perceptions permeate our understanding of academic rigour in all its manifestations.

Awakening Empathy in Early Childhood

Adrienne Hoskins

Young children experience conflict every day, generated by differences in age, size, physical abilities, language, race, ethnicity and culture, religion, family structure, socioeconomic class and gender: 'No girls allowed!' Children wish to be treated fairly and they have problems with perceived unfairness. They have an effusive and unrestrained capacity for expressing both hurt and compassion, and they enjoy the calm of equity and collaboration.

At Oak Grove School our youngest students, aged three to six, attend preschool and kindergarten. At the core of our practice of the art of observation during these early years is active listening and paying respectful attention. Teachers find that when we listen to young children, they provide a window into our society's priorities, values and prejudices:

'I wish I could be pretty like Daisy. She has bubble gum-coloured skin.'

'He can't be the daddy lion—he has slanty eyes.'

When young children are free to choose their play, teachers observe that they already exhibit societal stereotypes. By the time kids enter preschool, they have assimilated biases from the wider society, often developing strong, misplaced ideas. Many already show discomfort or even fear of certain differences.

A basic principle in our early childhood work at Oak Grove is that children will draw conclusions about other people based on their own previous experience and conditioning. Our practice of the art of inquiry includes providing space for children to actively question the way they have been conditioned to think about the world. Teachers respond to children's negative comments with discussions that are simple, clear and appropriate to the child's level of understanding.

'Shushing' children after an embarrassing statement might help an adult feel more comfortable in the moment, but effectively teaches kids that there is something shameful about the target of their remarks—and about the child too, for asking a question. Instead, teachers respond by acknowledging what children observe: 'You noticed that Daisy's skin colour is different from yours.' We then give them information using accurate language: 'Skin colour comes from something called "melanin" in your skin, which protects it from the sun. If your ancestors lived where there was a lot of sun, your skin would have more melanin and would be darker.'

Hurtful language elicits an immediate response, so rather than leaping to judgement or evaluation, we describe: 'Ming's eyes are that shape because he is Chinese. People's eyes come in many different sizes and shapes. He uses his eyes to see just like you do.'

A child's statement, such as 'Boys can't wear jewellery', reflects what could be called 'pre-prejudice'. Oak Grove teachers gently but firmly intervene: 'Sam is wearing jewellery and he's a boy.' We support a child who may have been hurt by biased behaviour and help children learn peaceful ways of resolving their own conflicts.

Teachers give straightforward information to children about differences: 'Lilly was born with legs that work differently from yours. She uses her wheelchair to do all kinds of things.' We encourage them to extend their thinking about something that interests them: 'Yes, a ramp would help her chair get up the stairs.'

As we read books or show pictures to children, we mediate messages or images that are stereotyped: 'The person who wrote this book was thinking only about kids who live with a mom and a dad. She wasn't thinking about kids who live with grandmas and grandpas.'

We might create emergent curricula around comments such as these—for example, we investigated wheelchair access at our school and the physics of ramp-building. Teachers also initiate curriculum proactively, planning projects and discussion designed to counterbalance prevailing prejudices in society. We have been inspired by the Anti-Bias Curriculum[1], an approach to teaching young children created by educators in the 1980s, to awaken children's budding capacities for empathy, to support critical thinking about fairness, and to lay the groundwork for their ability to take action against discrimination.

Each January, as part of Oak Grove's participation in the local celebration of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr's birthday, teachers introduce the story of the day in 1955 when Rosa Parks broke the law by refusing to give up her seat on the bus in segregated Montgomery, Alabama. We describe the bus boycott that followed and the subsequent changing of an unjust law through the participation of many people. Children hear Rosa Parks' story and because they process their experience through play, they begin to re-enact it. The 'bus driver' checks to see who can roll their tongue (a culturally neutral genetic trait) to decide who has to sit at the back of the bus! For days, children take on roles in spontaneous versions of this skit.

As children play out a story that intrigues them, teachers pay close attention to their comments, so that we can discuss what they're curious about during group time.

'My skin colour is tan, see? Like the wood on this table.'

'That's not fair! With that law, I couldn't sit on the bus by my friend Benjamin.'

'That's fair to me when everybody can go to school even if they have light skin or dark skin.'

'It's fair that Carol can go to school with me because she's Black and she's my friend, but she only wants to play with Davey.'

'I think that everyone could share the same drinking fountain and could ride anywhere.'

'My dad was alive when that happened with Rosa Parks, too. It wasn't fair 'cause the white person could've stood up! The rule was the dark-skinned people needed to sit at the back of the bus and the light-skinned people needed to sit at the front of the bus. Other people had the idea of stopping riding the bus! It wasn't fair. I like that we changed the rules on it.'

Through this process children begin to understand the injustice of the bus law and the power brought to problem-solving when people work together. Children begin to bring up injustices in their own lives. This year at Oak Grove, at an all-school assembly, preschool and kindergarten students shared their re-enactment of the Rosa Parks story with a rapt audience of elementary and secondary school students. It was followed by interactive activities for all students, designed to explore skin colour differences and to encourage them to share stories of inequitable treatment.

Teachers observe young children at Oak Grove learning to recognize injustice: 'No excluding kids because they're a boy or a girl. Everyone wants to play.' Students develop the ability to generate ideas to make changes: 'We have to write a letter to the company to stop saying that Band-Aids are "skin-colour".' Their ability to speak up for themselves and others in the face of injustice grows: 'Don't play cowboys and Indians—that hurts May's feelings.'

In teaching young children, we make space in our lesson plans for the awakening of empathy. We adults pave the way by helping them feel safe and secure in all their many identities, to interact comfortably with those who are different, to recognize social injustice and to speak up for what feels unfair to them. This is a tall order but, fortunately, it occurs one step at a time in small, daily ways that are accessible to all of us, no matter where we begin.

This work calls on teachers to be light on our feet. None of us is completely free of bias. Oak Grove teachers consider it essential to inquire into our own background to identify misinformation and stereotypes we ourselves carry, so as not to act on them or pass them along to the children in our care. We invite children's families to be partners with us in this process. By facilitating students' growth in these areas and their ability to stand up for themselves and others, they experience their capacity to make constructive changes in the world.

' ... If you want to change the world, you have to begin here (taps chest), which is the world. If you change, you are bound to affect the world.'

J Krishnamurti, 13th December 1975
Meeting with Oak Grove parents, staff, trustees and guests.

Notes

1. Derman-Sparks, Louise, and the A.B.C. Task Force. *Anti-Bias Curriculum,* NAEYC, Washington, D.C., 1989.

Small Wonders

Rupa Suresh

The junior school children, aged around eight, are in class for a geometry module. They look forward to these classes, for here they have discovered that objects like straws and sticks assume a more purposeful role. We have in the previous class learnt about quadrilaterals, which they will now make using ice-cream sticks. I sit down to watch as each child chooses a place in the room to begin work. Squares, parallelograms, rectangles and rhombuses take form and fill up floor space. I notice that many polygons too have made an appearance in the collection. The floor looks like a large canvas on which the children have painted a geometric pattern. A child remarks, 'This is my portion.' Another shouts, 'Hey, you're crossing my boundary!' A few others follow suit. My attention is drawn to the children arranging lines of sticks that define their individual boundaries. Why do they feel the need for demarcation? I wonder, and quickly brush the question aside so that I'm not distracted. Those who haven't created their own lines of territory are happy that their friends have willingly done it for them. I now hear: 'We are making and connecting boundaries. No. We are connecting everything.' After a while, I'm taken by surprise with what unfolds before me: boundaries refuse to be defined distinctly and a large piece of land has emerged. There seems to be sudden unsaid agreement to work together in creating what the children would like to call the 'Ice-cream Stick Land'.

The children busy themselves in building houses, a cricket pitch, a pond, a tunnel, a swimming pool, a fire station, a sanctuary, a dump place (for garbage collection), a temple, a church, a hospital, a park (I wouldn't recognize this were it not for the see-saw), a duck bridge (a toy duck stands on the bridge), a town aquarium, a crab house (crabs live here!) and a pleasure land park! They pile sticks, break some into different lengths, incline them at various angles to

suit their needs, add toy animals in the sanctuary, and look for other objects in the vicinity to adorn their piece of land. They work tirelessly, well beyond the timetabled math block period; the timetable has faded into oblivion.

I try hard to gather and make sense of the multiple conversations in the room: 'Hey, somebody just kicked this.' 'I'm helping, does anybody need more sticks?' 'Arjun, pass this to Dyuti.' 'We need to open another packet of sticks!'

I see a child jump over some of the structures created. She repeats this several times. Somehow her peers do not think it is a bad idea; perhaps I am the only one worried about the park or the bridge being knocked down. Once all the structures in Ice-cream Stick Land are labelled, I notice the one that says 'Town exit' and instantly the pattern on the floor begins to look like a maze.

For a while the students walk around, taking a closer look at the display. They look pleased with what they have created and I appreciate their work. I suggest that they calculate the area and perimeter of Ice-cream Stick Land. A few of them begin to think of how they can do this. 'We measured the plant beds outside junior school with paper,' says a child. As three of them tape sheets of newspaper with my help to make a square metre, the others get signboards ready for visitors. Needless to say, they are eager to invite other teachers and children for a guided tour of their land. The square metre sheet, carried by four children, slowly descends and hovers delicately just over the structures they have created. Another child assists by marking lines on the floor with a chalk to show the portion measured. The children take turns measuring the land and arrive at 10 sq.m. Since the shape of the land is irregular, the answer, they say, can only be an approximate measurement.

The students now discuss how they can calculate the perimeter. At this point I wonder if the few who are confused about area and perimeter will now see the difference between the two clearly. They decide to count the number of sticks and multiply that by the length of each stick. They tell me the other option is to run a thread along the outline and then measure its length to get the perimeter. To be sure and precise about the number of sticks, three children begin to count the sticks that form the outline of the land, each starting from a different point. They count again as one child arrives at 121 and the other two at 122. The three then confirm the number as 122. I help a child measure the length of the ice-cream stick: 11cm. Calculations are made:

1342 cm is the perimeter. Signboards with special messages, smiling faces and constant chatter greet the visitors who have come to see the display.

The children definitely enjoyed the process; this is evident from the excitement and initiative displayed. They have spent many hours on this creative project. The activity was another opportunity for them to see the relevance of concepts like area and perimeter. I'm not certain that all the children in the class have understood the concepts clearly. I will be able to tell only later, perhaps in working with them in the next class.

Was my learning objective fulfilled? Were there new learning objectives? Indeed, the learning objective I sought for the class was fulfilled. The children did make quadrilaterals. As the children created not just their land but also more opportunities to learn, new learning objectives came to mind: reinforcement of maths concepts and drawing a map of the land. These objectives need not be rigidly held, for they will then pose demands on the direction the activity takes. The children have initiated an activity and may have their own ideas on how to see it through. I bear this in mind even when I make suggestions to them in the course of the activity. I play it by ear; I make a suggestion and some of them take it on while others do not.

There are many learning outcomes of this activity. The children have learnt to work cooperatively, to share material and resources, to apply concepts learnt, to communicate ideas clearly and to present their work to others. For any activity, there can be unexpected learning outcomes. Apart from those learning outcomes that can be directly linked to objectives, it is likely that many others become apparent only in retrospect. In the ice-cream stick land activity, for example, planning the presentation is a learning outcome not immediately perceptible, as it is perhaps masked by the efficiency with which the children work.

This activity by the children illustrates certain principles.

- *Freedom to initiate and explore activities of their own:* From observing children, it is clear that they are able to create activities that they will enjoy. Furthermore, they are also able to make these challenging. A very young child walking on a path may suddenly choose to walk over a narrow line of bricks lying nearby; another may try to jump over three steps, having succeeded at jumping two; a group of children may create a running game with a set of rules that make it challenging and interesting. They can create,

experiment and modify activities to suit the individual or the group. This valuable capacity in children can be nurtured even in the classroom. Of course, this requires us to provide the space and time. Sometimes, as in the case of the ice-cream stick land activity, the children's initiative makes the activity possible and so the task of planning for such an experience does not rest on the adult. Here, the adult's response to such an initiative plays an important role in creating the experience for the children.

- *Working in a group:* The creation of the ice-cream stick land depended considerably on the children's ability to cooperate and work together. They shared ideas and resources, and volunteered to help each other while engaging in this activity. I have also noticed that children are able to distribute work amongst themselves, often with an awareness of each other's areas of proficiency and difficulty. These are worthwhile skills, which can only be honed while they are engaged in group work. The children in my example were motivated to participate in the process. Even those children who did not readily show interest when I suggested that they measure the land were slowly drawn to participate with enthusiasm. It is also likely that a few children tend to be passive in their participation. Working in a group allows the children space to give each other feedback about their contribution to the group effort, and this may well encourage participation.
- *Opportunity for application of concepts learnt:* As teachers, we like to give our best to planning how we will present a particular concept to the children. While this can be a one-time affair, opportunities come by where children can appreciate the relevance of something they have earlier learnt. One such opportunity came in the form of the ice-cream stick activity and, fortunately, it did not slip by. I am not suggesting that teachers go after several opportunities in some sort of rabid fashion. However, being alert to these provides us a range to choose from. Wherever possible, children can be encouraged to apply concepts they have learnt to enable reinforcement. Such opportunities may not promise motivation in children. Nevertheless, they do make learning meaningful to them.

Prashanti's Dilemma: Wisdom and Struggle in Students' Voices

G Gautama

Ethic - a set of moral principles, esp. ones relating to or affirming a specified group, field or form of conduct: the puritan ethic was being replaced by the hedonist ethic. Origin - based on ēthos

ēthos - the characteristic spirit of a culture, era or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations: a challenge to the ethos of the 1960s.

I attempt to explore the teachings of Krishnamurti, the role of education and secular ethics. There is not just one ethical code that drives our society; possibly there has never been. Archetypes point to Rama and the demonized Ravana in contrast. Events near and far draw our attention to the gap between stated moral positions and the practiced. While most of us may not commit murder for gain, would we come to the rescue of a woman being teased? This may prove costly! One can surely think of many similar examples.

Is there a connection between school and society? What is the communication that students receive through their school years on the questions of ethics? I avoid the word 'instruction'; in the world that we now inhabit, learning happens in many ways. The role of osmotic and non-verbal injunctions is potent and members of society feel the pressures of these. They carry inner injunctions defining good life, success and what is called 'normal'.

In recent years the role of individuals in civil society has come in for sharp examination from many angles. Does the individual matter? Does our education prepare us for participation in the upholding of ethical living? Or does it co-opt one helplessly into the role of invalidated bystander, helpless victim, tame and happy upholder of the unethical happenings in small and large measure?

In this context, I have heard students utter powerful words, authentic words. Many conversations have been deeply insightful, and leave fond memories of the students. Their words have been beacons

and hold a timeless quality. In this article I share some of these, but I hasten to say that the constructions are mine and the meanings drawn also mine. Students often utter deep things and then move on to other things. Once someone asked me, 'What is the strength of the school where you work?' I replied after a pause, 'Conversation!' The visitor persisted, with that tolerant look reserved for those who are a little slow, 'I mean, how many students do you have?' I said, 'Oh that! 350, hardly a number in India today. We are not so much a school, more a laboratory.'

Difficult situations

I saw a popular Tamil film some days ago—*Vettaikaran,* the hunter. The villain is a law unto himself and manipulates the police and all other institutions to satisfy his desires. Fear is his weapon. The hero learns this and then uses the same to overcome the villain. Co-opting is an important process. One may find oneself co-opted into positions that one does not endorse.

Nothing brought the role of co-opting more starkly to me than an episode in school that happened about ten years ago. Two students in class 11 had developed bad blood between them. Not uncommon. They came to the edge of a fight. Not uncommon. Some posturing and threats followed. Girls and the loyalty of the older students kicked into the debate. The students decided to 'have it out' outside school. They knew that this would not be acceptable in school—teachers would intervene. So they both brought 'friends' in support, to 'settle scores' on Independence Day after the sports events that were held at school. We were lucky that the matter did not progress as planned, thanks to an alert watchman, a last-minute phone call by a parent and the important fact that the students were open to the voice of the Principal. Nevertheless, this shocked us all.

We discussed the matter with students and parents, and among teachers. Such a thing was not supposed to happen in a Krishnamurti school! How did we get here? Students will have disagreements, and some of these may generate heat. One boy in this conflict was fair-complexioned, typically English speaking, guitar strumming and 'cool', and had joined in class 8, almost a newcomer. The other was Tamil speaking, rooted in the 'soil' and had been in school from kindergarten. They were different, inimical in their gut response to each other, starkly polarized and unabashedly so. Both were rebellious, honest and also valued the words of their teachers.

We had many conversations in order to understand what happened and tried to engage with the shame and sadness that students felt. What we heard shook us. Almost the whole senior school knew of this problem and most knew that the 'clash' was going to happen. Many students had tried to avert the fight. They had given up in helplessness or felt it was not their business. The only people who were clear that this was not right, the teachers, knew

nothing about it. The unwritten code of the students operated—'don't snitch!' As one student said, 'If they want to kill themselves, who can stop them?'

Another year a student in class 9 was bullied by a group of students. It happened systematically over a long period of time, away from the gaze of teachers. Again all knew except the teachers.

These were painful reminders of the statement 'You are the world'. We tried hard as a school to say that these were aberrations, due only to one student who was a 'bad egg'. In one case we could point to an 'outsider', a new entrant with a new culture. In the other we could not say this —the outsider was the target. A large number of students were involved. Some did not think anything would happen, others tried to do something, some did everything except bring in the adults, and most were anxious, saddened and helpless. Many parents knew, and knew that the teachers were in the dark, but did not speak. Almost all allowed their wisdom to be 'invalidated'. Almost all took responsibility up to a point. None took complete responsibility.

Could this be what Krishnamurti meant when he said 'students grow up and fade away into the woodwork'? These episodes show starkly that we are part of the woodwork. We work the way our society works. In fact, society is the way it is because we are who we are.

Conversations

On a visit to the hills in 2008 with class 12 students, a conversation grew suddenly. An adult said to the students, 'One who accepts a bribe is worse than the one who gives it. If the person did not ask for a bribe, I would not have to give. It is unavoidable. I don't want to, but sometimes I bribe … ' One student contested this view. She said, 'In my eyes both are equally responsible,' and stirred up a hornet's nest of discomfort.

Another adult offered balanced words: 'Don't be extreme; be practical and sensible. It is not necessary to be idealistic always. Ask your parents …You will tie your hands if you take such a position.' 'The heady wine of pragmatism' was offered to students as a voice of sanity.

J Krishnamurti said to students, 'Don't be corrupt!' He also said that the purpose of schooling is not to help students 'just fit into a corrupt society'. Teachers may not want to enter the space of this very difficult conversation, but once they do, what then? Or what if this conversation erupts, unasked?

One of the monthly occurrences in The School is a one-hour meeting of all students above class 5 with teachers, called the Open House. Anyone can bring up any topic or question for discussion. One can raise a question different from the one being discussed. We speak one at a time in a loud, clear voice so all can hear, and we don't engage ourselves in a side conversation or a game with neighbours. During one such Open House held in a grove of thick

tamarind trees I asked, 'Are you as students learning how to lead your life properly? Is coming to school everyday helping you? What is happening with you as a person?'

A student of class 5, aged ten, Prashanti, put up her hand and in a clear, loud voice, with a smile playing on her face said, *'I know what to do, but I don't do it; I want to do it but I can't do it!'*

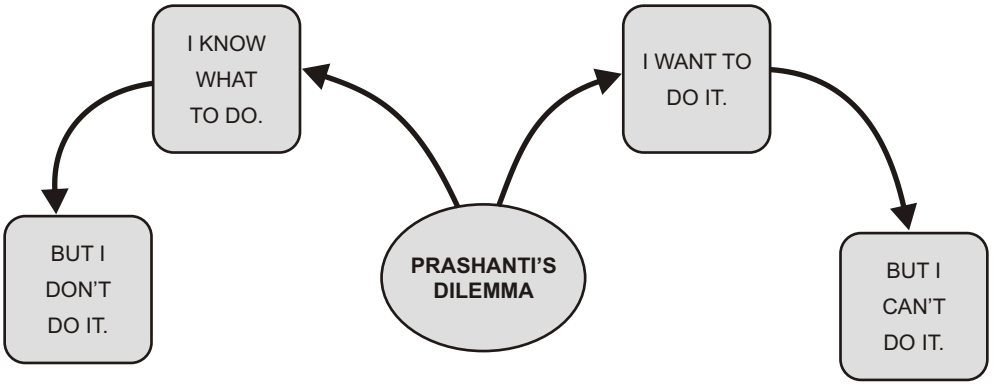
Her body was dancing as she spoke, moving one way and another, lending great authenticity to this creative act of finding words for an existential state. This statement represents many things to me. It is most valuable that the young have much wisdom and are still untrammelled. Prashanti spoke a truth that I have seen myself and many around me experience time and again.

I heard a student bring up a point recently in a conversation class—she spoke about how she finds speed very exciting, how she likes going in vehicles that travel fast, how one can avoid the police checks, and the thrill and the fear involved. She also spoke about how nothing has changed for her in this area despite a cousin losing his life on the road. Many others joined in and some spoke about all the tricks they used to avoid the police and echoed the excitement of speed. None seemed to catch her poignant question: 'If even death cannot teach me, then how will I learn? I know all the rules and the advice and that I should be cautious and respectful of others, but …'

The conversation classes, culture class, enquiry time or K-time share an important element. The teachers and students try to create and sustain an atmosphere in which such wisdom can surface without being ridiculed. It is valuable as this is also often a space for co-holding, a sharing in the value and the responsibility. This zone is possibly the most difficult in a school; children learn by osmosis that it is acceptable to laugh and put down others. It is not as if there is an obvious intention to hurt. It is just that we painfully discover our conditioning in our own responses. The child and adult are not separate here. 'You are the world' stands out prominently for all to see. The tension between strength and futility is evident in such interactions. How will the teacher ensure dignity for all? Can the teacher not take recourse to indignity and authority in the process?

In school one of the dominant concerns of students is 'fairness'. They become very agitated at perceived unfairness. Unfortunately, this code of fair behaviour is pulled out only in times of crises, and it has been my understanding that such moments are poor educators. Crises are meant to be fully experienced in order to understand who we are and manage with the best resources we can muster. I believe that in times of crises one needs to act, and all action can be found faulty in the *post mortem*. But act one must!

The 'acontextual' occasions are precious learning ground. When there is no crisis, when no problem is evident, when the



ground is relatively pleasant, enormous learning opportunities are present. This is the time the code of right behaviour with each other can be exercised and spoken about. This is the time when 'what is' can be gazed at for an understanding.

दुख में सुमिरन सब करे सुख में करे न कोय।
जो सुख में सुमिरन करे दुख काहे को होय।

Kabir

Discussing put-downs or bullying when a problem surfaces is one thing, but it is quite another when all is well. When all is well the discussion can be around a question such as, 'Is respect for all at all a workable thing?' Engaging and thinking about such a question in a non-threatening and non-coercive ambience brings to light our own felt experience. And K's words 'understanding what is transforms what is' can be a guide. Resolutions such as 'I must control myself when angry' are to be treated as mere starting points. In such conversations, one encounters the voice impatient with mere talk and it urges one to do something. To listen to this too, without contempt or sense of superiority, is a humbling experience.

In another Open House, almost 15 years ago, a student answered the dilemma of conversation: 'At worst one may get bored, at best one may learn something! I think we should go on with Open Houses.'

In most classes students have a seat that is fixed—the privilege of being near a window or under a fan is claimed by a few and that is that. Some are consigned to the back benches and others, equally helplessly, to the front rows. This is the time when it is possible to breathe the notion that as equals we can sit randomly, and randomization can be done by anyone, also a student. Changing places each week is a liberating exercise. It challenges our notions of comfort. The less the students are embedded in small groups, the better they are equipped for life, where hidden opportunities will surface. Randomization

permits an opportunity to interact with people one would never interact with otherwise. There is a social and ethical message—that each is worthy of attention and respect.

Again, acontextual conversations, not those born of a problem or a situation, permit one to look at things without compulsions and grasp the fabric of life as a multiplicity of experiences. One may be able to see that the positions one takes shift, and one could well be the other. This is possibly the best preparation for living with responsibility and depth.

*

One of the tough questions that surfaces often is, 'Whose ethics?' Looking beyond mere constructs such as democracy, would it be right to say that ethical conduct requires respect not just for a humane law and its manifestations, but respect for human beings beyond status, power and money? Ethical conduct requires underpinnings that go beyond the normative rules to guide one's actions. Following rules can be a matter of training. This may serve a purpose. Surely right conduct requires an awareness of the inner dialogue that weighs the situations in our lives, searching for appropriate responses. This dialogue is what connects us to life around, to society, and creates the world around. Thus, when K says 'you are the world and the world is you' he refers to the close connection between the individual and society, the seamless nature of the inner dialogue with the outward manifestations.

When we see life in a polished setting, we are tempted, seduced, not to look beyond. One encounters the assertion, 'Why should the ethical conduct of another be my concern? Why, in looking at another, should I reflect on myself?' K seems to suggest that this is an opportunity to bear witness to the society we have created. Such looking, gazing, without judging or dismissing or agreeing, is an act of compassion and there is not much of this left with adults. The innocence of our children and the sharp gaze of our youth is our best hope. Most adults seem to have given up.

शहरों शहरों गलियों जिसका चर्चा है
वो अफ़साना तेरा भी है मेरा भी।
मैखाने की बात न कर वाइज़ मुझ से
आना जाना तेरा भी है मेरा भी।

The story that is yours, and mine …
is the talk of the town and the streets
Tell me not of the evils of taverns, Oh preacher,
We all go there; you go there, and so do I …

Mirza Ghalib

Editors' Note: *This is the gist of a talk given in March 2011 at the Krishnamurti workshop in Delhi University*

Composing a Culture in Music

Anand Mathew Kurien

The schools in India that derive their inspiration from the philosophy of Krishnamurti are different from the mainstream schools in many aspects. One primary difference is in the predominant wisdom that the real potential of a child has nothing to do with 'how well he fares' in the 'subjects' offered in school. We tend to agree with theories that suggest the multi-dimensionality of a child's intelligence. Defining 'intelligence' has been a very interesting process. There are several definitions for the word, and many people have formulated interesting theories about it. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, for example, suggests that an individual can have any of the nine different types of intelligences (linguistic, musical, logical, spatial, kinaesthetic, personal, social, natural and spiritual intelligence) in different combinations.

Almost always, however, there are semantic constraints in giving an accurate definition for 'intelligence'. The closest I have come to it was back in college when my physics professor, while discussing artificial intelligence, said, 'Intelligence is pattern recognition.' I had not heard about Gardner back then, but this seemingly technical, computer-age definition was very appealing to us science students. It makes even more sense today when I think of this definition in the context of Gardner's theory. But what thrills me the most is that it makes perfect sense in the realm of music!

Good Earth School presented me the rare privilege of introducing Western classical music to children of all levels, from kindergarten all the way up to class 12. Here, the word 'Western' alludes to the methodology of learning and practising to sing, read, write, compose, interpret and analyse a piece of music in accordance with the Western classical music tradition. What most people may not know is that this is the same methodology used in the

composition of almost all popular music (both Indian and foreign) that originated after technology (gramophones to iPods) made it possible for an ordinary music lover to listen to music without attending a live concert. And, needless to say, this music also includes all the regional movie songs of India, which most young people enjoy. This article is the result of a search for reasons to promote this new venture at Good Earth and, in doing so, also peek into some of the interesting features of Western classical music.

The first reason was a firm conviction among some teachers that learning English songs with the right pronunciation would be an effective way to improve the diction of children who had a strong influence of their mother tongue when they spoke the English language. Apart from poems, stories and plays, songs can also help just as much in learning and memorizing strings of words, and in improving diction and vocabulary. All of us can remember the words of *Twinkle, twinkle little star* or *Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?* or the alphabet song *A - B - C - D - E - F - G*. We may not remember who taught us these songs; we may not even have made any effort to learn them by heart. Yet those strings of words seem to roll off the tongue so easily because they are attached to a melody.

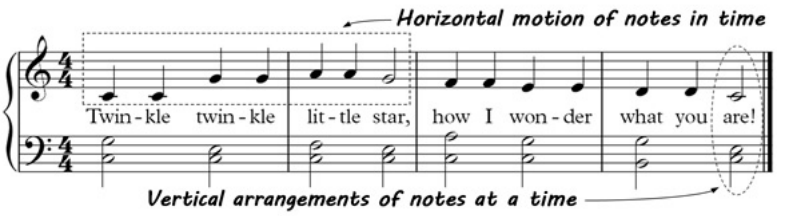
Surprisingly, most of us overlook the fact that these three different nursery rhymes have (if taught properly) an identical melody and almost identical rhythm. In fact, the slight variations in rhythm are only to accommodate the word or syllable count into the song metre. This famous tune is adapted from the melodic theme of Mozart's *Zwölf Variationen in C* or *Twelve Variations in C*. When I heard this classic piece for the first time it kept me wondering for days about the genius of the composer.

The second reason was to introduce children at a young age to a very interesting concept that is absent in the Indian tradition of music: harmony. Harmony in the musical context means to play or sing at more than one pitch simultaneously, causing a pleasant effect in the listener. In the Indian tradition, when a singer sings a melody, the accompanying string or wind instrument also plays the same melody. Such a rendition in the Western tradition is called playing 'in unison'. The only exception to unison music in the Indian tradition is the *tambura* that consistently plays the *'sa'* throughout the song (a *'pa'* or a *'ma'* may also be added to this). No matter what note the singer sings, the *tambura* always plays the *'sa'*. In the West, such a perpetuating note is called a 'drone'. An ancient European stringed instrument (a cross between a violin

and a sewing machine!) called the 'symphony' was designed for creating drones. The more familiar Scottish bagpipes also do the same thing.

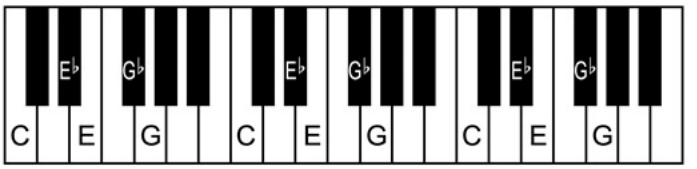
Musicians in the West found that certain notes (two or more), when played together, created a pleasant effect. Very appropriately, they termed this concept 'harmony': one note 'harmonizes' with another. The above-mentioned example of the 'drone' is a simple one. The first note of a scale (the Indian *'sa'* of *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni* or the Italian *'doh'* of *doh, re, me, fah, sol, la, te*) harmonizes with any other note in the scale in a very distinct way when played simultaneously. Although the musicians of India may have discovered the secrets of harmony, the difference lies in the fact that the Westerners employed it very seriously in their music writing. Indians, meantime, focused so much on melody that today their melodic renditions are far more complex than those the West has to offer. Here, however, I will concentrate on the different aspects of harmony.

A single musical note (or pitch) may not create any sense of emotion in our brain. The progression of various single notes in time, commonly known as melody or tune (and musically the horizontal motion of notes in time) does produce a sense of emotion, like that of a song sung by a soloist or a tune played on a flute or a violin. On the other hand, a simultaneous combination of two or more different notes producing harmony is also called a 'chord' (which then becomes the vertical arrangement of notes at a time). A chord creates a sense of emotion even though it is static, without any movement in time: plucking multiple strings on a guitar or playing two or more keys on a piano simultaneously would be a simple example.



To understand this, try playing the notes C, E and G simultaneously on a keyboard or a guitar (You can also try this with 3 violins or 3 flutes.). You will notice very distinctly that it represents a feeling of *happiness*. Now, play the notes C, E^{b} (pronounced 'E flat') and G and you will immediately find that it depicts a feeling of *sadness*. As mentioned before, such a simultaneous

combination of two or more notes is called a 'chord'. The first one here is called a C major chord and the second is called a C minor chord. The difference between the C major and the C minor chord is just one (the middle) note: an E or an E^{b}. Also, try C, E^{b} and G^{b}: it will depict *fear* (this is called a C diminished chord). Let us stop here for a minute to understand that the E note can be produced if a string or an air column in a flute vibrates 659 times in one second. In other words, it vibrates at 659 Hertz (Hz). Similarly, the E^{b} is 622 Hz. So it would seem that for the brain (and this is amazing) the difference between human sadness and happiness is a difference of just 37 vibrations per second!

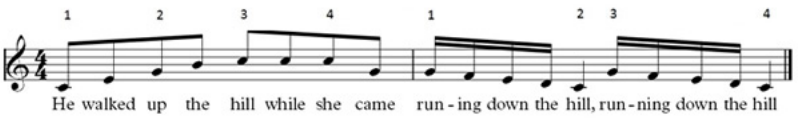


The pedagogy in Western classical music has defined over 15 to 20 chord types built on a single note, and each of these will depict a very distinct feeling or emotion. There are 88 such notes on a piano. Now, if we can get certain carefully selected chords to move in time, it can create wonders, emotions beyond what words can express! Beethoven (1770–1827) did so in his *3rd Symphony (*the *Great Eroica in E-flat)*, which was such a bold expression of emotionalism that this single piece of music marked the beginning of an all-new era, the Romantic era, in the history of Western classical music. Mozart (1756–1791) did so too, and hence all his piano concertos are perfect! If all this is too much musical jargon, let me put it in a different way. There are 88 keys on a piano. Playing just one note at a time, it can be mathematically shown that one can compose more songs than there are stars in the known universe! Imagine how much we can express if we play two, three, four or even eight notes simultaneously, and how wonderful it would be to be part of such an expression.

The third reason for promoting this form of music at Good Earth was to make the most of a universal written form of music. In the Indian tradition, songs and tunes are passed on from generation to generation by singing, playing and listening. This tends to cast doubts on the authenticity of the original tune as it was imagined by the composer. A good example is how we often come across various versions of the same song sung by different artists.

Although this may not be a crisis, it is both valuable and an interesting experience to know what went through the mind of the composer when he thought of the music. In 200 BC, a man named Sekulos wrote a song for his departed wife and inscribed it on her gravestone in the notational system of the Greeks. Today, after two millennia, it can be sung exactly the way he wrote it!

Yet another advantage is that learning to read, write and hence think music can be an extremely powerful tool. All of the music one imagines can be written down in pictorial form. So, apart from the auditory effect, one can also go by the visual feel of the music to enhance the composition. This is especially so in the correlation of the words with the music. In Western classical theory, this correlation of music and words is called 'painting a picture with music'. Observe in the example below (one note for every syllable) how the notes of the music move up or down in pitch, correlating with the words. For those who understand this musical notation, notice that when 'he walked', the music also 'walks' and when 'she runs', the music also 'runs'! (The numbers above the notes denote how the rhythm progresses.) This visual advantage can be further used in many different ways to make the music very interesting.



While a few of us would prefer to play or sing a song, most of us just enjoy listening to it. However, what we often do not understand or even think about is why a particular song is enjoyable. To understand this in all its glory and fullness, in my opinion, one must learn to read, write and think music. Reading and writing music can be learnt easily. But 'thinking' music is not a very easy process. It usually comes with experience or with the understanding of the relationship between one musical note and another. In the process of learning Western classical music, I have come to understand that although music is widely considered an art, the 'art of composing' good music is essentially a science. There are strict rules that one needs to follow in order to make music enjoyable for a listener. Being primarily a teacher of physics and an ardent fan of mathematics gives me the substantial advantage of understanding music from a scientific point of view as well. There are very clear mathematical patterns that govern a given composition. I call it mathematical

because of my training in science, but for a pure musician, they are musical patterns. We both mean the same thing.

Let us now go back to the initial discussion about intelligence being 'pattern recognition'. There are two sides to the coin: pattern recognition and its obvious counterpart, 'pattern prediction'. This means that mathematical intelligence, say, demands not just recognition of mathematical patterns but also prediction of mathematical patterns. Again, in the light of Gardener's theory, a person with, say, spatial intelligence is not just someone who understands spatial patterns around him but is also one who can predict and imagine how a space would look if something was added or removed. Therefore, musically speaking, understanding and recognizing musical patterns, and the rules involved in making these patterns, lead to a greater appreciation of a song. A good musician does not just appreciate these patterns but can also predict what will come next in a song even though he has not heard it before! So, reading, writing, hearing and, most importantly, thinking music can be a very useful tool.

Bach (1685–1750), one of the greatest creators of Western classical music, was also a man who built organs that were as big as churches themselves. He used to carry with him a roll of leather that had a keyboard painted on it, and he practised playing on it. Of course, no portable Yamaha keyboards existed during his time! But the question is, what music did he hear when he moved his fingers over this painted leather keyboard, looking at the music score in front of him? Bach said music would flow from a magnificent organ but the sound it created was limited by its size and shape. However, the advantage of playing on the roll of leather that could be stretched over a tabletop is that he could imagine the sound to be that of the most magnificent organ ever built! My music teacher once told me that it is a great sense of absolute understanding if one can hear what one sees on a sheet of music in the written form and vice versa. He said, 'A good musician is one who can hear what he sees and see what he hears.'

But how does one learn to read, write and think music? The answer is simple. We do it just as we learn to read, write and think in language. Let us now find out how well our brain processes the English language. Hold a book upside down and try to read the contents. You will see that you can read it easily. I am also sure that you can spot spelling mistakes in a text and yet understand the meaning of it just fine. 'Tihs is besuace it deos not mettar in

what oedrr the lerttes of a wrod are arrngaed, the brian usullay lokos olny for the fisrt and the last letrtes to idneitfy the wrod as a whloe!' It doesn't matter what font, size or shape the material is written in, either: our brain has become so familiar with the vocabulary that it can process the information without any problem. Make no mistake, this works just as well in music. Basically, it is a matter of familiarity, conditioning and a good musical vocabulary. And all this can be achieved by developing a culture in music.

Great ideas and concepts that changed the world always originated from within a group of dedicated people who created a certain culture around them. When we talk of institutions, we often come across places that have a culture that produces new things, which inspires the people around them. This could be a hospital with a group of great doctors and administrators. It could be a school or a college that has good teaching and non-teaching staff. Music too has the ability to emerge from institutions and places that have a musical culture built into them. When you think of Africa, for instance, you think of drums and drum beats. The people there do have an elevated sense of rhythm. Similarly, if you go to North East India, to places like Mizoram, Assam or Nagaland, you will see that two things matter to them: football and music! As a result, most people you meet from these north-eastern states have a good sense of pitch and rhythm. Building a healthy culture, therefore, whether in music or anything else, becomes a very important process, one that will define the quality of all dimensions of an institution.

How do we build a culture in music? One way is to impart an appreciation for it. The formal Western music curriculum in all Western universities in the world has a course in 'Music Appreciation' or in other words 'what to listen for in music'. How can one listen more carefully to music? The practical things one might listen for include the following:

- *Rhythm* (is cyclic and therefore repeats itself in time)
- *Melody* (the horizontal movement of pitches in time)
- *Harmony* (the vertical arrangement of different pitches at a time)
- *Dynamics* (how loud or soft the various sounds are)
- *Tone Colour* (what kind of voice or instrument is used in the song. The tone differs from person to person and instrument to instrument)
- *Texture* (how many different notes and/or instruments are playing simultaneously) and
- *Form* (the musical structure of the piece).

The above-mentioned points will help us become closely attuned to what is going on in the music and to hear more of the finer details. Studies have shown that there are two main factors that lead a person to appreciate a certain kind of music. First, if there is a person in your life who loves a certain kind of music, just being with them or listening with them, or just listening to them talk about the music, will give you the urge to listen and appreciate it. The second is repeated listening. Our favourite songs are the ones we listen to, over and over again. The more we listen to them, the more the finer aspects are revealed and the more we appreciate the music. For those of you interested, one of the first books written on this topic was Aaron Copland's *What to Listen for in Music* (1957). It was never intended as a textbook in music appreciation courses but was often used as one and is still in print today.

A final reason for introducing Western classical music at Good Earth: Steven Mithen wrote an interesting book, *The Singing Neanderthals* in which he explores the origins of music and language in the human mind. In the introductory chapter of this book he says:

> *In this book I am not concerned with the specific music that we like but with the fact that we like it at all—that we spend a great deal of time, effort and often money to listen to it, that many people practice so hard to perform it and that we admire and often idolize those who do so with expertise, originality and flair!*

Music does seem to have a profound effect on our lives whether we are conscious of it or not!

A wise teacher recently told me, 'Music or Art or Science, all arise from the same sense of wonder, wanting to understand the world through our senses, and meet nature with one's own madness, sensibilities and seriousness.' The questions therefore are posed to the educators: Do we as teachers watch a child wonder limitlessly? Do we lead them to imagine boundlessly? Do we show them they're alive? Do we let them ramble, follow traces, jump up with joy, get lost, be surprised, amused and inspired? Do we let them search for the 'whats', the 'hows' and the 'whys' of life? Do we randomly hum a tune and ask them to hum the rest of it? Do we lead our children into the self-discovery of their madness, their sensibilities and their seriousness?

Anthony de Mello said, 'A bird does not sing because he has a statement. He sings because he has a song.' The added responsibility of a teacher is to

impart this truth to children: that the song is more important than the singer and that, therefore, when we sing 'we' must disappear, leaving behind only the song!

Suggested reading: http://www.bostonconservatory.edu/music/karl-paulnack-welcome-address

Suggested video: http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_ passion.html

The Subject of Art

MARINA BASU

The love of beauty may express itself in a song, in a smile, or in silence; but most of us have no inclination to be silent.We have not the time to observe the birds, the passing clouds, because we are too busy with our pursuits and pleasures.When there is no beauty in our hearts, how can we help the children to be alert and sensitive?

J Krishnamurti

Nobody sees a flower really; it is so small.We haven't time, and to see takes time – like to have a friend takes time.

Georgia O'Keeffe

Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.

Paul Klee

An egret was flying overhead, neck outstretched, body perfectly streamlined, wings white against the grey sky. Below was a group of people, out on a walk. One person looked up and observed the bird . . .

There was an opportunity to immerse oneself in art and collectively inquire into the nature of art education, the role of art educators and the fundamental role of aesthetics in our lives in a gathering of art educators from the various KFI schools.[1]

In a society obsessed with material success, schools emphasize the conventional academic subjects while art, if at all it is included in the school's activities, becomes 'extracurricular'. This is just one instance of the fragmentation that happens in our lives.Yet art is an integral part of education, and nurturing an aesthetic sensibility is fundamental for the right kind of education, an education that leads to an 'integrated understanding of life' as Krishnamurti saw so clearly. KFI schools have been consciously located amidst nature, and the beauty of the surroundings seeps into one's consciousness, thus developing an aesthetic awareness; there is also a direct involvement with art, which is a central part of the curriculum.

Yet, how does one teach art? Should there be an art 'curriculum' with structured lesson plans? How important is the teaching of technique? How does one balance the roles of being an artist as well as an art educator without sacrificing one for the other? These were some of the strands of thought related to the pedagogical aspects of art as discussed by the participants.

Art, or rather the creative process itself, can be viewed as the intertwining of two apparently diverse but complementary components. One consists of measurable dimensions like form, line, colour, material and texture. On the other hand are qualities that fall in the immeasurable domain, like aesthetics, rhythm, sensitivity, beauty and harmony.[2] The creative process has to go through the discipline of form and technique, but beauty comes in transcending the given structures and touching something intangible. Herein lies the role of an educator, who has to provide some amount of technical guidance for the student to get started and then step back and let the creative process unfold. It is not the art educator who 'teaches' creativity to a child; the art educator only provides the conditions in which creativity can emerge unhampered. This includes alerting the child to learn from the material, to learn from the beauty around us, to be open to one's inner rhythm, and to flow with one's creative impulses unhindered by judgements, comparisons or conditioning about what something should look like.

For such a sensitive nurturing of creativity, it helps that the educator designs activities with certain pedagogical objectives in mind; however, these should not limit any exploration into the unknown from where true creative insight arises. And in such a journey of exploration, the art

educator also has to be an artist: a creative individual who is ready to take the plunge from the known to the unknown, who undertakes a serious inquiry to creatively understand the world. If one continuously engages with this psychologically, then the children also learn from that. Thus it is not the activities that become important, but rather the quality of interaction between the teacher and the student. The teacher is attentive to the processes taking place while the student is at work, as well as to the quality of being of the teacher herself as an artist, instead of just highlighting outcomes.

It is useful to distinguish between commercialized art—'art' that is produced by the 'artist' and consumed by the 'spectator' or, to put it differently, art that has no relationship to life—and an entirely different timbre of art that arises from a sensitive awareness of oneself in the world. Such art is not disconnected to life processes, as it is a way of life for the artist. The artist has a meditative relationship with the world; the creative process unfolds from silent observation of the world. As Krishnamurti wrote, it is from an empty mind, a mind free of chatter (in other words, a silent mind), that creativity is born. Creativity is where the self is not, since an alertness and sensitivity to the world around us can happen only when we are not caught up in self-centred pleasures or worries.

While exploring the world of colours and expressing oneself on canvas or paper, one has to develop the quality of being with oneself; one has to learn to listen to one's inner rhythm, a listening that arises in silence. The gap between the canvas and life is bridged when the artist learns the art of seeing and listening to the world within and without. In this striving, one's engagement in art becomes a quest and a self-motivated journey and not a mere 'subject' that has to be mastered. For someone who is willing to seriously engage in this process, the beauty of nature, and the silence and leisure in schools like ours allow for an intuitive learning. This learning happens in stillness, in exploring the rich vocabulary of colours, textures and pattern in nature. The uncluttered, silent mind, a mind that is not preoccupied with itself, is able to observe a simple object like a leaf, feel its texture, and thus see the leaf in its totality. The art that unfolds from an inner silence is not imitative or second hand; instead, it is imaginative and original, as each one finds out for oneself a way of creatively being in the world. There is a joy in experiencing things first-hand, in entering into a dialogue with the material, in directly perceiving the world and learning intuitively.

In the gathering of the art educators, another major theme that was explored was the role of craft in the art curriculum. In a place like The Valley School, while art classes are integral to nurturing creativity and insight in a child, craft—with its functional aspect—is a regular and equally

important part of the school's activities. Weaving, carpentry, embroidery, paper-making and pottery are just some of the areas explored in the KFI schools as a part of the curriculum. The child is encouraged to become sensitive to the aesthetics in a simple clay pot, in the weave of a cloth, in the twists of a cane, or even in something as mundane as a broom.

Let me linger a little on this particular object: the broom. If we ever take the time to really look at the much used but overlooked broom and wonder about the story behind it, we will find a whole world of specialized activity opening up. We will discover that a broom is made from locally available materials, which can be coconut leaves or reeds or grasses. Different parts of India have different kinds of brooms, with distinct textures and designs, determined by the materials used in making them. A broom can thus tell us the story of the place it is from if we care to listen deeply enough; it can even give us an insight into the person whose hands and patience crafted that broom, if we are sensitive to it. The making of a simple broom can teach us respect for material and for labour and, thus, also respect for life.[3]

In a space where nature, art and craft come together in creative harmony, the experimentation with material, especially non-conventional material (that is not manufactured and store-bought) can take on a life of its own. Objects lying around—grass, newspaper, wood shavings, sand, sticks or leaves, with their wide-ranging textures—can allow for varied creative expression. Conventional or readymade material hampers the development of sensitivity; its use leads to dependence and passivity.[4] In a society dominated by images and simulacra, sensitizing children about material and allowing them to explore a rich array of media can help them move away from a second-hand experiencing of life to something that is closer to what Krishnamurti envisioned.

Whether we are working with bamboo or some other kind of wood, as we work, we learn to be sensitive to the material itself, allowing the material to shape the emerging form. As anyone who has worked with her hands to create something knows, we cannot impose our will on the material to carve or mould it into any preconceived form. Thus ego takes a back seat and what emerges is something unthought of, something truly new, something original. The self is humbled. For an art educator, the insight is to provide the material and an environment that encourages creativity without any expectation, fear or pressure. In patiently sanding what seems like a random piece of wood one suddenly discovers a beautiful wooden spoon, or in playing with some clay on a wheel an unexpected and unusual form materializes. This is the moment of creation, impersonal and un-authored.

The bird was flying overhead. Someone looked at it in unhurried silence. A form emerged

in clay: the expression of an artist. Artisans—traditional potters—looked at that form and were touched by it. The discipline of the artisans and the inspiration of the artist-teachers led to the creation of an eight-foot sculpture of a bird with its neck outstretched.[5] *The curves of the clay displayed the skill of the artisans and made visible the spirit of the bird in all its grace, strength and beauty, allowing us to feel its vital life force.*

Notes

1 The Valley School, Bangalore, hosted a unique workshop in December 2011. Art educators from the KFI schools as well as seven other educational institutions came together to discuss their vision and concerns through small group discussions and dialogues. Teachers reflected on their individual journeys as artists; there were slide shows of their work and also of representative art work done by schoolchildren. The workshop provided a space for artists as well as artisans to work together and explore the different facets of art. For instance, village potters and pottery teachers collaborated to make an 8ft sculpture of a bird. Nature walks, music recitals and dance performances added to the creative energies of the gathering.

2 Sukant Misra, invited resource person and keynote speaker, emphasized the two strands—the measurable and the immeasurable—that arise in the creative process. He envisages art as a way of life or a personal religion of an artist.

3 Vishakha Chanchani, one of the invited speakers at the workshop, discussed the role of craft in education and argued that instead of delineating craft as an exotic but somewhat marginal and isolated subject, we need to make it central to the educational process. She makes dolls with miniature brooms to draw our attention to this everyday object.

4 Tarit Bhattacharya, one of the invited speakers at the workshop, beautifully illustrated the relationship between originality, creativity and sensitivity on the one hand and media obsession, imitation and outward orientation on the other hand. He initiated the making of a large mural, where all the workshop participants enjoyed working together and used clay, cow dung and straw. This huge piece of work, which appeared to be chaotic initially, soon found its order and rhythm.

5 In addition to creating the sculpture, the teachers (Bhanudas from Sahyadri School, Chandan and Hanumanthappa from Valley School, Satya from Rajghat Besant School and Nandakumar from Rishi Valley) experimented with Raku firing and produced several pieces of Raku ware.

Communication: Studying a Krishnamurti Text

KABIR JAITHIRTHA

This article is the result of a study, by teachers and parents at Shibumi, of a letter from the book *The Whole Movement of Life is Learning.* I have taken long excerpts from the letter and interspersed them with my own reflections as a teacher.

The letter is the thirty-third in the book and is titled *Communication*. It is one of the relatively few letters addressed to students, although it is really equally interesting to adults in its examination of the nature of learning and discipline, and the place of rules in a community of people living together.

> *You come to these schools with your own background, traditional or free, with discipline or without discipline, obeying or reluctant and disobeying, in revolt or conforming. Your parents are either negligent or very diligent about you. You come with all this trouble, with broken families, uncertain or assertive, wanting your way or shyly acquiescing but inwardly rebelling.*

This one paragraph covers the vast variety of backgrounds that students (and indeed teachers) might have come from and how, whatever the background, they sustain their own form of conditioning. It is interesting to note the very different behaviour patterns that students bring with them, from the *assertive to the uncertain and the outwardly acquiescing but inwardly rebelling.* One sees all these patterns and their variations among the students.

> *In these schools you are free, and all the disturbances of your young lives come into play. You want your own way and no one in the world can have his or her own way. Either you learn to adjust with understanding, with reason, or you are broken by the new environment you have entered.*

One can easily see how these patterns play out in the relatively free space that the school provides. This is particularly true of the present times when

individualism is emphasized at home and in society. *No one in the world can have his or her own way.* This is not an assertion of the superior forces ranged against the individual but merely a statement of fact. *Either you learn to adjust with understanding or you are broken by the new environment*. Again, this is not a threat about a particular environment but a factual statement. Adjusting with understanding is neither conformity nor resistance and therefore there is constant learning involved in it.

> *In these schools the educators explain things carefully, and you can discuss with them, and see why certain things have to be done. When one lives in a small community of teachers and students, it is necessary that they have a good relationship with each other that is friendly, affectionate, and has a certain quality of attentive comprehension*.

'Attentive comprehension' obviously applies to both the teacher and the student. The teacher may be impatient or indulgent but neither is the act of attentive comprehension in which alone communication occurs, whether it is about learning a subject or learning right behaviour. We often feel we do not have the time to nurture this quality of listening, but surely only such a communication engenders the movement of learning, and therefore order, which is freedom. Is it a matter of time, or is it impatience, which is focused on the result and therefore not attentive to what is actually taking place in the relationship? It is then that there is a movement of cooperation, and rules become unnecessary. Perhaps this is seen as impractical when one has to deal with larger numbers, but that is a strange criticism indeed. The problem is not in what is being pointed to but the environment one insists on retaining.

> *No one, especially nowadays living in a free society, likes rules, but rules become totally unnecessary when you and the grown-up educator understand, not only verbally and intellectually, but with your heart, that certain disciplines are necessary. The word discipline has been ruined by the authoritarians. Each craft has its own discipline. The word discipline means … to learn, not conform, not to rebel, but to learn about your own reactions, and background, and how those limit you and to go beyond them*.

Rules are unnecessary when there is attentive comprehension. If this is understood, we do not need to agonize over freedom and the need for order or with converting rules into contracts and agreements, but enquire into whether there has been attentive comprehension of what had been talked

about and if not, why not. It immediately demands on the part of the adult as well as the student a quality of integrity, which can only deepen communication and relationship.

> *The essence of learning is constant movement without a fixed point … The mind that is constantly learning is beyond all knowledge. So you are here to learn as well as to communicate. Communication is not only the exchange of words, however articulate and clear they may be; it is much deeper than that. Communication is learning from each other, understanding each other; and this comes to an end when you have taken a definite stand about some trivial or not fully thought out act.*

Communication is learning from each other, understanding each other. It is not just the exchange of information, ideas or opinion. Thus, each act of relating is fresh and independent of the previous one. It is renewing itself and so can never be destroyed. Can this quality of communication be there even in the learning of skills and academic subjects? How is this to happen when it is indisputable that the teacher knows and the student does not?

The mind that is constantly learning is beyond all knowledge. This is true for the teacher as well as the student. The knowledge does not have to be forgotten, nor does there have to be pretence of not knowing in order to be at the same level as the student. In the state of learning there is neither the teacher nor the taught and the subtle movement of authority as one who knows and the other who does not is not there.

> *When one is young there is an urge to conform, not to feel out of things. To learn the nature and implications of conformity brings its own peculiar discipline. Please bear in mind that when we use the word discipline that both the student and the educator are in a relationship of learning, not assertion and acceptance. When this is clearly understood rules become unnecessary.*

There is the natural conformity of the very young, in learning a language, in doing things. Perhaps this is not conformity at all but the movement of learning. Only later, when experiences begin to leave a residue does conformity, born out of the need for psychological security, begin. And the rebellion to those is merely the other side of the coin. To be in a state of learning about conformity is discipline. Can this begin to happen when one is still a child? Perhaps not. But surely, when one is a little older, the teacher and

the student can learn together to be aware of the movement of thought and reaction. And this discipline can continue with increasing sophistication and depth throughout one's school life. This implies that the adult has this quality of learning about his own reactions so that the conversation is a genuine act of observation and not pontification.

> *You learn about the universe not out of pleasure or curiosity but out of your relationship to the world … We are not talking of learning about something, but the quality of mind that is willing to learn. You can learn how to become a good carpenter or a gardener or an engineer. When you have acquired skill in these, you have narrowed down your mind into a tool that can perhaps function skillfully in a certain pattern. This gives a certain security financially, and perhaps that is all one wants.*

It is this relating, which is respect, which sustains order because knowledge is kept in its right place. In this there is no need for knowledge to be contained lest it overstep its boundaries. Learning, order and freedom become the one movement of discipline. So communication is learning from each other and learning is from relationship with the world and each other. It is this relationship that is order, and relationship is not merely a movement of thought. One's whole being is involved in it. There is respect, care, affection and sensitivity. This is the stuff of deep ecology and goes beyond stewardship and accounting. It is this sensitivity that will refrain from destruction of the environment and one's fellow creatures.

> *Discipline is not control or subjugation. Learning implies attention; that is, to be diligent. It is only the negligent mind that is never learning. It is forcing itself to accept when it is shallow, careless, indifferent. A diligent mind is actively watching, observing, never sinking into second-hand values and beliefs. A mind that is learning is a free mind, and freedom demands the responsibility of learning.*

Freedom cannot be divided from learning. To ask which comes first is to not understand this fact. So the laying of the right foundation springs from the movement of learning itself. Freedom is therefore at the very beginning, as Krishnamurti has pointed out so very often. It is not the reward for following a particular pattern in the name of discipline but is inherent in the act of learning about oneself and one's reactions and background, and going beyond them in the swift action of insight.

This piece was initially read together by a small group of parents and teachers of Shibumi. I have found it a very effective way of creating a dialogue where there is space for free-ranging discussions as well as coming back to the original theme and examining it at greater and greater depth. Krishnamurti's voice becomes one of the several voices in the dialogue, and there is no feeling of learning from an authority.

I then felt like reading it out to our older students, ages thirteen and above. It was interesting to observe how deeply it spoke to them—as if addressed to each individual and not merely a general letter. This is not surprising considering how his public talks had the same quality of addressing each individual through the pointing out of facts which are true of each one of us. This is of course one of the several ways in which there can be discussions about fundamental issues and relating them to one's own life. There are other situations where such issues are discussed in a group or individually and the teacher and the student are learning together to look at the many complex issues of life. Learning about oneself need never be an abstraction.

Elsewhere, Krishnamurti has said that we are trained not to observe purely. It is interesting to note that pure observation is not a matter of training but occurs naturally when knowledge does not interfere in the act of observation. As always, the approach is simple and the depths unfathomable.

Big Brother isn't Watching You
—and is not too sure what he is seeing

SIDDHARTH MENON

Recently, on a blackboard in a very public corridor used by students for good-natured but generally anonymous graffiti, something like the following had been neatly printed: SMILE WHEN YOU USE COMPUTERS IN THE COMPS LAB – YOU'RE UNDER CCTV. This was in response to measures like a log register being placed in the lab to keep a check on who was using the computers and for how long. Several weeks later, at a farewell event for outgoing students, I found myself remarking that I hadn't had much time with some of them in the past year—unless they'd gotten into trouble and been marched to my office. Both graffiti and remark were probably intended to be taken less than seriously, but they stand at the two ends of a crucial pole in any school—the way that students and teachers see each other and the way that students, especially, feel that they are being watched.

Instead of 'see' or 'watch', I had in an earlier essay (*Reading Children—a Perspective from Poetry* in Journal No. 13) used the word 'read', and suggested that there were parallels between reading poetry and 'reading' children. But I had also suggested that there was a more prosaic way in which children need to be read; this essay is concerned implicitly with the latter, and especially in relation to behaviour and 'disciplinary' matters. It is less about the poetry of seeing than what you might call the prose of keeping watch.

Which makes it appropriate for the title to be borrowed from that consummate master of prose, George Orwell. *1984* is full of darkly arresting slogans, one of the earliest that occurs being 'BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU'. Like the image of Big Brother himself, on posters and on telescreens, the slogan's presence is felt all through the novel, and you realize straight away that there is nothing avuncular about it. You are being watched, all of the time, and you had better toe the line. If this is a troublingly dystopian message generated by the totalitarianisms of the 1930s and '40s, the invasion of privacy even where you have the illusion of freedom is hardly unknown to us today. Technology makes it

possible to keep tabs on people as never before, without their quite realizing it, and it is being done regardless of the form of government.

On the face of it, neither the grossly intrusive watching of Orwell's creation nor its more concealed versions in today's 'free' societies accurately reflects the situation in our schools. Where the analogy holds truest is perhaps in our assumption that for the school's vision and ambience not to be undermined, it is reasonable to expect that we know what the children are up to, indeed that it is our prerogative to ensure that we are 'in the know'. This does not sound dissimilar to a state's ostensible reasons for watching its citizens. On grounds of state security, for instance, or public morality, governments have had no qualms about prying openly or by covert means into people's lives. Replace 'state security' with 'children's safety' and 'public morality' with something that sounds less priggish ('acting responsibly'?) and this can feel a little like some of our reasons, possibly the more prosaic ones, for keeping an eye on children in a school.

The difference of course—and it makes all the difference—is that a state is generally a jealous state, concerned more with perpetuating itself than with the well-being of its individual citizens. In fact, as Auden satirized in *The Unknown Citizen,* the state is not concerned with individuals at all (except to assure itself that they conform) though it expends considerable ingenuity in gathering information about them. With all this mass of data it does not pause to ask the questions that in a school we would consider fundamental, questions about freedom and happiness, for instance, that the speaker in Auden's poem loftily, or blithely, dismisses as being 'absurd'. To these we might add questions of learning and spiritual growth. In a school our watching of children is not merely tempered by our commitment to their freedom, happiness and growth, as individuals, but is directed towards making these possible. Watching, in other words, is less about preserving the status quo than about preserving a climate that supports learning.

'Preserving' is a less regressive notion than its implicit anchoring in the past might suggest. Isn't there something of such value to a place, something so intrinsic to it, that we would not risk losing it? If a 'climate that supports learning' is one such, an alertness to anything that vitiates it must follow. Since this essay is primarily about the way teachers 'keep an eye' on students, it seems appropriate to focus on those aspects of student behaviour that would, if unchecked, rock the learning boat perilously. In a residential school like Rishi Valley this could include the proclivity amongst older boys and girls to form exclusive relationships, or for students to keep banned items such as cell phones or cigarettes with them. A widespread preoccupation with these, and with keeping such things hidden, can distort their experience of school. And when it clouds the relationship between

students and teachers anything can feel suspect, including, on the one side, innocuous friendships between girls and boys and, on the other, the claim that students in our schools face 'consequences' rather than 'punishments', a legitimate distinction (as I hope to show, since it is relevant here), but one that tends to be perceived by students as an instance of Orwellian doublespeak.

Indeed differences in perception are sometimes the nub of the matter. An illustration from *1984*: the protagonist realizes that he is being eyed and followed about by a girl. He is convinced that she belongs to the sinister Thought Police and is out to trap him for his heterodox views, whereas she is in fact attracted to him but is wary of declaring it because of the risks involved. What is relevant here is the miasma of fear and suspicion in which actions are liable to be misinterpreted. If fear on the one hand and suspicion on the other inform the way children act and teachers see, there is little space for clear-sightedness.

What, then, would bring about an ambience in which evasiveness and 'keeping tabs' are the exception rather than the norm? One in which, to put it differently, students do not feel that they are constantly under surveillance and teachers do not consider their prime duty as being to watch that students keep out of mischief. Although teachers have a greater share of the responsibility to bring this about, a school provides rich opportunities for students also to learn what it means to be responsible not only for themselves but for things of which they form a part—including the ambience of the school.

If students feel disconnected or alienated from this responsibility, it ought to concern us: surely the school is less of an abstraction to most students than an impersonal state might be to its citizens? The school is a human and physical space which, over time and for its myriad associations, many children grow attached to. It is also a space for learning, alone and in relationship, not least learning about oneself and learning how to look at another in an undistorted way. If as teachers we were capable of seeing misbehaviour less as a departure from defined norms than as a hindrance to learning, in a place whose existence is predicated on learning, we would approach disciplinary issues differently. We would more readily see children as partners in preserving the integrity of a space that they share with us. Our primary concern would be with what facilitates their learning (and ours) and what hinders it. To be anchored in this rather than in the rule book would bring a different quality to the way we engaged with students on 'disciplinary issues'.

If the rule book has its place—as it surely might do, for reasons beyond the scope of this essay—it is incumbent on the teacher body to understand its contents. Policies are not arbitrary: they evolve contextually, and it is both instructive and fascinating to follow the process by which they do. To periodically re-examine policies

is to increase the likelihood that rules are implemented not merely because, like Moses' tablets, they exist, but because we have come together in appreciating their relevance. It follows that students should be drawn, wherever possible, into this process of examining policies and the rules that emerge from them. Learning is diminished when we become merely rule-minded: if obeying rules in an unexamined way were to become the focal point of our relationship with students, it would undermine the learning possibilities therein, and narrow our field of vision drastically.

The teacher's task, not just in ensuring that norms are followed without being obsessive about them, but in understanding why they are there in the first place, is not an easy one. One way by which it is both enriched and made easier is when teachers are together in watching, and watching over, children. It hardly bears stating that what we see is partial, not only because each of us has a limited and distinct kind of interaction with a particular child or group of children, but also because we don't see with the same degree of acuity, and how we see is distorted, or occasionally enhanced, by prior experience. We also have different temperaments, are culturally conditioned in different ways and are sometimes unsure whether what we've seen warrants action of some kind. Further, we might not be equally committed to deliberating over either the school's rules or its vision, and we might not relate with the same ease to all of our colleagues (which can inhibit the process of sharing what we observe of student behaviour).

Nonetheless, being in a school gives us the opportunity to learn about watching children, attentively (but non-intrusively). This watching, embedded in our relationship with students, is a wonderfully rich end in itself (as *Reading Children* attempted to show) but it also has a utilitarian aspect, and sometimes calls on us to share what we have seen with colleagues or with parents. To do so in a fair-minded and timely manner requires us to be aware of our limitations as observers. It is disconcertingly easy to assume that what we've seen is the most important aspect of the picture, or to make hasty inferences on the basis of the little we have seen. Impression hardens rapidly into certitude. Seeing, and sharing what we have seen, entails a patient willingness to suspend judgements and conclusions until we've seen further and seen together. Since we know that our seeing can be fuzzy, it is better to err on the side of understanding than of disapproval, while remaining alert to the possibility that there is more to a situation than meets the eye.

In our judgement about what to take note of and how to share it, it can be useful to distinguish between concern for the well-being of individual students, of students as a group and of the school as a 'place of learning'. Ideally there should be considerable overlap between the three, and there generally is, but there are situations where one or the other might take, or appear to

take, precedence over the others. A child's right to free expression may need to be curbed if it is vitiating the atmosphere in a hostel. But even while we curb him, if our emphasis is less on the curbing than on engaging with him so that he begins to understand the impact his actions have on others, this individual's well-being is in fact being served. And a growth in one person's self-awareness must surely be good for the group, and for the space they share.

But what about the other end of the seeing/being-seen spectrum? Students sometimes remark that they are being 'watched' all the time. While in a certain sense this is true, and perhaps needs to be, the problem has more to do with perceptions, balance and, ultimately, with relationship. Not unnaturally students are most aware of our watching when there is something they do not want seen. This might be different if we were equally appreciative of the positives, not just the public achievements that children would expect to be commented on but the little touches, actions or signs of change that might have passed unremarked. If we were as attentive to these as to the things considered undesirable, our watching would be a more joyous affair, and being watched would be less problematic.

Likewise with sharing what we have seen amongst the teacher body: children sometimes feel that teachers only share 'negative' observations. It is up to us to ensure that our sharing does not end, or begin, there. And neither should watching children, evaluating what we have seen and possibly sharing it become programmatic. This can make us less ourselves, less spontaneous, in our relations with students. Another aspect to this is that children sometimes sense, or grumble, that teachers speak about them loosely, with little basis for what we are saying and, what is worse, in a gossipy manner. Whether or not, or to what extent, this is true, there is an implicit caution here: discretion (and even reticence) has its place, and sharing might best be on a need-to-know basis.

Even where we need to probe a possible misdemeanour—by 'interrogating' students, for instance, or checking their bags or lockers—tone and emphasis are all. Superficially, these actions might resemble those of a police state, but if they happen exceptionally rather than as a rule, in a manner that allows students to disclose whatever is concealed before it is discovered (even if it happens on the verge of discovery, self-disclosure is less humiliating) and if, above all, our grounding in the larger context of learning and our affection for the children remain unshaken, these actions would have a rightness that students are likely, over time, to appreciate. This might be easier said than done—in the heat of the moment more superficial or importunate considerations come into play—but it is not impossible.

This is where the distinction between consequence and punishment becomes

relevant. To face the consequences of one's actions allows for a feeling of agency, for the possibility of self-awareness and growth. To face punishment, however justifiable it might seem, is more likely to result in fear, evasiveness and resentment. The former has much to do with learning, the latter with submission to control. From the outside it is not always easy to distinguish whether an action is the one or the other: the real test is where the action is coming from—with what objective and in what depth of relationship—and where the student senses it is coming from. What is the quality of our seeing at the time that hard decisions are being taken? What is the quality of our relationship?

As teachers we sometimes take the rightness of our attitudes so much for granted that it surprises us when we discover that students are 'on a different wavelength'. To engage with one another and with students, to re-examine policies that seem self-evident and open up difficult questions for discussion, is not only to test and refine our understanding, but to bring students into a more active engagement with the school. Indeed it provides teachers and students a shared context for dialogue and learning. This would strengthen relationship and reduce the incidence of fear and misunderstanding, of suspicion and resentment. By learning how to watch together, students and teachers can continually recreate the space that they have come into.

Thus relationship is at the heart of it, even (perhaps especially) in the prosaic realm of discipline. Indeed it is worth reminding ourselves that Krishnamurti repeatedly associated 'discipline' with 'learning'. If a teacher feels, as I ruefully did at the farewell event, that his relationship with a group of students is being weighted towards issues of discipline (in the narrower sense), it is his responsibility to redress the imbalance. He might not teach the class but can always, especially in a residential school, find happier ways of engaging informally with them. If he were to do so, his gimlet eye would be less minatory and the prospect of CCTVs would remain a cheerful witticism.

Educating to be *a Part of* not *Apart from* the Environment

RADHA GOPALAN AND SONALI SATHAYE

We are academicians-cum-practitioners, one from the environmental sciences and the other from the social sciences, coming together as teachers with the aim of re-envisioning an approach to environmental studies. The article invites critical responses, so that ideas introduced here may be developed further.

Introduction

In the present day educational context, engagement with nature and the environment around us is largely cast in the form of 'environmental science' or, at a more advanced level, 'environmental engineering'. The language calls forth images of scientists and engineers engaged in the noble task of saving the basic elements of our life—air, energy, water, fuel, food—by charting and measuring, creating new technologies and by sounding warning bells about crossing limits. Viewed with this lens it emphasizes a technological, instrumental approach to both the problems and the solutions facing our planet. In this telling, there is little acknowledgement of the profound ways in which human culture, its economics, philosophies and ways of life affect our 'natural' environment, and by extension, our resources.

Interdisciplinary boundaries have perforce to be crossed, however, to investigate how apparently dissimilar material processes and systems might work together to create an effect: say, melting polar ice caps upon earthquakes, the effect of Bt brinjal on biodiversity and livelihoods, the destruction of South American rainforests upon rainfall in South India or the effect of a human antibiotic upon vultures. In such cases no single scientific discipline can uncover either causation or amelioration.

Moreover, we are now at a point in human history when the view that science and technology are the panacea for all crises facing the planet is increasingly being challenged by individuals (including scientists, economists and philosophers) and communities (including indigenous peoples). Science is critical to understanding structure, function and processes in nature

and the consequences of resource-use in a particular manner. Science and technology may also provide us with tools to develop solutions and help in determining what is possible to do. However, science cannot help make the choices for us or even perform the task for us. The decisions we make on how we engage with the environment and draw upon natural resources to meet our needs and wants are not driven by this understanding and application of science and technology. Social, cultural and political inclinations underpin and inform our individual and collective decisions.

The ways in which we engage with the environment are thus not driven by material considerations alone. To pretend otherwise is to limit and distort our understanding of the issues; it is to pretend that a technological solution is all we need to save us. For a complete understanding of the environment we need to look to ourselves as a part of it. The social sciences, including history and philosophy, become important tools through which to make explicit the otherwise unexamined imperatives and motivations that shape our individual and collective decisions. The creative arts, we believe, are just as essential to this endeavour, involving as they do those experiential, emotional aspects of ourselves without which, arguably, no learning can be said to be complete.

In this article we propose that the assumptions about the word 'environment', which underlie a model that privileges a scientific knowledge of it, be looked at anew. In its place, we would like to draw the outlines of a broader understanding of 'environmental studies'. In doing so, we will also attempt to illustrate, briefly, how environmental studies could be pursued in schools located in diverse environments. We believe that school is a critical space in this pursuit since this is a formative arena with a profound influence on our conscious and subconscious minds.

Perception of nature

To begin with, we question the idea—promoted by a two centuries-old worldview that underpins much of science—that 'nature' exists as an entity that can be fully known only through a study of its parts, i.e. through a study of its physics, chemistry, biology and geology. Human beings and the natural world have historically been attuned to each other in varying degrees, informed by multiple world-views. We therefore seek to draw attention to the degree to which human culture, its philosophies and the ways in which those unfold in the lives of human beings play a decisive part in the shaping of the natural environment. Indeed, it appears that much of the so-called natural world has already been shaped, or is being shaped, by human beings. This way of approaching 'environmental studies' suggests, therefore, that working towards creating more sustainable environments on our planet is not just a matter for the natural scientist, but for everybody. And school education must play a key part in

educating persons who are concerned about the state of the planet and feel a sense of responsibility towards maintaining its integrity.

In order to feel moved to act towards the creation of such a responsive attitude towards the environment, teachers and students must feel directly implicated; together they must learn and feel the urgency of the facts for themselves. The question then is, how do we enable such learning?

Challenges in the teaching of environmental studies

One of the more significant challenges in any teaching and learning related to the environment is the translation of its inter-disciplinary character for students. The questions that emerge then are, firstly, whether 'interdisciplinarity' is too sophisticated an idea for students at the school level to grasp; and secondly, whether we as adults (teachers, academics, scientists, technologists and policy makers) ourselves truly understand the concept. In several conversations with teachers it has emerged that while most may understand the idea of interdisciplinarity in theory, they do not feel adequately equipped to translate it in their teaching. With the exception of a few schools with a more open-ended curriculum, most teachers find themselves severely constrained by the rigidity of school curricula and syllabi, and inadequate teaching resources. What is worth exploring therefore is a methodology of teaching that may open up some new directions and help relieve some of these constraints.

Methodology in environmental studies

Methodology of learning about the environment and, therefore, the related issue of how knowledge is gathered lie at the heart of this approach to environmental study. How do we know what we know, why is it that some kinds of knowledge are accorded more respect than others, and how do we, first, decide what is useful knowledge and, secondly, go about gathering or creating that knowledge for ourselves? Do our forms of knowing bring shifts in attitudes and values that would guide our actions and decisions vis-à-vis ourselves, other peoples and the evident problems in our collective environments? How then do we use knowledge to seek solutions where necessary?

We suggest that the course of environmental study must extend through the school years. It must equip students with the understanding that knowledge about the phenomena and human activities that constitute our environment (the local and the global) comes from various sources: written text, practice, experience, learning from peers and also from people whose livelihoods are based on close connections with natural cycles. It must encourage students to not just look to books, text- or otherwise, or even the so-called 'experts' as the sole founts of knowledge. Instead, we urge the creating of spaces for teachers and students to learn from practice, from those people at the so-called 'grassroots' who have over generations had occasion to

study nature and natural resources and the associated patterns intimately. In asking and learning from agriculturists, pastoralists, artisans, indigenous communities we expect that teachers and students will begin to question existing hierarchies of accepted knowledge. Such an approach will hopefully also lead students to question current disciplinary boundaries and then transcend these boundaries to experience true inter-disciplinarity. This, we hope, will help shape their lives to work towards a deeper understanding of and real solutions to the problems of the present and future.

Towards a new curriculum

We envisage such a course as consisting of a set of modules, guided by a flexible framework in which teachers can use or substitute topics depending upon whether they are relevant to their particular locations. The framework could provide a broad roadmap with themes and topics that may be studied at various levels in school. Students should over the years have the opportunity to study a phenomenon from varied angles, including among them history, economics, mathematics, the natural sciences and literature. For example, children in class 7 may be studying the 'history of life' and emergence of 'human societies' as part of the subject of history. The former can be pulled into science classes through discussions on evolution and thus demonstrate that key ideas are interdisciplinary.

The course must include the creation of simple models to understand natural systems, such as groundwater flow. There could be science projects on topics such as the aeration of soils by earthworms or an exploration of what microorganisms exist in the air around us. There should also be some practical work on the land: clearing water channels and drains, constructing simple rainwater harvesting structures or clearing waste. Nature-walks to study local flora and fauna can be used to hone observation skills and to understand their relationships with local cultural and conservation practices. These may include the significance of sacred groves, of local deities and rituals that tell us about the agricultural cycle. The above are largely relevant to rural settings. In urban settings, students may do projects that engage with livelihood patterns and economic 'niches' occupied by communities such as small traders, fisherfolk (in coastal towns) or rag-pickers. Such studies may throw new light on the opportunities, dependencies (as well as iniquities) and community lives in urban environments.

Since we are keen that students learn experientially, through creating their own work, we would want them to be engaged in some forms of ethnographic interviews and writing, imaginative writing, and art and drama projects. Students might also learn something demonstrable from the community with whom they have been studying the phenomenon, both urban and rural. Depending upon the area, it might be a skill such as planning a vegetable

patch, determining when to harvest fruits or vegetables, transplanting rice—it might even be basket-weaving or a dance-step!

The theme of 'food security' and its ramifications could be the subject of a set of crucial modules. Students studying the question of food security, can, for example, begin by asking questions regarding the status of food security in their immediate locality: Is it due to inadequate production or access? How do people access food? If they are in rural areas, students can look at how landed and landless people access food and water. Students can visit not just the poor parts but also those parts where food is expensive, richly displayed and abundant. They can study the history of food consumption in their area: What have been the staple diets over the years? What were the factors that led to that particular pattern of eating at a certain point in time? What changes led to current dietary habits? Juxtaposed with this experiential learning can be a theoretical exploration of world food systems, issues associated with the current and future food systems, sustainable alternatives and other such areas. The learning can be taken back to the field for discussions with local communities. The module on food security can be developed to various degrees of complexity depending on the age and level of the students. Linkages to water use and energy use can also be explored, thereby creating awareness on the interconnectedness of life-support systems.

Taking an anthropological perspective, students may study the different meanings of food within a community or locality. Are some foods perceived to be more 'prestigious' than others? Are those perceptions fuelled by availability, or rather, by scarcity? Do considerations of calorific value or nutrition play any role in determining prestige? What kinds of values express themselves through food? Students could learn new recipes and incorporate them into their daily diets. Studying food could lead, quite organically, to a consideration of how socio-cultural processes are not separate from us, and also how these have a deep effect on our environment: in this case, in the kinds of agriculture that is practiced, on the health of people in that environment, apart from discussions about local, seasonal foods and what it means to have a wider range of choices than those locally available.

The economics of food production, distribution and consumption can also be integrated quite logically into this set of modules. Students could look at the life cycle of any given vegetable or crop in a rural area, or how urban homes can create rooftop or balcony spaces to grow some of their own food. Through this they could learn about seasonality, dependency on resources such as space/land, water, labour, soil conditioners, and understanding of nutrient and water cycles. In the process, students can also begin to understand the significance of economic policies in determining food production and access.

High school students in an urban school can study the role of urban planning and its impact on natural resources—water, air, land, local flora and fauna. Questions on equity and social justice in the context of availability of essential services such as water supply, sanitation, electricity, fuel and food can be integrated with those on the technological choices made to manage resources in cities. Other questions that can be explored include: Why are slums located where they are? What led to the slum residents being in the city? These questions may bring about a critical understanding of the nature of development and the impact of development projects on landscapes and communities, leading to discussions on alternative models of development.

In such explorations, teachers and students will also come in contact with the impact of our economic policies and programmes. This will provide an opportunity to engage in issues of governance. Students could be encouraged to review government policies related to, say, food security, water resources, creation of jobs and loss of livelihoods, and to comment on them.

It is not just natural or social scientists who reflect upon the upheaval wrought by environmental change and its concomitant economic and social change. Indeed, most of the truly powerful work on these themes has come from artistes working in several media all over the world, over the last so many decades. In India and abroad urbanization; mechanization; the arrival of a cash-economy; the loss of traditional livelihoods and resultant poverty; the dispersal of communities; and the wounding of large swathes of the earth and those who depend upon her form the subject of much literature and music, many films and social movements. These bring alive, through narrative and emotion, what students might otherwise be encouraged to think of merely as dry, conceptually dense, impersonal processes.

A scientific approach encourages students to be dispassionate, to stand outside a situation and evaluate it in ostensibly objective terms. While this is useful and necessary, it does not tell the whole truth about a situation, or even, sometimes, the most important aspect of it. We hope that students will begin to discern where the heart of an issue lies by looking not merely at scientific facts, but rather at the whole picture, by looking at the effects of human action on other human beings and the natural landscape. Through an experiential approach, based on and led by inquiry, we hope students will begin to see the connections between our ways of thinking, living and acting, and its impact on the planet.

What next?

We see the need to re-envision a curriculum that will enable us to engage more completely with the environment in our schools and homes. In this approach the

adults are as much in a position of being learners as are students. This article is thus a call for a renewal of our discourse on environmental education, which should impact education as a whole.

The ideas expressed here are meant to initiate discussion on the possible ways for students, teachers (and parents) to engage in a meaningful fashion, so that we are truly a *part of* and *not apart from* the environment around us.

Theme Meetings: A Conversation Space for Educators and Parents

AKHILA SESHADRI

The right kind of education begins with the educator, who must understand himself and be free from established patterns of thought; for what he is, that he imparts. If he has not been rightly educated, what can he teach except the same mechanical knowledge on which he himself has been brought up? The problem, therefore, is not the child, but the parent and the teacher; the problem is to educate the educator.

So, what is the right kind of education, and how are we to bring it about? It obviously cannot be brought about through somebody saying, "This is right education," and all of us merely agreeing and following the pattern, but rather the teacher and the parent, the whole lot of us, must sit down together and find out what right education is, which means that the parent and the teacher have to be educated as well as the student.

J Krishnamurti

Looking back at my own school days, the only time my parents visited school was for academic meetings called by teachers after a term-end exam (particularly if I had done badly), or for Parents' Day, and only if I happened to be participating in a play or a dance. My parents took charge of my academics only when they saw that I wasn't able to do well in tests and exams in a particular subject. They would organize some tuition or take it upon themselves to teach the difficult subjects. As for those subjects I was able to do well in, they left well alone.

In most schools, the meeting with parents is over their individual child, because the teachers have found the child encountering academic or peer difficulties, or because the parents are concerned about the child's progress. Other meetings are often held with the PTA and are largely concerned with a school report that lists the school's achievements and students' examination performance. Yet other meetings are 'Open House', where parents voice their complaints and the school responds.

The mandate in Krishnamurti schools is somewhat different. In many of his talks and writings, Krishnamurti has spoken interchangeably about the parent and the educator. He has spoken of both of them as learners and responsible adults in the life of their children.

Having taken on this responsibility, here we are, a group of teachers trying to bring about the kind of school that Krishnamurti wanted:

> *... these schools are not only to be excellent academically but much more. They are to be concerned with the cultivation of the total human being. These centres of education must help the student and the educator to flower naturally.*

The School (KFI) is a day school in the middle of a metropolis, with parents who come every day to school to drop and pick up their children. Working here, we have felt the need for some kind of formal, sustained engagement with the parents. We have many kinds of meetings with parents. In this article, we focus on one kind of parent-teacher dialogue (initiated in the mid-1990s) with a special aim: the theme meetings.

Theme Meetings: spaces for exploration

The theme meeting was born out of a need and a wish. The need was to find a forum of engagement that would be a neutral meeting, a conversation space for teachers and parents, not about an individual child and certainly not over a

problem or a concern. The wish was to help parents understand and grow with the school in its intentions and philosophy. Parents are often helpless and dependent on teachers: *If you tell my child to do this, she will.* Parents seek not just succour but also wisdom from the teachers. But can parents intelligently question the school, raise the bar and challenge us to truly be the school Krishnamurti wanted?

Theme meetings are wonderful because the space is for conversation that has only one context: we are both together responsible for the child growing in this school. The urgency is not over a problem, a specific child or even because of an emergency. It is leisurely in the sense that we are not agitating and attempting to find solutions, but together attempting to look deeply and seriously at themes that concern our children.

Over the decade and a half that these meetings have happened in school, the themes and modes have been many and varied. We have explored topics such as learning, fear, anger, jealousy, comparison, notions of childhood and play. The process of creating a theme meeting and seeing it come to fruition has been an exciting journey. The conversations among teachers have been rich, diverse and exciting. There is a sense of greater understanding of why we are here and what our struggles and challenges are. Conversations often help heighten observation. We also involve the children in our questions and have found that they are deep and ready thinkers.

A case in point: this year's meetings

This year, the themes for the middle school were freedom, sensitivity and discipline. Difficult words, often not understood easily, and yet at the core of what Krishnamurti had spoken about.

We began speaking about the themes in our section meetings as early as September. The theme meetings were scheduled for November. We decided to look at these themes in various ways, to explore each of our questions and perceptions regarding freedom, discipline and sensitivity. We also read Krishnamurti and other thinkers on the subject. We came up with many questions and perceptions. *Surely, freedom is not independence? Children often ask for the granting of their ways: free play, something other than what we usually do … and so on. Is saying yes to these requests actually freedom?*

We questioned ourselves too: *How can we be truly not authoritarian in class? Is saying 'no' exercising authority? Is sensitivity based on cultural perceptions? In one*

culture, it is okay to call an adult by name; in another, it is rude. Is there something called 'core sensitivity'? What's really wrong with discipline? Is it because it is often associated with an outside intervention . . . and often in the form of punishment?

Organically, we began sharing these questions with children—asking them what they thought was freedom, discipline or sensitivity—and exploring scenarios with them. If we had no rules, would we still function in a sensible and sane way?

Some students even had conversations with their parents: *Is freedom really choice?* The teachers' enthusiasm was infectious! Students began connecting these ideas with what they had heard or spoken about earlier, such as the campaign led by Anna Hazare against corruption. Their parents told them that true freedom was never choice. Another parent spoke about how limited choice is, using the example of an older sibling who had chosen subjects in class 11 and later lost interest in them.

Together, the teachers created formats to suit our themes and intentions. We deliberately arranged it so that, for example, a junior school teacher might anchor the discussion with the parents from middle or senior school.

The first theme was freedom, and we began by asking parents to answer two questions for themselves on a slip of paper:

- What is freedom, according to you?
- What freedom is it that you want to experience and also want for your children?

Then, using two scenarios we took up these questions:

- Is there a lack of freedom here? If so, how do we ensure that our children are good, safe and thinking for themselves, and also free from authority?
- How do we ensure freedom is not indulgence?
- How can we help children learn about freedom and how to be free?

Finally, we shared what the children had written about what they felt freedom was or was not. It was revealing that their questions were similar to our own.

We left the meeting with these questions: Is it possible for us as adults to trust children? Is it possible to think deeply about freedom, choice, indulgence and individualistic ideas? Can we actually work along with our children and learn about freedom together?

For the second meeting on discipline, we began with these thoughts: When do we ask or expect children to be disciplined? When we want them to do things in an organized way, sit properly, behave in a certain way and so on. But while outward order may be established or ensured to some extent, how does one go beyond that and work towards inculcating self-discipline? How does one move away from the cycles of consequence and punishment?

The following three questions were put up on the board and we used a 'fishbowl' format to generate a conversation that was later opened out to the whole group (a 'fishbowl' format involves a few people in a larger group having a discussion that the rest observe):

- What are the commonly held views of discipline?
- What are the ways of ensuring discipline?
- Do we want obedience? Does it have a place?

The conversation moved from asking whether enforced order was discipline at all, to looking at discipline as action with understanding. We looked at culture and discipline and inner order. Some of the questions we ended with were as follows:

- When there is fear, can there be love?
- Why does a child tend to move away from discipline in a group?
- Can there be inner order, and can we trust that a child has it?
- Is there an inner sense of order in a child that we are not willing to explore?
- Why do we break rules? Is it because of impatience, greed and laziness?
- Is it possible to see discipline arising out of a feeling of sensitivity and affection?
- Can the norms of discipline be seen as a matter of relatedness?

The final meeting on sensitivity included two fishbowl discussions in which we posed the following questions regarding specific scenarios:

- Where do we recognize sensitivity in the situation?
- What are your responses to the situation? How would you help the child observe himself or herself?
- What interactions can we create? What are some affirmative points?

The rich discussion had us asking questions such as these: *Can sensitivity be 'taught'? What makes us sensitive at times and completely indifferent at others? We tend to associate sensitivity with gentleness, but can't a 'negative' emotion such as anger be a*

sensitive response? Is being sensitive and expressing sensitivity different? What determines the importance we give to sensitivity: culture? Our contemporary notions of success?

We came upon some valuable insights. Sensitivity is not fragility, and it cannot be acquired as a habit; it is shown in action and understanding. It is also about bringing attention to relationship, and about listening and responding to emotions.

The theme meetings may not be spaces that fundamentally transform us all, but they do allow for the process of exploring and thinking together. The mind is engaged for a short while in these vital questions of life. The meetings help bring about a better understanding of being human, of being a parent, a teacher: someone responsible for another small human being.

A Time to Reckon: Theme Meetings at School

R Kripa

'I am the mother all right, but I worry when my child assumes that I am the parent!' As parents and teachers we had come together at the annual theme meeting at The School (KFI) to discuss our role in a child's life and a child's role in ours. The topics for this series of theme meetings were the following:

- Responsibility and ownership for our children
- Our responses to children's questions
- Reward and punishment in learning
- Observation

Despite the diversity in the topics and formats of the meetings, the variety in the case studies and a new group of participants each day, all conversations seemed to merge seamlessly into one another. The unmistakable point of convergence of all thoughts was the nucleus of the adult-child relationship. The tough moments were when we had to break out of our beliefs and critically examine our approach to the scenarios presented as case studies. At times, silence marked the metamorphosis of assumptions into realization, and realization into a new understanding. The conversations were an opportunity for us adults to unlearn and learn, while vicariously reliving our childhood.

The first meeting dealt with the common assumptions that adults make about children. What influences our perceptions of and behaviour towards children? One factor is the deep conditioning born out of societal influence and the context we live in, which places emphasis on results. The experience of childhood is eclipsed by the preparation for adulthood. In addition, our own childhood experiences and their residual memories get projected onto our child's life. While tackling these challenges, we are responsible for the child's future. But does responsibility unwittingly become ownership?

The assumptions that a child needs to be engaged 'productively', and that to manage a child's time is the adult's responsibility, emerged through the example given by a parent who chalks out a full week of post-

school activities for her child and frets over one free evening in the week that she has not managed to fill in.

We were divided in the justification of such an approach by a parent. One group recalled their orientation and induction into a Krishnamurti school, where they were introduced to boredom as being constructive. The other group's emphasis was on the perception that children need to spend as much time in their peer group as possible, engaged in activities that complement what they do in school. This group, however, did question themselves about whether they planned the child's time with a lot of activities as a means of dealing with their own lack of ideas, time or inclination to engage.

In the second meeting, we presented some interesting questions that students had raised in class: *Why are some people rich, while others are poor? Why do I have to grow up to make decisions?* We asked ourselves how adults are to respond to questions like these. We agreed that the context, time and place would determine the response to such questions. However, as we probed deeper within ourselves for the answers, more questions emerged. Do all questions from children have to be answered? Is it an answer or a response that a child really wants? Why should the adult always have answers to a child's questions? Does an adult really have the answers? Can a question be a response to a question? Is the child's question in fact a call to the adult to engage with him/her? There lies a very important communication behind a child's question. How we decode that communication will determine how alive such questions will stay within the child. Any response to a child's question is in engaging with it: to understand the question, to seek its origin or to journey towards finding the answers together.

The third meeting was on learning, and the use of rewards and punishments. Traditional approaches to learning rely heavily on the use of reward and punishment, yet this is in complete contrast to, for example, Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's theories. We can summarize key aspects of his thinking as follows:

- Children construct their own knowledge in response to their experiences
- Children learn many things on their own without the intervention of older children or adults
- Children are intrinsically motivated to learn and do not need rewards from adults to motivate learning.

We asked ourselves: Is the need for rewards and punishments triggered by the compulsion an adult feels to intervene in a child's learning process? It was apparent that rewards have become a part of everyday life, be it in the form of celebration, parental approval or much-coveted gifts. Therefore, how do teachers and parents of a school that has renounced any system of rewards or punishment come to terms with this? A teacher's exhilaration at a show

of responsibility by a child changed to disappointment when she heard that her approval was the real motivation for the child to do what he did. A parent exercises approval as a motivational tool to get her child to do what she would want him to. The subtleties involved were evident in the various justifications and in the questions asked. How can a pat on the back be a reward? It is appreciation. A child feels cheated or may think that his work is not being taken seriously if he does not get appreciation. If the appreciation takes the form of a celebration or small gifts, will that really imply a reward-oriented approach to learning?

In my opinion, the experience and the process are the most significant and enduring reinforcements for a child. Rewards and punishment have a very short life. They point to the outcome, neither the path to get there nor the meaning behind it. That overt, tangible expressions alone gratify or motivate a child could well be in our minds and not in the child's till we reinforce the idea.

So how do adults, without intervening in the process of learning, still facilitate and be responsible for it? We wondered whether true observation of the child would lend us more understanding of the child and our role in her life, and made this the theme of our next meeting.

Observation is watching with all the senses alive, both to the object of our attention and to our experience of watching it. It is to have a heightened awareness of what one is watching while suspending thinking. When we observe, we slow down, we listen more and we listen better. The most important truth that feeds into observation is that everything is constantly changing—perhaps at varying paces, but nothing is constant. So every time we observe, we observe something new. In an example we discussed, we explored what we really see when we see our child respond to an unhappy situation by withdrawing into herself. Do we see a pattern, a predictable reaction or an indication of the emotional make-up of our child? Often, in all these so-called observations, what we are really seeing is a reinforcement of our own beliefs or judgements. Instead, if we were to watch, as we would a new incident, a new behaviour in our child and be aware of the contexts, reasons and the impact of these on what we are watching, we will see the incident more clearly. We should observe to watch, to understand, not observe to know. When we believe we know, we stop watching and start projecting our knowledge onto what we see. As we all thus observed ourselves and analysed our thoughts, I recalled a suggestion that education should break down patterns. By the end of the four meetings, I was convinced that the adults in conversation had made a significant attempt at rearranging the patterns within themselves. As questions arise, we shall keep on questioning. Until we meet again.

Vision and Practice: Exploring Reward and Punishment in Education

ANDY GILMAN

In late 2011 Oak Grove School facilitated a series of one-hour dialogues focused on an exploration of punishment and reward in educational practice. Three separate groups were formed—one of parents, another of Oak Grove teachers, and a final group made up of high school students. In each meeting, a collection of quotes was read (which is also printed below), a time for reflection was established, and a dialogue followed. Given their respective vantage points, each group approached the topic differently, though all with empathy and thoughtfulness, along with substantial congruence. This article outlines several of the themes and challenges that emerged.

By being with yourself you begin to understand the workings of your own mind, and that is as important as going to class.

J Krishnamurti

Do you know what discipline is? It is a process of making you do something that you do not want to do by offering a reward or punishment. If you don't understand what you are being asked to do, don't just do it. Instead, ask for an explanation so that you build your own understanding of life. You cannot develop deep intelligence if there is any kind of fear.

J Krishnamurti

Instead of getting students to obey, we need to help them develop their own ethical principles.

Alfie Kohn

I thought children would only work at something if they were offered rewards but then was surprised to see that children educated themselves when rewards were removed. But it is hard for teachers and parents to not offer rewards because it is a habit.

Maria Montessori

Reflection, inquiry and dialogue: the parent group

Attendees of this discussion included the parents of pre-kindergarten-aged children all the way to high-school-aged children. Initially, the quotes above prompted more questions than answers, but in general the group centred on the parents' own habits of punishment and reward learned in childhood and reinforced by society. Additionally, parents also discussed how their own desires, insecurities and fear partly motivate their rewarding or punishing behaviour. Finally, the inquiry turned to categories of behaviours, appropriate consequences, the value of a loving approach and the role of the parent.

One mother described a challenge she faced. Her young daughter had a difficult time getting ready in the morning, which resulted in late arrivals to school. The parent described her wish to avoid reward or punishment (though these tactics seemed the most immediate to her) and to set up natural consequences for her daughter. She developed a routine by saying to her child, 'We are going to leave at 7:45. You picked out your clothes last night and they are on the dresser, and breakfast will be ready for you at 7:20 at the table. If you don't have time to eat or to change from your pyjamas before we leave, that will have to be what happens and we will go to school.' So far, the child has not arrived at school unfed and in her pyjamas, and the mother is thankful. Her own dread of being viewed as a bad parent if her child arrived at school unprepared made her nervous; but she was committed to this action if necessary. She did realize that this fear of judgement from peers made her punish her child in the past, but that reaction was something she wanted to change in herself.

A father described an example where his son in high school didn't want to play soccer with the team. At first, his son was brief about not wanting to participate, but the parent thought there might be more behind it. The parent created space for his son to speak and be heard, and set up a meeting between

the coach and his son. It took a while, but after several conversations his son finally said that he felt uncomfortable with his body, and that the soccer uniforms revealed more of his body than he wanted. Armed with that knowledge, the coach could then offer options, 'Wear sports pants, along with the long-sleeve soccer shirts we have.' The son participated in the team and became one of the players that voluntarily stayed after practice for the pick-up games held in the afternoons. The father describes the process as beneficial hard work. 'It would have been easier to have just said, "You have to play or else . . ." or to say, "Here is a reward for participating." It was more time-consuming to truly listen to him, to work with him and to offer a loving nudge toward something positive. He became part of the solution, his voice mattered and that was its own positive consequence.'

The group explored these examples and others, and described the importance of *approach*. Is the impulse to address a behaviour coming from fear or anger, or is the approach truly from love? Everyone agreed that opening a space for listening, for reason and for collaboration had enormous benefits. When children could be a meaningful part of the process they were less likely to need extrinsic motivators.

The attendees also addressed different kinds of behaviour and the consequences that follow. Specifically, some behaviours risk psychological well-being, and others physical well-being. Of course, some risks can have catastrophic consequences. The discussion of behaviour types evolved into a striving for balance. Perhaps not every conflict calls for a long, loving conversation . . . the parents agreed that sometimes there is a verbal command first (e.g. 'Stop!') and an explanation later, especially when someone might get hurt.

Several parents encouraged the group to reflect deeply on the role of parenthood. Parents often feel that they know more than their children, and this must certainly be true sometimes. But if parents can sincerely pause and ask themselves if they are reacting from habit, fear, or insecurities; if they can ask themselves, 'Do I really know what is best here? Am I ready to try another way?', their relationships could strengthen. Finally, the group agreed that children are looking for parental approval; and the parents asked themselves how often they say 'good job' in a thoughtless way (everyone agreed that they say 'good job' to a child almost every day).

Reflection, inquiry and dialogue: the teacher group

Oak Grove's teachers echoed many of the themes in the parent group, and also touched on practical matters. These additional topics included classroom management, dealing with diverse abilities, balancing group and individual needs, and the focus of observation. Embedded in the school's curriculum and culture is a programme called *The Art of Living and Learning,* which includes inquiry, communication, academia, engagement, aesthetics and relationship. Of these arts, inquiry and communication were focused on during the dialogue, and the language of observation instead of praise became a central theme for the group.

One teacher explained what she means by observation rather than praise: 'When a student finishes his or her piano practice, it feels natural to say "good job", but if you simply observe and say something like "I notice that you smile when you are playing piano. Do you enjoy it?" suddenly you have moved from praise and reward to engagement. The motivation for the student can move from outside to inside.'

Another theme that emerged in the inquiry was student self-regulation. The teachers discussed the practice of having the class itself determine and promote the class-wide rules it will use to foster learning and deal with conflict. When students become a valued part of the decision-making process, their approach changes—something that the parent group also noted earlier.

While students at Oak Grove are encouraged to question everything, including authority, the teachers discussed some risks that are non-negotiable. These risks concern student safety. Still, the teachers agreed that when students are shown the reasons for non-negotiable rules, they fundamentally understand and agree with them.

Several questions were brought up by the teachers:

- How did a system of reward and punishment become so prevalent? Is it instinctual or conventional?
- Can explanation get everything done? What if you need something accomplished immediately?
- As a school, how can we de-emphasize grades in the high school, given that the college system our students are graduating into requires them?
- It seems that competition gets some people to perform better. What do we think of that?

The teachers reaffirmed that the mission of the school includes every student taking responsibility for the world, and that the use of reward and punishment thwarts this effort. Finally, the teachers agreed that a climate of inquiry and mutual respect discourages thoughtless and selfish behaviour … in fact, it supports the opposite.

Reflection, inquiry and dialogue: the high-school student group

Our high-school students were engaged with the question of reward and punishment in education *simply because they were asked, and their responses were listened to.* What was interesting in this group was that several of the points made seemed contrary to those heard in the adult groups.

'I realize that getting a grade is a reward, a judgement, and that we are all working together to understand ourselves and our world … but I'm definitely motivated to get that A.'

'I've gone to Oak Grove most of my life, and I couldn't wait to get grades in high school.'

'When I am competing in sports, I play harder and better than I would otherwise.'

Perhaps the high-school students illustrated the point best that rewards are culturally very powerful and formative, perhaps even 'natural' for us as humans. 'Getting paid for work is a reward. It is something you wouldn't do (like washing dishes in a restaurant) without getting paid.' One student explained, 'But doing your best at your school work, or your art or music … or even being in your family … those are things that you should not get paid for. They are good things by themselves. Like the community service we do … if you are getting paid for that then it's not service.'

Similarly, punishment was described as motivationally powerful but lacking care. Several students had the same sentiment: 'If I get a bad grade in school, I'm not happy about it and I know my parents are going to talk about it with me, probably with my teachers too. But if I get grounded as a result too, I just get mad. I would rather be treated more like an equal … I would like a chance to make it better.'

Several students echoed the point raised by their parents and teachers when they said: 'I don't like being forced to do things. I like it when my thoughts are considered … if I can have some part in deciding how things are

going to be, I will agree to do it.' Further, one student explained, 'I really like the Krishnamurti quote … if people just say "do this" or "do that"… right away I am defiant. But if they say "Hey, here is something that needs to be done and here is why … can you do it or help me think of another option?", then I am happy to be a part of it and don't need anything else to motivate me.'

*

These dialogues were intended to inquire from all perspectives, to begin a conversation with the potential for each group to learn from the others. Mutual respect, active listening, collaboration and reason over reactive emotion: all of these principles were central in each group's inquiry. Oak Grove will keep this exploration alive with more questions of vision and practice for school and home. Stay tuned!

Not Different in Kind: Exploration into the Teacher-Student Relationship

SONALI SATHAYE

This article is a rumination on what happens in us teachers when we 'teach' another. It appears to me that the question is relevant for the kinds of schools Krishnamurti set up because classroom teaching is not the only, or even the main, focus in these places. Explicitly and implicitly, teachers are expected to engage with students

in uncovering the subtleties of life as it is lived. Yet, as Krishnamurti often pointed out and as must be apparent to us teachers with very little soul-searching, the teacher and student are not qualitatively separate; all of the psychological machinations and mechanisms that the student is plagued by are just as much present in the teacher. Typically, however, most discussions about teaching lead almost automatically to discussions about the best conditions in which students may learn or, more to the point, the reasons why they do not. The conversation gathers around techniques to better the relationship between teacher and student, and ranges from the need for that relationship to be based on affection rather than fear, to questions of attention and discipline. There is little discussion of the state of mind of the teacher, from where emerges her urge to 'teach'. This exploratory piece focuses on that question.

Teachers teach. Students also teach (teachers, that is) but that is not built into the structure of a school in the way that the former is. In a school teachers are called on to intervene in sticky situations and clarify matters, sometimes between students, between a student and her parents, or in her studies or her understanding of what she be allowed to do while at school. Some of these situations are straightforward in that a student knows and expects the teacher's intervention, even though she may not like or want it. These might include issues such as the need for eating right, sleeping well, playing games and so forth. At other times, however, the initiative to instruct—to point out or ask—may emerge from the teacher; at such times the student may be nonplussed at finding a casual chat change its shape to show itself as a 'learning experience'.

In the act of pointing something out to another (here, a student), does one seek a change in the other person—in their behaviour, in their perception? Does the teacher feel invested in the thing being pointed out? And if so, why? How is that received, and does the manner of the reception matter? Can received knowledge actually teach anybody? What is the role of verbalization in teaching and what the role of example? By extension, is experience the best teacher? Finally, should only those teachers who are free of attachment teach? Given that much thought and energy goes into the education of children, is asking only about 'effectiveness' reasonable? These are some of the questions that arise in my mind when I view the process of teaching from a teacher's point of view. Even a cursory examination of some of these has led me into subterranean terrain, much of it slippery and defiant of categorical answers.

Teaching as a vicarious activity

Those slippery moments can reveal the teacher's own thoughts, her ideals, her hopes and fears. In my case, some of these preoccupations are not hidden from myself or my students at all. Even by the end of just one year, students can no doubt predict the tenor of many of the questions I will ask them about malls or films or shopping.

The questions will, generally speaking, be critical of much of the fun they have had over their holidays. But what is it that I am really saying through those interrogations? Students will probably be hard put to answer in any definite terms; they might say something about how they know I am going to say junk food is full of unnatural additives that only advertising makes attractive, but that they find it tasty anyway. As for me, I would say that I am concerned with students not being tricked by the baubles and trinkets that modern industrialized society sets before them.

Without getting into the details of why I might be so concerned, what is of interest to me in the context of this article are the underlying mechanics of such exchanges on the part of the teacher. Many of the questions I ask can be argued, articulated, defined. However, most of the real impetus of my interaction with students is non-verbal. It is intimately tied to my understanding of what it means to be a teacher, an understanding that is no less powerful for being ill-defined. This meaning includes something about not just making sure the student has been filled up with enough knowledge to duly pass her exams and get into a reputed college. It includes a feeling that the student should buck the system at least a little, that she not accede unquestioningly to the pressure to obtain 'high marks' and make 'good money'.

Even when not verbalized, ideas about the state of the world and one's responsibility in it are easy to access. It is harder to see the beliefs about teaching per se that underlie those ideas. Motivations for becoming a teacher are mixed; individuals differ and an individual differs from situation to situation. One of my unvoiced motivations is to put my sociological and other knowledge to 'practical' use by suggesting to young people that they pause before they go down many of the well-worn paths set out by their elders. I would like them to think of the question of livelihood carefully. It is in this way that I hope *my* livelihood is of use to society. Expressing this ideal in such terms is a little embarrassing. It reveals the degree to which my ideal of contributing to the larger good is dependent upon seeing the change in another.

Put like that, the patent absurdity of such a proposition strikes one hard. Put like that, teaching appears to be all about the teacher. And like all such relationships in which one's own sense of fulfilment is tied to an outcome in another, it must bring some degree of frustration and, eventually perhaps, a sense of burnout in the teacher. For this approach to teaching places great emphasis on the measuring of outcomes; it is animated by the unspoken (even unconscious) idea which says that an outpouring of my energy is only going to be worth it if I can see *x* change take place in the student. Again, stated baldly like that, the demand is revealed in its arrogance, and in that, its limitations.

However, if effectiveness is an issue that may cause some heartache to the teacher, surely abandoning a concern with

measurement can ease some of the frustration that must accompany the approach.

The impossibility of pinning a cause to an effect, or measure what?

But is one to abandon all concern with effect as well? I began this exploration with the express intention of focussing solely on the possible motivations that reside in the mind of a teacher. However, it appears that any discussion of a teacher's methods and motivations cannot avoid touching upon some aspect of the student-teacher relationship. However problematic or laudatory a teacher's motivation, its effect on the student will be quite a different matter altogether. To be suspicious of measuring effect based on a preordained standard is not, therefore, to reject the question of impact itself. But perhaps the issue of impact is best addressed negatively —not by what it does, but by what it prevents. Are students adversely affected by a teacher with a too-strong agenda? Can a teacher's pushing of agendas, however pious, be conducive to a student's learning? Is the ideal teacher one who can speak out of a profound sense of detachment, which is to say, without a motive?

These questions are problematic in themselves because they appear to suggest that uniform answers exist in an area that so resists a formula. Different students respond in different ways to the same style. At this moment I have to take recourse to my own memories of being taught by various adults. I think back to a few teachers who were deeply tormented by social inequality and ask myself whether they would have made for better teachers had they been calm and rational, had they chosen to allow us the space to discover it for ourselves; I wonder whether their anger marked us. The question is not easy to answer because we students reacted differently to their teaching. For myself, their emotion was a pointer to something real; it brought home the baffling, intractable nature of injustice in the world. I also cast my mind back to other, equally powerful teachers with whom I had, and continue to have, a warm, open relationship. I try and remember what pearls of wisdom they offered me, what words to live a life by. None come to mind. Did they then lead by example? Not even that, or at least not always. And yet something endures of those interactions. There was something that distinguished these teachers from others in one's school-life.

It seems to me that pressing on the 'what' of teaching brings us, as if by a swing door, to the question of 'how'. This is not a new thought. But yet it is startling to discover that try as I might to focus solely on the content of a teacher's thought, in the end I have come to discussing the effect of the teacher's manner on the student. Kindness matters. But of what does it consist? I do not think it merely a matter of language or even of tone. Although these teachers did set out to 'teach' about inequality, or the environment, or, say, about the ways in which we repeated old patterns of thought, they were open to challenge;

there was an honesty in their dealings. This was not an affectation. One knew this because they never seemed to lose sight of the fact that they were, themselves, part of what we spoke about; they did not hold themselves separate in kind. Thus we were able to focus on the thing itself in a spirit of, dare I say, fraternity, and that instantly made the inquiry more *fun*. The knowledge that the teacher had nothing to teach me freed one to learn from them.

So much for the effect of particular teachers on this student years ago. It is a truism to say that many factors influence and shape the young mind. It is near impossible, however, to trace the cause of an effect. The only possible definitive statement is that teachers, like parents and peers and the media and the trees and the hills, have an impact on a person when they are growing up.

Structural issues in the teacher-student relationship

School is a place where teachers are supposed to have the upper hand over students, where students may be punished for not abiding by a teacher's wishes. If an educational institution where the structural roles are mutually interchangeable were to come into being, we should not recognize it as a school. As countless studies of the dispossessed have revealed, this merely means that the teacher-student relationship offers rich possibility for evasive and diversionary tactics. 'Reading' a student to understand one's worth as a teacher can thus be an illusory business. Besides, a student can be a tricky bellwether to adopt.

The teacher and student live in a framework in which the teacher, answerable to the parents and the school, and even on occasion to the State, is responsible for the decisions made by a student. The teacher therefore has the power—no, the duty—to challenge and curtail the student in ways that are not at all reciprocal. Students are fully aware of the discrepancy. One of the first things students shout out in class when one invites a discussion about teacher-student differences is, 'Teachers can "bomb" [or "blast", as the case may be] but we can't "back-answer".' Students are acutely conscious of not being able to show displeasure to a teacher.

By the same token, however (and this is hardly ever recognized by the student), the teacher too is not really free to voice her innermost thoughts to the student. Teachers are individuals, but they are also representatives of the institution in relation to the student. Moreover, they have also to be careful about the ways in which a so-called honest expression of their views might be insensitive, might potentially be hurtful or damaging to students. So the structural distinction between student and teacher exists and it is a real one; merely asserting the fact of our shared humanity will not wish it away.

Perhaps these are the sage reasons for which we appear, as teachers, to have accepted in some part the teacher-student relationship as belonging to a separate

category of its own. In this box called 'teacher-student', apologies or explanations may not be required, perhaps certain kinds of information may be withheld; we may feel that we cannot, or *should* not, show our vulnerabilities to the student. It means that we speak in statements rather than questions. Within that structure we are expected to be, and can easily become, the authority, an institution which, in its very existence, assumes definitiveness and inhibits uncertainty. Working on the assumption that as teacher one has more clarity and therefore the ability, indeed the right, to guide a student to safe waters, makes the teacher-student relationship immediately more navigable for the teacher. In those instances, the question of what drives a teacher to teach is relatively easy to answer: it offers an authority which is seductive because it appears to offer the teacher a place and purpose; it offers safety and perhaps even an apparent sense of order born of concentrated power.

Begin again

Yet there is hardly a relationship that is not conducted within a structure of one kind or another, official or not, recognized or not. There is hardly an intimate relationship, between friends, parents and children, husbands and wives, that does not admit of some institution, with its attendant role-playing, withholding, careful handling, at different points in its life. But we should baulk at saying that those relationships can therefore never be genuine, or need always be formal.

So we are back at the beginning: not looking to the student or to any other person to understand the success of oneself as a teacher but instead turning to our own capacity for truthful engagement. Oddly enough, accepting that the teacher and student are not different in kind does not, in practice, absolve the teacher of responsibility. It does not mean that the teacher must be uncertain or indecisive. Blurring—actually, denying—a qualitative difference between teacher and student seems automatically to make greater, more direct and more personal demands of the teacher. It requires her to step out of the safety of her institutional armour, so that teacher and student may then, together, begin to learn about living.

Inner Work:
A Way to Create Emotional Well-being

Rajasree Sen

If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves.

Carl Gustav Jung

Learning in the real sense of the term can occur only when one feels safe—physically and psychologically. In a hierarchy of nearly two dozen human needs (compiled from the works of Abraham Maslow, Alice Miller, Andrew Weil and William Glanser) 'safety' stands at number two, just above basic survival needs such as food and shelter. Safety, it would seem, is an important prerequisite to achieving other higher-level needs, such as 'a sense of belonging' and 'purpose in life' to name a few. Enlightened and aware educators have long known of this basic need and today there is at least some awareness in schools of the necessity to create a safe and healthy environment both inside and outside the classroom. A healthy environment can, however, only be created when there is a healthy relationship within the adult community and therefore with the young in school. What is poignant in this regard is that grown-ups often feel the need for safety because that will translate into 'successful relationships', which in turn would lead to educational success in various dimensions—academic achievement, better discipline, as well as social and emotional development.

That leads one to ask how adept we are as educators to engage in a meaningful relationship with so many different and diverse minds. Are we ready for this kind of commitment? How many of us involved in educating young minds are ourselves 'aware' of ourselves as individuals? Are we prepared to brave the demands and onslaughts of 30 or 40-odd students in our

care and reach out to them with the emotional support that they need? Are we prepared to leave behind our emotional baggage or are we ourselves 'burdened' and unwilling to take risks? Perhaps many of us are not ready to find out, as Krishnamurti says, what it means to 'educate from beyond the known, the self'. Beyond the innovations we might have made with regard to classroom structure, experiments in learning methodologies and curricula, have we tried to meet this challenge at a much deeper level? This demands that we begin to free ourselves from the shackles of all forms of negative emotions or at least be sensitively aware of them so that we may be ready to educate our children 'to be sensitive to the whole movement of life'.

Teachers inevitably act on their attitudes, beliefs and feelings. Whatever the teacher *is* with regard to *self* will have an influence on the students and how they act in similar situations. If teachers are unable to teach from beyond the self, chaos and hurtful situations are bound to arise. Perhaps this accounts for the fact that in many schools staff members come to meetings unwilling to dialogue, but ready to clamp down on any productive suggestions. There are many instances of teachers who are spurned by their colleagues when they speak their mind, or when they show creativity, innovation and vitality. Such schools, where there are shallow or strained relationships, low levels of trust or teacher effort, remain mired in a 'toxic atmosphere'. This leads to a hardening of the mind. In such a scenario no meaningful relationship or trust or connect can co-exist. When teachers themselves do not feel safe, how can they do justice by their students?

Being alert, open and creative are perhaps major criteria for becoming a human being. One cannot help but think that these qualities are even more of a prerequisite for teachers, with their extended role as parent and educator, who must be willing to give of themselves. Jenny Mosley suggests that adults in a school need to feel emotionally safe within themselves, be grounded and capable of meeting their own needs, before they can engage with students in educational programmes that would promote emotional safety and learning. A healthy school environment helps boost teacher morale and that in turn helps create a healthy school environment. So how is such an environment to come about?

The universality of the educational teachings of Aurobindo, Tagore and Krishnamurti is perhaps somewhat re-echoed when an educator of modern times rightly encourages teachers to do what he calls 'professionally relevant

inner work'. We need to heal, or at least to understand, our unresolved issues with parents, childhood wounds, anger, addictions, or any other behaviour patterns or attitudes that can lead to emotional instability. To become conscious of the many movements in oneself and take note of what one does and why one does it is the indispensable starting point. The educator must be able to observe herself, to note her reactions and impulses and their causes. She has to become a clear-sighted witness of her desires, her movements of violence and passion, her instincts of possession and appropriation and domination. We may observe in the background that there is a shifting movement of our vanity, our 'self-images' in relation to others, which when faced with difficult situations, may also plunge us into discouragement, depression and despair. Evidently there is a 'freeing' from these destabilizing movements only when there is a growth in the power of observation, along with a release of new energies that were held back by emotional blockages. Thus, besides focusing on our teaching practices, we need to do reflective thinking on ourselves. To sum it up in the words of the Dalai Lama, 'If we examine ourselves everyday with mindfulness and mental alertness, checking our thoughts, motivations and their manifestations in external behaviour, the possibility for change can open within us.'

It is also imperative that deeper attention to this dimension of personal development become more widespread in actual teacher preparation programmes. However, it is clear that change in our schools is likely only when individuals begin to take responsibility for their own growth. Such initiative is, however, not easy in the neurotically busy, success-driven pace of today's lifestyle, which keeps us so occupied that we are often asleep to our genuine feelings. While it is true that the system should support individuals in this inner growth, the system is not likely to change by itself. It is only as individuals change that the system will undergo any change. This implies that the teacher, the one who needs to protect the young, needs to take primary responsibility to protect herself, generating emotional safety for herself and for those in her care.

Children learn not from what we say or do, but from who we are.

Rudolf Steiner

Dynamics of a Grand Finale: The End-of-Term Event at Brockwood Park

Valentin Guerlier

No one remembers why they called it the 'Concert'. Already in my heady student days, the Brockwood Concert was an established and much talked about event. It was in a Brockwood Concert, one cold December night, that I made my humble beginnings on the world stage, nervously uttering a few forgettable lines in my freshly broken, French-accented voice. After that, life was simply never the same.

Equivalent to an old style Broadway Revue or an evening of cabaret, the Concert was, just as it is today, a flexible performance format in which a variety of acts, with no obvious link between them, were gathered together. The aim was simply to celebrate the end of term, or year, and to showcase some hard-worked-at—or, in some cases, hardly-worked-at—musical numbers, or to put on a short play or a humorous skit whose sole purpose was to poke healthy fun at the Brockwood ethos in general, and at the staff members in particular. Not much of a concert, in the traditional sense.

And yet, truly, 'concert' is a perfect word for Brockwood. For, aside from its specific reference to a musical form, the word originally means *tying together,* harmonizing, bringing matters of contention into agreement. And this, in every sense, is what a Brockwood Concert does. At a practical level, it is creating order out of chaos, putting on a coherent show by connecting what is disparate, and celebrating harmony through music, dance or theatre. And at a deep level, it is learning to work and be together; it is uniting the talents, energies and dedication of many to find their natural place within a harmonious whole; it is overcoming difficulties and challenges together. It is, simply, the joy and learning that comes with and through a communal task.

Thus while practically we work together for a specific goal, we find that, deeply, the specific goal works for us. The final performance becomes in fact a centre of energy around which that certain unique togetherness can occur, and from which everyone works according to their own

interests, talents, dedication, or simple wish to learn.

The importance of such an event, then, is not the performing at the end, though that of course has its relevance. The importance is the togetherness and unique intelligence that the building process brings along with itself. It is, in truth, *concertare,* a coming together in harmony that generates wholeness.

First movement

As many will know, performing is but a small part of what putting on a show involves. The very first step resides in finding, among the student population of Brockwood, a 'producer'. Some might argue that basking in this glamorous appellation is in fact the only advantage that this unhappy soul will get to enjoy. The producer is a modern-day *factotum:* organizing workers, chairing meetings, craftily negotiating with school directors, fixing, unfixing, lending a hand in every department from performance to costume making, running after people, calming people, motivating people, simply finding people—and, of course, making hundreds of cups of tea a day. As the performance approaches, the producer develops a distinctly haggard, ready-to-spontaneously -combust look, and everyone knows to leave him/her alone.

Brockwood Concerts always begin from nothing, or rather, from an austere, octagonal Assembly Hall, which was certainly never built with anything remotely theatrical in mind. No structure for lights, no appropriate seating, no backstage or useful doorways, and certainly no acoustics! Transforming this stern meeting room into a fully functional theatre means, quite simply, making the impossible possible. And this is where the students are in their element. For, during the three weeks that lead up to the show, they will be hard at work building complex seating structures, setting up lights, defying the laws of gravity and the gremlins that play havoc amidst the Brockwood electrics, assembling elaborate sound systems with limited equipment, and inventing costumes and make-up, always on a tight budget. This whole affair, it is worth stressing, is entirely organized and brilliantly executed by students. And this is where those among them who enjoy building, fixing and making thrive: their participation in the project is simply invaluable. Remarkably, too, they go about their business spontaneously, with no need for reminders, pressure or motivation from others.

Variations on a theme

So much for the building process … What about the performance itself? Well, a 'typical' Brockwood Concert may begin, for example, with a sober Bach piece for the violin or a melancholy Debussy piano adagio, to then follow into a couple of soulfully delivered jazz standards, some four-part harmony music of all ages, performed by a mixed choir of staff and students—also of all ages, and suddenly to

fire up with some fiendish Irish fiddles, breathe out into an Indian *rag,* and rise to a final crescendo with a raucous, old rock'n'roll favourite arranged for voices, strings and wind instruments.

To weave this unlikely musical patchwork together, the production team will need to come up with a 'theme'. This will be a surreal story or narrative, which might situate the acts, for example, in a timeless, imaginary cabaret; among the neighbours of a street that never existed; following the strange adventures of a poet with writer's block, or a street sweeper with magical powers. In this way, the Concert is tied together by actors, dancers and narrators who poetically weave the acts into one whole story, with wit, humour and imagination.

Then there are the rehearsals. Working pieces up to performance standards inevitably brings its own set of challenges and difficulties for the students. This, it should be said, will not necessarily be a 'rags-to-riches' story. Sometimes skilled performers will find themselves frozen, unable to play another note. The journey for them is to get back to the joy and simplicity of the music and letting the music *itself* speak. Others find they like the *idea* of acting, singing or dance, but the realization of it throws them a demand they find hard to respond to. Here again, the looming of the impending performance demands dedication and responsibility. And, of course, there are those with a vocation for the performing arts, who know all about the difficulties and pangs of growth that these bring about, and who willingly throw themselves into working on challenging pieces. Thus, each performer finds that the Concert asks of them, individually, that they embark on a journey of learning harmony and bringing order from the conflict within themselves.

Intermezzo

But here one might ask, what role do the performing arts really play in a student's whole education? It is sometimes suggested that performing is, fundamentally, a self-centred pursuit, and that the performing arts create an environment where people's egos are over-celebrated, usually with little reason. This sort of critique may be culturally relevant, but it covers up the question too hastily. Suggesting that certain activities, as opposed to others, lead to more or less egocentrism in fact amounts to making an inner condition dependent on outer factors.

It seems more helpful, rather, to see performance as the celebratory act of a craft: a craft that needs love, patience, attention and dedication to thrive. Though performing is an important part of a musician's life, great musicians become great through their dedicated love of and attention to *music itself,* not merely because they crave the buzz of performing or showing off. Performance is a *part* of this craft; indeed, it is a rare moment in which such dedication and attention can be joyfully shared. As for being self-centred,

most performers know, whether consciously or instinctively, that great performance occurs when one is simply not in the way of the art. To be consumed by a need for validation is counterproductive to the simple giving that constitutes any true performance. To perform, despite appearances, actually demands an attention and care that must go beyond one's self, *because it heeds and takes it cues from what is beyond one's self.*

Great performances happen when there is a quality in the room which involves all present, where audience and performers alike actively listen, receive and give. This, I believe—rather than the celebration of 'talent' and 'genius'—has always been the true meaning of universal performing expressions such as music or theatre. To quote Shakespeare, who knew a thing or two about this, it is in fact a 'holding the mirror up to Nature': words which, to me, truly belong to the spirit of Brockwood.

Finale

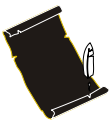
Finally, one might ask, what does the Concert bring to the school? For it is true that the Concert fits awkwardly in a curriculum, disrupts the end of an academic term and demands inconvenient changes to the school's day-to-day schedule. And yet, in its own way, it creates a special quality, a sense of finality and celebration to the school's year, and it does so by emphasizing qualities which truly belong to the Brockwood spirit: creativity, dedication and working together. We often ask, here at Brockwood, the question of what it means to live together. While there is always space for inquiry in a reflective context, we would do well, I think, to take note of the moments in which such togetherness does in fact occur—in the case of the Concerts, spontaneously, with joy and dedication, and not necessarily through the dilemmas of discussion. The quality of such a lived and shared event escapes words and definitions; this is precisely its uniqueness and strength.

This event, then, is much more than a performance or talent show. It is a mirror: it asks the question of our response to the whole, of what it means to be a part of the whole, to care for it and be responsible for it, each in our own way. It is also a nucleus: it gathers our energies and makes sense of our work and dedication within a larger context. It is, finally, a gift: there are no exam grades, no diplomas or rewards other than the joy of having aimed high and offered our work with honesty and joy.

And on the night, after the nerves, the laughs, the applause, and the bows, performers and audience alike leave, having, knowingly or not, participated in a little piece of togetherness.

My Introduction to J Krishnamurti's Teachings

S N Dubey



I did not know J Krishnamurti personally and had only one occasion to see and hear him, but this talk is very vivid in my memory. In October 1982, while posted in Bihar, I had gone to Delhi to attend an official meeting and a friend took me to a talk by J Krishnamurti. We entered the hall where the event was organized and took our seats. After some time, a frail old man, immaculately dressed in *kurta pyjama* and jacket, and neatly combed all-white hair, entered the hall and took his seat. In spite of his age (I was told he was over eighty-five), he sat totally erect. He had a fair complexion, a sharp nose and a very handsome face. He gazed at his audience, and when he looked towards where I sat, I felt he was looking directly at me. I felt a great sense of affection towards him, as I would when looking at somebody very dear to me. There was nobody to introduce him or what he was going to talk about. Looking towards his audience, he started speaking.

I can never forget his opening words, as they made an everlasting impression on me, which I carry even now and will do forever, as it changed my life. He started like this:

This is not a lecture, but rather a conversation between two people, between you and the speaker, not on a particular subject, instructing and shaping your thought or opinions. We are two friends sitting in a park on a bench, talking over together our problems, friends who are concerned deeply with what is going on in the world, with the confusion, the chaos that exists throughout the world. I wonder if you have a friend with whom you talk, to whom you expose your own feelings, your concepts, your ideas, disillusionment, and so on. We are going to talk over together in that manner – exploring, enquiring, without any bias, in great friendship, which means with great affection, respecting each other, without having some kind of hidden thought, hidden motives.

Then he went on to talk about the reasons and causes of confusion in our life. After this talk, I got thinking, and I recalled that I had first heard of Krishnamurti in 1970, when I was a graduate student at the University of Waterloo in Canada, from a

Professor K Ariaratnam, a professor of civil engineering, who had recently attended a talk by Krishnamurti near Los Angeles.

Later, reading Krishnamurti's conversations with Professor Allan Anderson, along with hearing Krishnamurti in person in New Delhi in 1982, really got me interested in what he was talking about and what he was telling his audiences all over the world. I had always thought that getting into the Indian Administrative Service was the high-water mark in my life and that I needed no other support system, until I heard Krishnamurti in 1982. Even after this, I continued my life in self-doubt for eighteen years, till the year 2000.

It was in January 2000 that I got a chance to visit Rajghat, Varanasi, with a relative of mine, who was at one time a student of Rajghat Besant School. We moved around the Rajghat campus and visited the room where Krishnamurti used to stay whenever he visited Rajghat. I noticed that there was no statue or memorial or place to worship Krishnamurti anywhere on the Rajghat campus, nor were there any prayers conducted for him. This seemed a little odd to my mind, which was conditioned in Hindu traditions.

It was this visit to Rajghat that really got me interested in Krishnamurti's teachings and I started reading the books. It was revealing to find an absolutely clear analysis of profound human problems and also to find Krishnamurti's explanation about why the only way to solve them was by ourselves. Till now I, like many others, had been looking for solutions to my problems outside, little realizing that one had to look inside oneself. I had also read some books on Buddhism, and on one human emotion, anger, the Buddha says: 'Slay anger and you will be happy. With anger slain, one weeps no more.' We know that an angry man is an ugly man with peace and happiness miles away. Despite all the comforts we may have, we cannot sleep; despite our wealth, we are poor. Filled with anger, one hurts others by acts of body and speech. Many of us tend to get angry over the slightest issue or irritant. If someone has hurt us or our near and dear ones, or if someone has caused us material loss, or has not behaved well with us, we get furious, and do things only a mad person does. It is true that not all of us react in anger and make a counter-attack. The more sensible among us would like to pass off such cases as not our problem but that of the person causing it. But the problem remains how to slay anger. I found Krishnamurti's description of anger scientific and realistic: he tells us to be aware of anger and examine the cause of it, rather than condemn it or run away from it and blame others for it. If one could just observe it without judging or measuring it, then one could be free of it.

My introduction to spirituality had been through my mother, who was deeply religious without very strictly following the Hindu rituals. Every evening, after the

household work was done, when the stars began appearing, she would light an earthen lamp and place it in front of the *tulsi* plant. One day when I sat beside her and asked why she lit the lamp, she said: 'When at night someone lights thousands of stars for me, I light a lamp to Him.' I sat with her silently, looking at the sky, and as the evening darkened and more and more stars appeared, I tried harder to see the *lighter* of a thousand stars. Years later I wondered: 'Is religion our relationship with the infinite, the entire world without, the stars and the grass, and the dweller within, and is that dweller God, nothing or I?' Many times in my life I have stood dumb before the austere beauty of man's relationship with the ultimate silence of nothingness. But will I, like my mother, ever know the *lighter* of a thousand stars?

When I grew up I began to reflect on why, given all its achievements, humankind is anxious over the state of the world, over what might happen tomorrow? Why have humans become the greatest enemy of humans and of the earth? Why have we made nuclear bombs? Why are we lonely, insecure and unhappy? When the earth has such beautiful things to offer, why can't we listen, touch, smell and see, respond and create, celebrate in song, dance and poetry, like Tagore did? Why have we lost our ability to relate?

As if in response to my questions, Krishnamurti's books compelled me to have a dialogue with myself that challenged my very way of living and thinking. I saw very clearly the need for a deep psychological change. I saw how even the modern system of education, of which I was a product, was poison in disguise, corrupting human society to the core; and I saw how in order to establish a sane, compassionate society, we would need an altogether different home, school and university, founded on an understanding of our relationship with the world, and of our own minds mirrored in that relationship. Krishnamurti's teachings did provide an answer to many of my queries at the intellectual level, but how was one to have a quiet mind, which Krishnamurti had talked about?

Some of the statements he made during the course of his talks got me thinking further. Here are some that got me really stirred mentally:

We may be highly educated, but if we are without deep integration of thought and feeling, our lives are incomplete, contradictory and torn with many fears, and as long as education does not cultivate an integral outlook on life, it has very little significance.

A consistent thinker is a thoughtless person, because he conforms to a pattern, he repeats phrases and thinks in a groove.

What Krishnamurti says about dying psychologically every minute is to look at the views, opinions, which we have held for years, and be willing to change them if we see that they are false. This means

'dying to' our prejudices, which we have accumulated and which are illusions. One cannot 'die to' truth because truth is 'what is'. It is not an idea or opinion.

On the question of authority, Krishnamurti says:

All authority of any kind, especially in the field of thought and understanding, is the most destructive, evil thing. Leaders destroy the followers and followers destroy the leaders. You have to be your own teacher and your own disciple. You have to question everything that man has accepted as valuable, as necessary.

As a matter of fact, it was the feeling of wonder that gave birth to what we call subjects or disciplines. The starting point is wonder, which leads on to curiosity and inquiry. Our surroundings evoke questions as day moves into night and on to another day. Likewise, feelings arouse questions. Compassion, too, is the source of questioning. If we learn this art of questioning and keep our mind alive, we find that we do not accept opinions and beliefs blindly. A mind that listens to questions and thinks over them quietly is an inquiring mind. If our mind is stuffed with opinions and beliefs, it will be like a cramped room with no space, no windows open into the world.

We do notice that when we are far away from the crowds, alone and by ourselves, perhaps at night, certain very personal questions arise within the mind. Why did I get angry with 'X' today? Why do I generally get angry over small things? What are my worries? What are my fears? Little questions, big questions, some silly questions, some very serious questions. This is the time to have a dialogue with oneself and if we learn to go on questioning ourselves about what is happening inside us, we may discover many interesting things about the world within us, just as we have so much knowledge stashed inside our brain about the outside world.

In my dialogues with students and teachers at Rajghat, I have observed that one question leads to another: Why am I nervous today? Is it because I am afraid of facing new people? Why should that make me so nervous? All these come up in dialogue with students and teachers, and one finds out the deep-rooted courses and causes of such emotions.

After being in touch with Krishnamurti's teachings for eleven years now, I can see that Krishnamurti discussed the profound questions we face in life and sought answers without referring to any religious scriptures, but by looking into these and many more questions through enquiry, observation and self-knowledge. He spoke only from his own observations.

Krishnamurti said very clearly, time and again, that the only way a change or transformation in the consciousness could happen was by the direct perception of truth, by a mind that was free of conditioning and of its past (which is experience and knowledge), so that it could receive the immeasurable. Krishnamurti did not claim

to be a guru or an authority. His aim, he said, was to hold a mirror in which individuals could see themselves revealed if they chose.

He questioned our identification with any group, religion or country and said that 'identification' puts an end to all creative understanding. Identification puts an end to love and to experiencing anew. Identification was surely possession, assertion of ownership—and ownership denies love. To own is to try to be secure and there could not be love where there was defensiveness.

Krishnamurti gave a new definition to words like a 'religious mind', 'time' and 'love', different from what we normally mean and understand. Men like Krishnamurti are very rare, and I consider those people who got in close contact with him really fortunate. I am indeed blessed in interacting with those who really were close to J Krishnamurti and knew him.

The Alphabet of Literature

Rahee Dahake

I don't want to be a tree; I want to be its meaning.

Orhan Pamuk, *My Name is Red*

I see a child putting letters of the alphabet, one in front of the other, daring to make sense out of what is being written, attempting to give meaning to what is being said, trying to relate to the meaning within his minuscule world of experiences and being satisfied with what he gets out of it, wide-eyed and exhilarated. I also see the child read a story, look at pictures in a book, hear the words of a story being narrated, equally wide-eyed, feeling exhilarated with what he can visualize through the words falling like drops of ink on the world of his imagination and experiences. The child experiences the real world on his own. The child also experiences the real world through words written by other people. In literature, the child can see what he knows and identifies with it; he can relate to what he has understood of life and at the same time also be a part of something he had not known or understood till that moment.

Ever since I can remember, I have been reading books. As a child, I read books that opened up new worlds for me. As I grew up, I saw that I understood the world around me through the text. As I read, sometimes I merely identify with the characters and their situations; sometime, I see through their eyes and comprehend something that is not otherwise palpable. The world of literature has been as fascinating for me as the experiential world itself. Perhaps I have been so immersed in the world of literature because, often, my experiential world meets the world of the texts in myriad and miraculous ways. As a reader and a teacher, I want to lead my student-readers into the backwaters of experience and imagination.

In a flash, 'When the evening is spread out against the sky; Like a patient etherised upon a table,' I can see T S Eliot's wasteland stretched in front of my eyes while a train is pulling out of Delhi. Standing in front of a

field of white crosses, growing a crop of the remains of unknown soldiers, I know what Rupert Brooke spoke of when he wrote about 'some corner of a foreign field'. I can experience the world of acrimony and misogyny at its fullest, not through my own experiences but in the flesh and blood embodiment of the women in Lorca's *House of Bernarda Alba* or Elkunchwar's *The Old Stone Mansion*. I feel weighed down by the density of love and can peel off the layers of the emotion while reading Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* or while unbraiding Jeanette Winterson's *Passion*. I can completely relate to Pamuk when he says, 'Over time, I have come to see the work of literature less as narrating the world than "seeing the world with words". From the moment he begins to use words like colors in a painting, a writer can begin to see how wondrous and surprising the world is, and he breaks the bones of language to find his own voice. For this he needs paper, a pen, and the optimism of a child looking at the world for the first time.'

The process that takes place while one interacts with literature is multi-faceted. While teaching a literary text, one can separate various strands of the silk thread to hand-weave an experience for the students. There are instances when I can understand the literary text because of my own insight into the world: I can try and understand Hamlet's melancholy after having experienced something like it. At other times, I can understand the world because of the power of the writer's words, which dissolves the ambiguity of the idea or the emotion and sublimates it such that it is crystal clear. The concepts of futility and irony are understood in their sharpest and most 'unblemishedly' devastating sense after reading war poetry or Khalid Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

The interaction between my world of experiences and the world of the writer takes place in a fluid space, within which my mind darts around like a silver coloured fish. In these two worlds, I see myself. I can relate to the experiences deeply embedded in a literary text, not only as something I can 'understand' but also as something I can 'experience'.

Literature is a microcosm that is created by the writer and the reader-teacher. There are three texts born within this microcosm. The first text is the experiential reality and the imaginary world of the writer. When the reader-teacher reads the text, her own experiences and imagination create a second text. The reader-teacher perceives the first text in the light of the second. The third text, however, is a product of the two, which cannot be held or analysed as it lies between the space in which the worlds of the reader-teacher and writer meet. The third text is what creates the individual who will be able to look at the world with a vision that will either restore it or destroy it. It is the reader-teacher who sometimes aids the student in the creation of this third text.

For instance, while reading *Blindness,* a novel by Jose Saramago, you never quite

feel you can see what's going on; you feel that your viewpoint is constrained: in fact, you feel partially blind. In the novel, a man driving his car in a city stops at a traffic light and is struck blind. So begins *Blindness*. This is just the start of an epidemic that spreads rapidly throughout the country, robbing everyone of their sight, for no apparent reason. Saramago imagines brilliantly the collapse of a civilization deprived of the visual structure on which it depends and, as the horror unfolds, he develops the central metaphor to explore a number of key themes. Accepting his Nobel prize, Saramago, calling himself 'the apprentice', said: 'The apprentice thought, "we are blind", and he sat down and wrote *Blindness* to remind those who might read it that we pervert reason when we humiliate life, that human dignity is insulted every day by the powerful of our world, that the universal lie has replaced the plural truths, that man stopped respecting himself when he lost the respect due to his fellow-creatures.'

In this novel, it is not the powerful, but powerless people who insult human dignity. They are ordinary people, terrified at finding themselves and everyone else blind. Everything is out of control and some behave with selfish brutality. We can see that the group of blind men who seize power in an asylum and use and abuse the weaker blind inmates have indeed abandoned self-respect and human decency: they are a microcosm of the corruption of power. This understanding of this third text makes the book far more significant for us today. Building the scaffold to arrive at this understanding of the third text is what the reader-teacher does.

Reading a text is like looking through a microscope or through a pinhole camera. One encounters the minutiae of experience one might never have first-hand but which go far into the making of one's conscience as well as one's sharpened awareness.

In Albert Camus' *The Outsider* we have a narrative about Meursault, a man of French descent who lives in Algeria during the French colonization. Meursault does not follow the typical social conventions of a French-Algerian bachelor. He lives a simple life, acting on impulse, while viewing life itself with a calm detachment. Meursault never lies, and because of this he lacks the emotional responses expected of him by society. In Meursault's case, he wants to be free from hope because hope means that there is some disconnection between the two selves—who he should attain to be and who he actually is.

The third text is the one where I, as a reader-teacher, can see the outsider within me and within those I interact with. I see the rift between selves, within oneself and between people. I can see how I am 'othering' or being 'othered' by people around me constantly. Only when I become aware of this split self can I become an individual who responds responsibly to the world around her. The merging of Camus' experiential world with mine gives rise to a real world that engages with others

responsibly. When I as a teacher invite my student-reader to be a part of this real world, there is a possibility that it would lead to the development of the politically aware individual who holds power responsibly.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being by Milan Kundera is a novel of love and politics in communist-run Czechoslovakia between 1968 and the early 1980s. Here is a 'post-modern' novel in which the author withheld so many of the things we expect from a work of fiction, such as well-developed and complete characters. Kundera himself tells us, 'It would be senseless for the author to try to convince the reader that his characters once actually lived.' The novel brings in lastingly significant concepts of fortuity, a brotherhood of mankind based on kitsch and the conviction that it is by our treatment of animals that we most clearly display our essential and unforgivable arrogance as a species. What is remarkable is that a work so firmly rooted in its time has not dated. Kundera's novel seems as relevant now as it did when it was first published. Relevance, however, is nothing compared with that sense of felt life which the truly great novelists communicate.

Teaching literature at various levels, from school to university, is one of the bridges that could bring individuals closer to the stories within writers and within themselves. Teachers as readers separate the layers of emotions and complexity within the text to present it to the students. A novel such as Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind* could be taught keeping in view the Barcelona of the 1940s. In the novel, it is a city shut down in a time of death and fear. Survivors of civil war, its people hang on grimly, with no apparent expectation of better times. Yet they will snatch at scraps and find real sustenance in a city streetscape whose every corner tells a story.

The reader-teacher is able to decipher the writer's conviction of the importance of literature in real life, which comes shining through. The story exemplifies the liberating power of the imagination. Walk down any street in Zafón's Barcelona and you'll glimpse the shades of the past and the secrets of the present, inscribed alike in the city's material fabric and the lives of its citizens. Exuberant, larger than life in their tragedies as in their joys and desires, they are irrepressible: no dictatorship can keep them down.

Reading contemporary literature in class makes available to the teacher the possibility of discussing constructs that colour our conception of things around us. Julian Barnes' new novel, *The Sense of an Ending,* has these themes dominating the book: how we choose to construct what has happened to us, how we shape our memories to suit that construction, how we are all unreliable narrators of our own lives and histories, and what this means to us.

Novels like these sensitize us and help us to understand the world around us, without being blinded by its blaze or

without tethering us to looking at a blinkered reality so that we can be spared the pain or the rude shock of encountering life. If literature is a part of one's life at all times, we are awakened to the emotions and humanity that course through our veins. We are constantly in danger of being deadened to the irreversible reality around us due to the monotony, distance and repetitiveness with which it strikes us, arriving at our doorsteps in the form of news. Literature, with its intrinsic nature of enlivening the mind, stops us from turning into sandpaper hearts. We become conscious of experiences and we find peace through it. 'You cannot find peace by avoiding life,' says Virginia Woolf. The writer herself and her representation as a character in Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* merge in our subconscious as we try to interpret what Virginia Woolf (the real or the fictional) said:

To look life in the face, always, to look life in the face and to know it for what it is. At last to know it, to love it for what it is, and then, to put it away.

Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Margaret Atwood, William Shakespeare, J M Coetzee or Kazuo Ishiguro: these are some of the many great writers who communicate the sense of life that fosters the heart, the mind and the imagination so fully that one can be equipped with a vision that enables thorough engagement with viewpoints, perspectives and ideologies. Their works are also texts that are inherently stories. Stories that belong to the writers meet the stories inside us (reader-teacher/student). We come across stories at every corner, in every other person or text.

We meet stories through literature but also through science and mathematics and history. Since stories, like travel, broaden the horizons of the mind, books need to be read. It is then significant to have literature as a subject taught at various courses, not limiting it to the humanities or courses in literature. Not just that, teaching courses through stories would also give the student of biochemistry or information technology an insight into a world that has been kept at bay, has not been allowed to merge with his multiple selves. The reader-teacher finds herself equipped with tools that bring the essence of felt life closer to the students through these texts. There exists a basic inter-textuality in our realities and experiences. We cannot be detached as individuals, performing roles separately, dividing our lives into compartments as teacher, father/officer, wife. Then why distance literature from what we do or study? Stories are what we encounter outside as well as within literature.

Reading the stories within other subjects helps us to unfold the narrative and makes the text reachable. The story is the kernel that holds the interest as well as the thought. Experiences merge and become

real. The worlds of the reader-teacher and the author meet inside the story. An author can be anyone who has created the text. This is why it is imperative to read the story behind any text—even mathematics or physics. It is while reading this story that one can see one's own shape carved out fully. One's own experiences and expectations, one's own perceptions and choices are all reflected in one's interpretations of the stories. It is not just what the story does to you but also what you do to the story that changes life.

At the heart of Orhan Pamuk's novel, *The New Life* is a book. It has an interesting beginning. The narrator, whose name is Osman, is a young engineering student living at home with his mother. He is overwhelmed by a book:

I read a book one day and my whole life was changed. Even on the first page I was so affected by the book's intensity I felt my body sever itself and pull away from the chair where I sat reading the book that lay before me on the table.

Light surging from its pages illumines his face: 'Its incandescence dazzled my intellect but also endowed it with brilliant lucidity.'

He becomes obsessed with the book, the reading of which completely transforms him, rendering him incapable of continuing his present existence. To assuage his restlessness, Osman leaves his hometown and goes on a long journey lasting many months and passing numerous small Turkish towns on different buses. Pamuk's meditation on the complexity of being Turkish is mirrored by a narrative structure that moves away from that of a standard novel. Osman's life is his own but his meditations on it are ours as well. As readers, we share in the protagonist's point of view because we live in his shoes and see through his eyes. At the same time, by using narrative devices such as direct address and second-person pronouns in his novel, Pamuk wants us to know that he is aware of our presence in his text. In fact, he writes to speak to us; his anticipation of our responses assists in his storytelling.

Orhan Pamuk writes a book that invites us in, changes us, and by so doing, changes the meaning of the book for us. As Osman puts it:

So it was that as I read my point of view was transformed by the book, and the book was transformed by my point of view.

The World 'Between the Lines': What does Reading Comprehension Really Mean?

KEERTHI MUKUNDA

For some time now, I have been fascinated by what children are thinking about as they read. This has made me wonder what reading really is. It seems to be so much more than just decoding words. It is a complex network of mental events: comprehending texts, recognizing themes, relating to characters, visualizing imagery, reacting to events, recalling personal narratives and so on.

We are all familiar with the typical literal textbook questions—who, what, when and where—which make us go back to the story to check for specifics. At times (rarely, though), other critical and inferential questions are also included in textbooks. Here are examples:

Literal: What did Daedalus do when his son flew too close to the sun? Where did Daedalus and Icarus live before they were taken to the island? Where did they find the feathers? What problem did they face?

Critical: Do you agree with what the father decided to do? Why or why not? Would you behave the same way? What do you think she was thinking when . . . ? (These questions encourage discussion.)

Inferential: Why does the writer give the reader such a detailed account of what happened? Are there similarities between the stories? Differences? Why did they do that? What does that phrase mean?

While these are important questions and we should give time to them, I would ask: What about going beyond the book and uncovering the questions and comments from the children themselves? These are often critical and inferential.

> *Why would this character like a 'night with no moon'? Why is the book called 'Morning Girl'? Why did Columbus think of the native peoples as 'dirty'? Is there anything Tom will like doing on the farm?*[1]

Once we open up this possibility of 'reading between the lines', a deeper world of understanding emerges. It becomes a dynamic endeavour when children connect stories to their own lives, to past experiences, to other books they have read, or to authors and their messages. As Keene and Zimmerman write in *Mosaic of Thought* (a resource book I treasure): ***We want children to develop a command of the cognitive strategies known to be used by proficient readers to create memorable interpretations of books and to read with passion and purpose.***

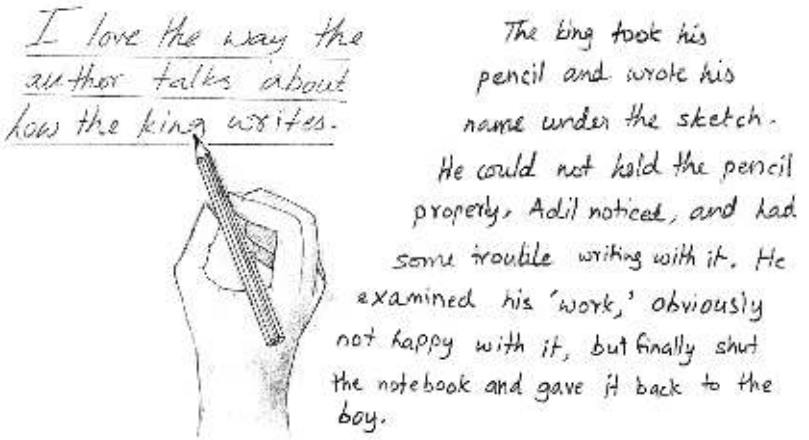
I have engaged 10- and 11-year-olds with three activities in class that help nurture the qualities described above: thinking aloud, literature discussion and classifying questions. Below I describe these with examples.

Thinking aloud

The class read a short story out loud together and all children made notes of their questions, feelings, predictions, opinions and connections (I needed to model this thinking-aloud process). Once class discussion on the story was done, each child chose one 'note' of his/hers to illustrate and present as a mini poster.

A short story titled *My Friend, The Emperor* by Shefali Jha (a story from the series *Different Tales* brought out by Anveshi) tells of a Muslim boy, Adil, who struggles with history homework, claiming that history does not like him. When he visits the mosque, trying to avoid the routine power cut at home, he sees a stranger, a king, who looks 'like he was out of The Arabian Nights'.

Here is one poster by a child:



A paragraph about the king reads: 'He had small eyes that made him look like the pictures of Chinese people Adil had seen, but somehow he didn't quite look like them either.'

A student in my class wrote a note in his book as he heard that part read out: *I wonder why we see certain things in people and think they are from a particular place…like when Adil thought he was Chinese just by looking at his eyes.* From here, the child generalized to: *Why do human beings look so different from each other in the world?*

This led us on a journey of explaining how early man settled in certain geographic regions and lived in those for thousands of years, developing certain characteristics due to the region and/or due to propagation of that particular group, and not due to large genetic variation. The following week, we discussed the nature of stereotypes, and how we all think in stereotypes often and on an everyday basis. Students shared personal examples:

Lady auto drivers surprise me; gender roles are rules we have made up.
I used to think taller meant older.
I saw a dark person in a mall and got scared.

Following this, another student in the class began to wonder about the differences between caste and religion and drew beautiful sketches of women in *burkhas* in her notebook. Later in the term, she decided to make a poster about fairness that addressed caste discrimination.

In her article *It's about time to talk,* Mary Kitagawa writes: *The rationale for spending almost two hours a week in speculation, hypothesis building, group reflection and elaboration of emerging thinking about literature is that students read better and develop new perspectives.*

Literature discussions

These took place over some weeks, based on the reading of a novel. In this scenario, a group of five to six students all read the same book on their own, a chapter or two a week, and then gathered to discuss their points or notes. These discussions happened at least once a week, for about half an hour, with a teacher acting as a guide. This followed well after the first activity described above.

Here are examples of notes that the students took while reading on their own:

Comments about *Morning Girl* by Michael Dorris:

Why is the book called 'Morning Girl'? She may be the most important character later on. 'The day remembered us' is a very unusual phrase. I noticed that Star Boy has a friend called Red Feathers. What does this mean: I was glad I didn't have to drink because then I'd be thirsty? I found out that Sharp Tooth lives quite close by, because he fixes the canoe. Let me think … Are Star Boy, Morning Girl and Sharp Tooth their real names? They always call them these names … it's probably translated from another language. Is this fiction or non-fiction? We got into the people in the story, like Star Boy and Morning Girl, as if they were normal people like us. When Columbus came, he described them as if they don't know anything, like they are young kids.

One time, a student read out the following extract from *Midnight Fox* by Betsy Byars:

> *I (Tom) remembered one time when Petie Burkis came over to my house and told me that he knew a way that you could figure out when you were going to die – the very day! He'd learned this from a sitter he'd had the night before. It was all according to the wrinkles in your hand – you counted them in a certain way. Well, we sat right down and counted wrinkles in my hand.*

The other students commented:

It is a silly superstition. Just a joke. Petie's sitter shouldn't have told him about the hand. How strange to count the lines. The sitter was teasing but Petie took her seriously. A superstition is when you really believe in something.

This became an opportunity to share opinions the children had about superstitions or beliefs. Mary Kitagawa writes:

> *With tentative ideas supported by time and a focusing framework, student-led literature discussions, ideally with an adult participant, are a way to explore belief systems.*

Classifying questions

As a class, we analysed everyone's questions and comments by categorizing them on a chart (this could be seen as a process of encouraging metacognition). Children noticed and realized that some of their questions were answerable by looking at the text; some were unanswerable; some gained clarity by discussing; and some gained clarity by researching. We were back to literal, critical and inferential questions, but this time provided by the children!

Questions	**Examples**
Answers in text	*Why doesn't Tom want to go to the farm?*
Answers by thinking about the story and my experiences	*Who would like a 'night with no moon'?*
With no certain answers	*Why did they name her Hazeline?* *What does he mean by 'History doesn't like me?'*
To clarify meaning	*Patterns in the sky: what does she mean? Constellations?*
Comments Predictions about events in the book	*Tom claims that he doesn't like animals, but does he begin to like the fox?*
About author's message/intent	*I love the brother's point of view of the world!*
About author's style	*The author writes, 'The day wins.'* *I found it strange that the author called a person a duck.* *The author seems to write very sarcastically.* *The author seems to be jumping time.*
Opinions	*No one should force him, he needs freedom, he should feel like going.* *He doesn't doubt his own way of thinking.* *It's a good idea that Tom left the den alone.* *Fred shouldn't catch the fox; he should keep a security system for his chickens; he could try catching and taming one fox rather than killing.*

Once the children became aware of the kinds of questions that were possible, they could generate more, and with a freer spirit. Their horizons broadened and the process of reading became dynamic and meaningful. I must say reading the stories and novels with them made the process so alive for me too! I would like to share this poem by Billy Collins on the nature of reading texts for the young, by way of conclusion.

First Reader

I can see them standing politely on the wide pages
That I was still learning to turn,
Jane in a blue jumper, Dick with his crayon-brown hair,
Playing with a ball or exploring the cosmos
Of the backyard, unaware they are the first characters,
The boy and girl who begin fiction…

… It was always Saturday and he and she
were always pointing to something and shouting, "Look!"
…They wanted us to look but we had looked already
and seen the shaded lawn, the wagon, the postman.
We had seen the dog, walked, watered and fed the animal,
And now it was time to discover the infinite, clicking
Permutations of the alphabet's small and capital letters.
Alphabetical ourselves in the rows of classroom desks,
We were forgetting how to look, learning how to read.

Billy Collins

Resources

Mary Kitagawa, "It's About Time to Talk", Voices from the Middle, Vol 1 No 1, September 1994

Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmermann, "Mosaic of Thought", 1997

Anveshi Team, "Different Tales", 2008

Notes

1. All italicized words are the students' own written or spoken words

On Lighting a Passion for Reading

ROOPAM DUBEY

It was on a crisp winter morning, when the entire teacher body of Rajghat Besant School sat in the eastern verandah of our magnificent assembly hall that it was announced that articles were invited for the Journal of Krishnamurti Schools. Being relatively new to the school, there were many things I was yet to explore, and the Journal was one of them. As the librarian for the senior school library, I had seen the issues of the Journal neatly stacked on one of the shelves but had not had the time to go through them. That same afternoon I picked up one issue and sat reading. Afternoon turned into evening and I found myself still engrossed in another issue of the Journal.

The articles were informative and interesting; they left me amazed at the sheer passion, earnestness, energy with which the ideas were put forth. Be it about teaching mathematics, taking children for a walk, understanding each child as a fresh poem or creating a compost pit—energy was there in all of them. It was the same energy, earnestness and passion that I observed each day in many of my colleagues here at Rajghat. I had been associated with teaching and education, but nowhere had I found the energy with which this KFI School reverberated.

Here our morning began with moving and melodious singing from *Geetayan* (the school song book) and the chanting of Vedic hymns, followed by a teacher's study meet. Each teacher found time to attend the meeting once a week. After reading an extract from one of Krishnamurti's books, we chose to discuss issues. With this soul-soothing start, the day unfolded in a most natural and unhindered way, but this question always lingered at the back of my mind—what was my role here as the senior school librarian? Was it only to issue and take back books, keep the decorum of the place and be responsible for the books, or was it something more? What energy was I transmitting which the students received in our interactions? What learning was taking place? Of course, sensing the urgency with which Krishnamurti addressed us in his books, I was aware that he

expected much more than what I was grasping. It actually seemed frustrating at times not to be able to argue with him in person about why he could not see that I could not see what he expected me to see. I could not visualize where I stood in his vision. How was I to light that flame of learning that would result in transformation of consciousness? This question, in various forms, strikes one ever so often, jumping out of his books. My day started with this question and ended without an answer.

In the library, groups of students came and left, and each new day I won new young friends. To connect with each child, to get the feel of their borrowing patterns and the favourites of different age groups, I had conversations with each of the groups. We shared our stories, we discussed the first books we had read, our favourite authors and, yes, also why some of us felt that it was a waste of time to read something other than the prescribed textbooks.

The Dewey decimal classification system was used in the library, and the books were classified accordingly. The library records were completely computerized, and the exact location of any particular title could have been located with a click of the mouse. The place seemed more or less in order. The restlessness was within me. I needed to be clear about my role as an educator, or rather, as a human being.

We maintained a file, apart from the usual book cards, in which we noted details, like the name of the book and also of the student who had borrowed it. At the end of the month we had a clear picture of a student's reading habits, favourite books, authors. Getting students to return books on time and being considerate to other readers in the library were areas where extra effort was needed.

The students were repeatedly reminded to be punctual about returning the books they had borrowed, but the desired effect was not achieved. Surely, there was insufficient listening between us. Why did books need to be returned on time when the book was not needed by another? Was it because of others or was it important for our own selves to be punctual? Was it important to be responsible, be it for returning books or reaching the morning assembly on time? Being true to our commitment and honest to ourselves was a lesson we all needed to learn, whether in the library, in the playground or in life as a whole.

We placed a few sheets of paper with the header, 'Late Returns' and three columns: 'Date', 'Name' and 'Remarks,' and kept them on the librarian's desk. Students who returned books late were required to fill in the columns and write a reason for the late return of the book. The child invariably paused and then wrote down something like, 'I am sorry, this will not happen again,' or 'I will be responsible and will be on time, next time.' I also asked them if it was important to adhere to the rules and if so, why? We engaged in a little whispered discussion then and there. With delight I

noted that the names of the same children did not appear on 'Late Returns' again.

A clay pot full of water with flower petals in it greeted every visitor to the library. Soft instrumental music and the smell of incense created a serene atmosphere. Entering the library, the children automatically grew quiet. The soft background music and the soothing fragrance made them pause, listen, smell and then settle quietly with their chosen material. There seemed no need to remind them, every now and then, to be quieter so as not to disturb others. If ever there was a need, a gentle touch on the shoulder did the job. Of course, there were some who required more than a symbolic gesture; but even with them, no more than a quiet talk was ever necessary.

In our library committee meeting, we discussed the matter regarding circulation of books amongst students. We felt that categories other than fiction were not being borrowed. To get students interested in the different and diverse sections of the library was a challenge.

The first thing we did was to organize a book talk for each class separately, and students were encouraged to select books from different sections. The students gave vivid accounts of the books that were suggested to them and this made others interested in those books. Thus by word of mouth and by speaking to the regular readers individually, we tried to make students interested in books from other genres. At the end of the session we decided to have a Book-Lovers Meet. It was open to all and attendance was optional. The venue was the library and the time was late night, after dinner.

To our pleasant surprise a large number of students turned up on that cold winter night. The guest speaker, an English lecturer in a local college and an avid book reader, set the tone for the evening, and student speakers, one after the other, created a mesmerizing atmosphere. *Gone with theWind, The Moon by Whale Light, Greek Mythology, A Fistful of Rice, Artemis Fowl* and *India Unbound* were some of the books spoken about. Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Ibsen's plays were discussed and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and *Restless Earth* were searched for. Sitting in the cosy library annexure, huddled together, the young faces were alight with eager excitement. They listened to every word of the speakers. At the end of the meet no one was in a hurry to leave, and books were being reserved. Hot cake, baked by a helping teacher, was truly more than the icing on the cake.

Encouraged by this response, we rearranged the library and weekly displays of books were given more care. It was truly heartening to see students walking into the library pausing to take a second glance at the displayed books; and it was sheer joy when they selected one from among them. Long forgotten books, hidden somewhere behind hundreds of others, in some

remote corner, were getting a feel of the young hands.

The help from the language teachers came in handy. The students were given assignments to write book reviews in their language classes, and poem recitations were organized. These activities introduced even those children to books who had shied away from them earlier. It was heartening to see the non-readers too, browsing through the shelves, even if only for their book review assignments. Neat and wittily written book reviews started pouring in. The ball had started rolling. We kept a 'recommend books' file at the entrance to the library. What was a trickle in the beginning turned into a torrent as the titles and authors' names filled the pages. We were flooded with suggestions. The talk of books was in the air, and excited and happy faces started pestering me for recommended books.

Having been in the school for some time by then, I had begun to experience the freedom each one of us had in expression of thought and idea and also in its execution. On our request the school authorities sanctioned a handsome amount for the purchase of new books. More than two hundred new books were added to the library. From *To Kill a Mockingbird* to the Meluha and Nagas trilogy, from Eric Segal's *Love Story* to the Percy Jackson series, Marquez, Tagore, Premchand, Dostoyevsky, Coetzee, Yeats, Ghalib, Pamuk, Sawant and, of course, Nicholas Sparks, the students' all time favourite: the list was unending. The new arrival section brought fresh energy to the library and yet the craving for more books was not fully satisfied. We had not been able to acquire the whole list of recommended books. We decided to have a book fair in the library. The fair was planned for a whole week. Each section was allotted a time slot and each child a fixed budget.

The excitement of the book lovers could in no way be contained. Posters, banners, bookmarks, quotations—all poured in. The night before the fair the whole campus was decorated with hand-made materials. Book reviews of suggested books were displayed at strategic places. The whole place wore a festive look. To see the students discussing, exchanging details about books, and trying to fit the books they wanted into their limited budget was heartening. The books chosen and bought by most of the students gave us encouragement and hope for the future. The books are being read, and the library is planning to have the next book-lovers meet when the contents of these books have been shared.

Amidst the hurly-burly of all these activities and the daily routine, my question remains unanswered. Am I clear about my role? Am I transmitting the energy that will help light the flame of learning in the hearts of my young friends? I know I will have to find my own answer, and I will have to be my own light and come out of this darkness on my own.

The air has turned warm; the trees are now bare. The colours in nature have changed mostly to brown and the end of the summer session is nearing. From my librarian's desk I see a child taping these lines onto the display board: 'One who can read but does not read is to be pitied for he/she is in a worse situation than those who cannot read at all.'

Learning from Feedback

Kavitha Krishna

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view … until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.

Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

When I first read *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a 15-year-old, these words made a deep impression on me. I often wondered what the world looked like through another person's eyes. The cobbler at the street corner, the peanut vendor at the bus stop, the Principal on the podium: What did the world seem like to them? Sitting in a boring afternoon class, I wondered if my teacher ever stepped into her students' shoes. If she could see the class through my eyes, would something change? Would she liven up the class with some humour? Would she give us less homework? Would she talk less, and let us talk more?

When I began to teach, I found that looking at things from a student's point of view made teaching more interesting and more fun. I also think it made me a better teacher.

There are different ways in which we can understand our students' viewpoints. In this article I explore how written feedback questionnaires can be useful in gathering students' perspectives to improve teaching and learning. The article describes some ways we can collect, interpret and respond to feedback.

What is feedback?

The dictionary defines feedback as 'the process by which a system is modulated, controlled, or changed by the product, output, or response it produces'. As

teachers we are constantly giving our students feedback. Corrections in the notebook, suggestions in the class or reminders in the corridor are all forms of feedback. As teachers we believe (and sometimes hope!) that our feedback is having a positive effect on our students' learning. Feedback is a way for us to communicate our viewpoints and concerns to students.

As teachers we also get feedback constantly. Feedback from students helps us to modulate or change the way we teach. The expressions on students' faces, the questions they ask and their written work are all forms of student feedback. Feedback of this kind is very useful, though it is sometimes difficult to interpret correctly. Do the yawns mean that the lesson is boring or that the students were up late at night? A direct way of understanding students' viewpoints and concerns is to ask them.

Written questionnaires are a systematic way to gather feedback from students. We can choose what to focus on in a feedback questionnaire. We can find out students' perceptions of what they are learning. We can get feedback on our teaching practices.

How and when to get written feedback

Written feedback can be taken in the middle of a term, while there are still opportunities to make changes to what and how we teach. Student responses can help us identify what they find helpful as well as what they find difficult. It also helps us to understand the concerns of those students who would otherwise hesitate to communicate openly. Written feedback can also be taken at the end of a course, when it provides us with inputs to plan for the future. This works well with both young students in primary school as well as older ones in high school. Of course, the questionnaires need to be prepared in an age-appropriate way.

Written feedback can be gathered in 10 to 15 minutes of class time. Students need to be assured of anonymity so that they are frank in their opinions. It's also useful to tell students the purpose of the feedback. 'Your responses on this questionnaire will help me review my work as well as yours,' is a statement that I often prefix to the questionnaires I use.

There are many possible questions we could ask, depending on which aspects of teaching and learning we want to focus on. There are two main categories of questions that I find useful. The first category includes questions

about teaching practices. The second category includes questions that encourage students to reflect on their own learning.

Questions about teaching practice

This category could include questions on the use of the blackboard, the language we use in the classroom and the way we handle students' questions. I learn what is working well in my teaching from student responses to these questions. I also discover areas that need improvement. The very act of posing these questions makes me more aware of what and how I am communicating in the classroom.

Here is a sample of feedback I request from students in this area:

Please respond to these statements about the teaching in science classes this year. Tick in the box which matches your opinion the best. If you have any comments or suggestions you can write them in the last column.

STATEMENTS	*Strongly agree*	*Agree*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*	*Any comments or suggestions*
The topics and concepts covered in class were relevant and interesting.					
The language used by the teacher was clear and easy to understand.					
The teacher used the blackboard well.					
The explanations given by the teacher were clear and understandable.					
Activities were well organized.					
Instructions were given clearly.					
Assignments and tests were corrected promptly.					
The teacher gave clear and useful feedback on your work.					

Student responses have often highlighted areas where I can improve my effectiveness. Here are a few examples of comments and suggestions that I have received from students, which have pushed me to look for ways to improve my teaching.

Akka, maybe you could go to drawing classes. Some of your drawings on the blackboard are difficult to understand.

I have focused on making diagrams and illustrations on the blackboard simpler and clearer. I also make it a point to practise any new drawings before I attempt them on the board.

You spend too much time on giving instructions for lab work. That's really boring.

I think about what I really need to say to students before lab work. I have replaced lengthy instructions with colourful posters, which I use to remind students about lab rules. I encourage students to read and follow written instructions independently.

I feel sleepy in the afternoon classes. We could have more outdoor activities in the afternoon.

Field trips, quizzes in class, project work are scheduled for those sleepy times whenever possible.

Your feedback in my notebook really helped me.

This encourages me to continue giving fairly detailed written feedback in students' notebooks even though it means spending extra time.

Questions about students learning

The second category of question reveals students' perceptions about what they are learning. These include questions about what students found difficult in class, what they found valuable and so on. Here are some sample questions that helped me understand students' concerns:

What are the most significant things you have learnt in Science class this year?
What do you think you could have done better?
Complete this sentence to describe how you feel about science. 'Science is _____'.
*What did you enjoy the **most** about Maths classes?*
*What did you like the **least** about Maths classes?*

I have found such questions useful in two ways. Firstly, students' answers tell me what is working and what is not. I get a sense of the difficulties students may be facing. I also get a sense of what enthuses them.

The second benefit is to students themselves. Students get a chance to reflect on their own learning. Student responses can be a starting point for further discussions on what and how they learn. Here are some sample responses from middle school students:

I like doing Maths problems when I am getting the answers.
I think I could have coordinated better with my group members.
I should have taken more detailed notes in class.
I learnt to raise my hand and wait for my turn to speak.
I hate working in a group. I think we should be allowed to work alone.
The most significant things I learnt were to ask questions and how to work in a group.
I learnt a lot about plants.

Responding to student feedback

It's nice when students give positive feedback. But students, if they are honest, are not always going to say what we want to hear. Students may give feedback that we do not agree with. Some of it might make us feel hurt, angry or resentful. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and yet go beyond them. Being open to student feedback is vital, whether it seems positive or negative. A certain sense of objectivity and detachment helps when responding to feedback. I find it useful to ask myself: What can I learn from this perspective? Feedback is not the same as praise or criticism; its purpose is to help us improve teaching and learning.

The first step in responding to student feedback is to acknowledge it promptly. Acknowledging both positive and negative feedback tells students that we take them seriously and are open to their opinions. Acting on it is the next step, but responding does not mean that we have to implement every suggestion. There may be some aspects of the feedback that we may choose not to act on. Some suggestions may be inappropriate or difficult to carry out. It's important to communicate to students why we choose not to act on such feedback.

We can also communicate the specific changes we choose to make in response to student feedback. Our response to feedback can also be an opportunity to clarify our own expectations for the class. It can create a space where we can dialogue with students about their expectations and learning.

Conclusion

If we want our students to learn from each other and be open to our suggestions we need to show how it is done. When we seek and respond to feedback in an open way, we model for students how to learn from another's views and opinions. We communicate that learning is a process shared by both students and teachers. Listening to students gives us many opportunities to learn: about ourselves, about our students and about the world.

A teacher who establishes rapport with the taught, becomes one with them, learns more from them than he teaches them. …Whenever I talk with someone I learn from him. I take from him more than I give him. In this way, a true teacher regards himself as a student of his students. If you will teach your pupils with this attitude, you will benefit much from them.

M K Gandhi, *Talk to Khadi Vidyalaya Students, Sevagram. Harijan Seva,* 15th February 1942

Note: Sample responses are from students in Rishi Valley School, Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre and Nammashaale school.

From Visibility to Accountability and Assessment: A Sleight of Hand

Gopal Krishnamurthy
with Craig Walker and Sunsong Clark

School is an institution for drilling children [and teachers] in cultural orientations. Educationists have attempted to free the school from drill, but have failed because they have gotten lost among a multitude of phantasms—always choosing the most obvious "enemy" to attack. Furthermore, with every enemy destroyed, new ones are installed among the old fortifications – the enduring contradictory maze of the culture. Educators think that when they have made arithmetic or spelling into a game; made it unnecessary for children to "sit up straight"; defined the relations between teacher and children as democratic; and introduced plants, fish, and hamsters into classrooms, they have settled the problem of drill. They are mistaken.

Jules Henry, *Culture Against Man*

Accountability and assessment—the idea of holding schools, educators and students responsible for measurable learning—is a pervasive 'cultural orientation' of schools and educational institutions. It underlies achievement-based teaching, where success is valued and failure is feared or stigmatized. It motivates our efforts for what we assume is an indispensable need for evaluation in the teaching-learning process and the life of our schools. On school boards, in parent organizations and at faculty meetings around the world the same questions are asked: How do we know that learning is going on? How much of this learning is valuable? How do we know that our teachers and students are skilful and excellent? How do we ensure the quality of education in our schools? Are our tests and assessment rubrics valid and reliable? Such questions and worries are predicated on an implicit and unexamined drive for accountability and assessment.

We tend to associate these issues with conventional educational systems that teach to state standards, administer high-stakes standardized tests and require annual improvement in school and teacher performance. In light of Henry's caution and critique, the authors of this paper would like to reiterate and extend the

relevance of concerns about accountability and assessment to charter, private, so-called 'progressive schools', Krishnamurti schools and to educational contexts in general. The following is an invitation for all of us to grapple with these issues in whatever settings we find ourselves.

One root of accountability and assessment lies in what Alfred North Whitehead called the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness' (Whitehead, 1925, p. 51). There is a sense that learning and teaching are made available and apparent only by their evaluation according to some measurable criteria. But why do we need to make learning, teaching, thinking, observations, skills and questioning accessible and visible? Well … so that there can be more learning, teaching and thinking; so we can occasion more of this for each other. You need to make visible your learning, teaching and thinking, and I need to do the same—so that we can learn from each other, make sense of things together. However, converting this to a requirement for measurable evidence or proof involves an ethical and pedagogical sleight of hand. The injunction 'show me what you are learning and thinking—so I can learn' is substantively different from 'prove to me that you are learning and thinking, and I will evaluate its quality and soundness'. Those requiring accountability and assessment get to decide what counts as good teaching and learning, and those required to demonstrate the achievement of these criteria need to win the approval of those in power in order to perpetuate this system. Visibility allows for mutual learning and growth; accountability, however, sets in motion a system of education in which the assessor directs and evaluates learning and teaching according to predetermined and measurable content, skill and performance standards.

Because it is often the assessors—teachers, administrators, school board members, and legislators—who determine a school's standards, they are based primarily on the needs of the assessors, particularly as they relate to college entrance and employment. Progress towards meeting these standards is measured by various forms of evaluation, and conformity is imposed through a mechanical structure of curriculum and teaching methods—conventional or progressive. Superimposed on this accountability and assessment structure, and energized by it, is the culturally induced illusion that conforming to these structures demonstrates personal responsibility and achievement. New teaching methods and assessment techniques may be substituted to reinvigorate this illusion, but in so doing schools persist in drilling students in cultural orientations.

In the accountability and assessment driven system, progress is measured along predetermined cultural orientations, rather than reflecting what the students and teachers are actually learning about themselves and the world in real time

as learning unfolds. When we start with objectified procedures and criteria, however enlightened or progressive our methods and frameworks may be, our vision gets so occluded we only see human beings as deficient and always falling short of some measure. In short, we are blindsided by our own obdurate drive towards the achievement of distal criteria.

When one follows a method … the children [and teachers] are important only as they fit into it. One measures and classifies the child [and teacher], and then proceeds to educate him according to some chart. This process of education may be convenient for the teacher [school boards and administrators], but neither the practice of a system nor the tyranny of opinion … can bring about an integrated human being.

J Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life,* 1953

Our challenge is to respond to students and teachers as three-dimensional living beings in our care and purview. Methods and frameworks for accountability force us to see teachers and students with regard to criteria of excellence and achievement and trajectories of development. Such 'seeing with regard to' drives us to 'see as'; to label people as gifted, average or learning disabled; but in all such instances we fail to 'see'. As Wittgenstein points out, '*seeing as* is not part of perception, and for this reason it is *like* seeing and then again not *like*' (1953, part II, xi). Thus, when we see human beings with regard to criteria and according to the labels generated by this process, we are involved in activities that have the semblance of perception but not perception itself.

The same sleight of hand that has transformed visibility to accountability reduces learning to a mechanical, conditioned process that configures learning as linear and makes student 'progress' easier to assess and quantify along a predetermined trajectory. Questions have answers, and problems have solutions. What we *know* is important; what we don't know is a matter of concern or even shame. Understanding the source of a problem or discovering a question is less critical than finding a solution that satisfies the cultural orientations of the school—be it progressive or conventional.

Many alternative, progressive and experimental schools try to solve these problems by reducing class size, humanizing the curriculum, eliminating grades and adopting alternative assessment procedures. While these innovations and reformations may provide some reprieve within the prevailing educational paradigm, the foundational cultural orientation that learning and teaching are made visible by accountability and assessment remains active and intact.

Some progressive schools have turned to smaller classes, but small is not necessarily beautiful: while some things might improve with a change from big classes to small classes, the core conception of teaching and learning and its everyday

enactment may remain impoverished if the locus of our concern still revolves around accountability and assessment. Even in small classrooms we hear the same complaints that we find in big classrooms: lazy students, incompetent teachers, disparity in levels of competence, ability and achievement.

Other schools have adopted new terminologies, but the name is not the thing. A mere shift in educational terminology and discourse is inadequate unless there is a change in the daily enactment of teaching and learning. Authentic assessment, active learning, caring community, project-based learning and inquiry-based learning: all these become shibboleths and proxies for a more radical re-envisioning of education as it unfolds in daily practice. We can envisage the danger of an inquiry-based curriculum where the criteria for what counts as inquiry are not themselves the subject of or open to our questioning.

The impulse to humanize education by replacing standardized testing with other forms of assessment that continue to sort students and teachers into ability heaps is as pernicious as a standardized metric. We may call it formative assessment (usually nothing more than a series of summative assessments along a pre-ordained trajectory of learning), authentic assessment or even self-assessment. We might arrange people into small project-based learning groups, but grade human and humanizing activities like participation, cooperation, inquiry, and soon even kindness! Such misguided humanism is often worse than standardized testing because it brings even human qualities, dispositions and virtues into the bay of the measurable.

Teacher education programmes are no less susceptible to drilling in cultural orientations. Supervision, and even mentorship, conceived of as the modelling of good teaching practices by experts and experienced teachers for novices to emulate or adapt, elicits conformity rather than the creative development of unique teaching approaches and styles—drawn from attention to human beings rather than to predetermined criteria. Progressive educational methods that prescribe a learner-centred teacher training programme hold teachers 'accountable' to a criterion of 'learner-centredness' without themselves being fully responsive to the circumstances and challenges of the teacher as a learner herself. To be 'learning-centred' rather than 'learner-centred', teacher education must provide a mutually educative environment for both mentor and mentee (teacher and student).

As Bill Ayers puts it, 'a major obstacle on the pathway to teaching is the notion that teaching is essentially technical, that it is easily learned, simply assessed and quickly remediated' (2001, p. 10). This notion arises from our persistent orientation towards accountability and assessment, which reduces education to quantifiable knowledge and correct answers. If the

correct answer is 'C' and a student writes 'A', how hard can it be to recondition the child to pick 'C' instead? Yet, the world is so much more complicated than this … and so is teaching.

Teaching is at once intellectual and caring. Students make sense of subject matter in myriad ways, and the teacher has to be concerned, alert and responsive to all of this without merely insisting on delivering inert content in the way that she or others may have amassed it. Thus, the challenge for teaching is not merely to find out which student has *got it* but rather to *get at* learners' diverse understandings—which are only sometimes synonymous with *getting it*. In this project both the teacher and the student are engaged in a shared journey of discovery and learning. In fact the original meaning of 'assessment' is to 'sit down beside', derived from the Latin *as sedere*. The turn towards assessment as the measurement of learning reconfigures the educational encounter away from a mutuality of commitments and engagements.

In sum, our worry and contention is that, unless we closely examine our conceptions of teaching and learning and how this gets enacted every day, in every moment, reform may provide some reprieve, but not a foundational reframing of teaching-learning and a repurposing of schools for the values that we all really care about. We would like to end here with some further questions: What would it look like for learning, and not the measurement of learning, to be at the core of every educational interaction? Is there an excellence without measurement—and what would teaching look like in this context? What would learning look like? What would happen to motivation? What would school look like?

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'To Know Is Not Enough': Critical Thinking in a Krishnamurti School

LIONEL CLARIS

Underneath the obvious critical situation of the economy and the environment, isn't the world today actually suffering from a crisis in knowing and thinking? Bombarded with more information than ever: advertising, political, religious, social, online commandments of all kinds, giving advice on anything and everything, we are at the mercy of a surfeit of uncritical knowledge.[1] So much so that it's not uncommon for people not to know what to think or who to believe anymore. Here I have in mind, for example, events with a global impact, from the ongoing world financial crises, to the latest US presidential election, in which both parties spent an unprecedented amount of money to run in today's apparently necessary propaganda-like advertisement race.

This trend of information overload is only going to get faster and heavier. What does this mean in terms of the intentions of Krishnamurti schools? Critical thinking, I want to argue, is an art—not just a skill—that is essential to impart to our students. One that I want to suggest is in alignment with the 'questioning mind' that Krishnaji sought to bring about. This essay explains what critical thinking is generally thought of as; offers a new working definition of it; and explores what it can mean to think critically in the context of a K school.

In the last decade or so there has been an increasing focus in many schools and universities around the world for students to develop their critical thinking as one of the most valuable lessons of their schooling. Yet in spite of this, and the fact that the phrase 'critical thinking skills' has become an international buzzword, it is debatable what *criticality* really is.[2]

It's important to question whether conventional wisdom[3] of what it means to think critically is enough to tackle the critical times we live in. I want to offer that it's dangerously limiting to reduce critical thinking to the application of skills, as is typically done. Indeed, all variations of conceptions of *critical thinking* as a skill I have come across involve an application by

an *observer* who tends to see him or herself as more or less morally superior from the *observed*.[4] This leads to aberrations in the ways critical thinking is both practised and assessed; from the presumptuous implementation of it by certain academics to its being included in multiple-choice tests.

Skills are important, of course, but if thinking does not become critical of itself in their application, the 'skilled' thinker fails to appreciate the whole complexity of the context beyond the limited field of what is immediately known and accessible to thinking. Indeed, what about the epistemic assumptions of a given context, of the skills themselves, and those of the 'critical thinker'? What of the urgent need to challenge conditioning, power relations with their normative commandments, and corruption?

The expectations behind the study skills and essay writing class I teach that serves as an inspiration for this article are quite demanding, especially at an existential level, because the topic cannot be kept at an arm's length. Students are expected to face themselves, experience their limits and grow beyond them as a result. This is within the framework that if students are allowed to learn in a critical way about what they are interested in, that will help facilitate finding out what they love in the face of their fears of learning. My second assumption is that if they so discover what they love to do, then the rest will follow in a way that may not be the typical path, but that, as a result of not conforming, will be empowering, innovative and socially *responsive*. This is in part why discovering what one loves to do is a core intention of Brockwood[5] and, I imagine, of other K schools as well.

By being encouraged to be self-reflective about their subjects, students—this includes the teacher—engage with their learning in a way that they are led to concretely appreciate that 'to know is not enough'. This is true in two interrelated ways, namely, students explore distinctions and connections between outer knowledge of the world and inner knowledge of themselves. One of the central goals is for them to see that in both cases knowledge is *constructed* and must therefore be critiqued as such.

In this light, I want to suggest that critical thinking needs to be reconceived as both reflective and reflexive. 'Reflective' in the sense of *deep thought* about something, and 'reflexive' in the dictionary meaning of the term as *taking account of oneself.* This includes seeing the effects that one's thinking has both within and outside oneself. These two kinds of looking within are very connected because *reflection* is necessary for *reflexivity,* and the latter in turn enhances the quality of one's reflections. As such, criticality must not only be practised *within* a given field of inquiry, as is typically the case when it's present at all, but *about* it too. If not, a classic unjust hierarchy is created: critical thinking becomes dangerously distant from its object of study.

Interdisciplinary research in critical theory, critical pedagogies and theories of moral development, together with K's own insights on the limits of thought and knowledge all seem to point, albeit in different ways, to a *reflective praxis of critical thinking.* Because *to know is not enough,* in this course students learn to do so both *within* and *about* their field(s) of study, thereby taking reflections to the reflexive level.

Non satis scire: 'to know is not enough'. I first engaged with Hampshire College's motto about 12 years ago when I applied to Hampshire to do my undergraduate degree. Founding trustee, Winthrop S Dakin came up with it in 1968 just before the inception of the college in 1970. The dictum's early interpretation was that one must not only know but also do and act. By bringing it into the context of a Krishnamurti school I intentionally depart somewhat from its traditional meaning, displacing it into a more critical reading and thus seeking to enhance it. Before turning to that, however, let us first briefly become familiar with how the motto has been officially interpreted and re-interpreted over the years.[6]

Charles Longsworth, second President of Hampshire College, recently quoted the poet Emily Dickinson in relation to the maxim at the new President's inauguration in April 2012: 'Wonder—is not precisely Knowing. And not precisely Knowing not.' President Ralph J Hexter extended the meaning of *non satis scire* on the occasion of his inauguration in 2005 when during his address he brilliantly deconstructed it: 'Within the logic of *non satis scire,* the ultimate insufficiency of knowledge is the necessity of doubt. … I might propose reversing the words of the motto, reordering them into *satis non scire* … : "it is sufficient not to know." It is an old saw that the beginning of wisdom is ignorance. Awareness of the insufficiency of our knowledge is what sets in motion our search for answers. What we know rests, in the end, on the foundation of our most basic uncertainties and questions. It is uncertainty and doubt that test each and every hypothesis; without those tests, they would have no validity …'

In 2012, for the inauguration of President Jonathan Lash, whose event was entitled, *Educating for Change: Critical Thinking in a Critical Time,* US Vice-President Al Gore referred to the dictum in question as '… the slogan … "to know is not enough" could not be more appropriate to the time we now are living in. I want to challenge you to breathe life into that phrase. We know about the injustice in the world and we know that it's not enough to simply know about it.' Shortly after, during his address President Lash pointed out the importance of 'not [being] satisfied to acquire knowledge, but determined to use it'.

As we've started to see, simply to believe in what one thinks is problematic because it lacks wisdom and indeed criticality. And yet, while being the obverse, isn't it

also true that to disavow what one *actually* knows is equally unwise? Importantly, psychoanalysis, and its notion of *fetishistic disavowal,*[7] adds a critical twist to *knowing not being enough*. One of the reasons we can be unmoved to act based on what we know is because we don't really believe it. That is, the observer and the observed are split. This is another side of 'to know is not enough'. Indeed, in the grips of such *fetishistic split* we also lose touch with facing the reality of what we know. We must, therefore, not only learn to question uncritical thinking's acceptance of knowledge, but as such, we must challenge belief's double register: believing blindly *and* disbelieving unthinkingly.

The importance of doubt, of 'not-knowing', of self-criticality, in critical thinking, should therefore not be underestimated. K too puts forth the essential notion of doubting everything, including not only knowledge but its active double agent: our own thinking. This questioning specifically includes scepticism towards the knowledge one has of oneself because it affects all other knowledge. For when thinking imagines it knows—imagining at the same time him or herself as an individual who knows—all it sees is the projection of itself. It's not listening or learning but reducing the spontaneity of life to identification. At that point, the image is uncritically taken for more than it is.

When I think I know, all I am able to sense is actually just a hermetic extension of my old thinking repeating itself. I am similarly reductive with myself. For instead of realizing that by labelling I am boxing myself in further in uncritical thought, strangely I think the label maker is not responsible for the label. This is partly what K means by 'the observer is the observed': that at the moment of observing my image-making, I *am* that identification. At this critical point of realization, K teaches, I stop identifying with knowledge and thought; and here starts a process of learning which is an emptying of the mind of what is false. Staying in that state of being, though, is at issue.

Despite the brief glimpses of insight we all may experience from time to time, Krishnamurti comments on the humbling state of affairs of finding oneself back in the illusion of thinking one knows, or in wanting to know absolutely. This typically manifests itself in wanting to know *how* to get to that state of insight. But for K *there is no how.* Indeed, to *know [how] is not enough*. There is only *what is* and the facing of it or lack thereof. All labels are subterfuges for not looking.

I want to ask whether *criticality,* as self-negation, is precisely the very stopping of image projections needed. What if thinking, in becoming critical of itself, realizes the danger of its identificatory movement? Can thought see itself in the mirror? Is there then another modality of knowledge and thought that is not an *identifying* but a *facing?* To be sure there is

still thought but there may not be a thinker. This is perhaps controversial, because the words 'thought' and 'knowledge' tend to be more or less explicitly banned in the K world. But I want to suggest that thought is not the enemy; it's *identification with thought and knowledge* that is the danger. The mechanical and uncritical tendencies of thought are due to identification—and not thinking per se.

To answer our questions K comes to the rescue:

> *So it is important to understand who is the enquirer. We have gone into that a little bit, we said, still thought. Now can thought examine itself? Can you? Can thought look at itself? Go on sir. That is, we explained the other day, and bearing in mind that explanations are not the fact, the word is not the thing … we are enquiring whether thought can look at itself. Can you be aware when thought arises? Of course one can. But who is the entity that is being aware of thought arising? … It is still thought. Is this clear? You see we have divided thought into the thinker and thought.*[8]

I want to argue that if thinking is to be critical it must in its reflections practise *a kind of reflexion* that leads it to let go of the identity of the thinker. It's a sort of reflexivity, therefore, that is more of a forgetting than a heightened sense of self. At the same time, reflexive thinking does not take place in a vacuum, and, as such, it is vulnerable to identificatory re-conditioning. What is needed is a critical access to the state of consciousness prior to the explicit reflexes of the ego, even as we must recognize that even an implicit space within consciousness is not necessarily pure. Indeed, it's because consciousness contains deep-seated fear and anxiety that affect reflexivity that it must be critiqued, while also acknowledging that the sort of critical thinking we need in order to do so is one without a thinker.[9]

What we are exploring is the possibility for a kind of *thinking without a thinker.*[10] Wittgenstein seems to be after something similar when, in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* he writes, '[t]here is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas.'[11] Some may say we still have to reconcile this with the fact that K warns 'the thinker is the thought'[12] and that therefore *thought is the thinker* too. It's clear that the thinker needs thoughts to exist but I want to suggest that the opposite is not necessarily true; namely, the identifying thinker needs uncritical thoughts, but critical thinking as such does not need a thinker.

Practically speaking, how can all this manifest itself in classes in a K school? When it comes to outer knowledge, 'to know is not enough' materializes in students realizing for themselves that to learn content knowledge without knowing how to apply it is not enough. This may take them out of their comfort zone because learning is not about memorizing anymore. Some healthy fear here, as in an experience of the unknown, may be induced. In terms of inner knowledge the related point

students explore is that to know something psychologically, say one's fear in learning, does not suffice to make one change. The point is for them to understand this existentially. This happens when they are guided to critically engage with that fear.

Instructionally, students can be taught the kinds of study skills necessary to be a successful, free, lifelong learner. Many go through school without ever having been taught how to study, how their brain processes information, why it remembers certain things and forgets others. Students should learn how to do mind mapping in order to organize their thinking and learn the art of asking meaningful questions so that they make the material theirs. And perhaps the most important skill of all: writing critically.

We can assist students with the kinds of writing they need for their exams (analytical and argumentative). Students learn how to structure an effective essay: how to write an outline, an introduction, a conclusion, and clear paragraphs. Writing is the challenge where many of the things they learn come together and where their reflexive thinking comes to fruition. It's a great medium to learn the art of critical thinking. It would be a mistake, however, for students who are attempting to be critical, to see themselves as fundamentally separate from the object of their critique. As we saw, it's not just a matter of applying a skill. Critical thinking is instead the art of reflectively being critical of both the object and the thinker.

In this way, students not only become methodical about their studies, alleviating a lot of the anxiety associated with studying, but they learn how to establish meaningful, constructive, critical connections. Classes are interactive and students bring the homework they want to work on, for which they get individualized help and attention. They like coming to a place where the atmosphere is studious.

As in a laboratory, the focus is not on lectures, although there can be some targeted ones at times of need. But the point is to reduce those and guide students to become engaged learners, putting more responsibility for learning on them. To a certain degree the role of the teacher changes, to become more of a facilitator than an all-knowing authority. This allows for richer interdisciplinary work to happen, especially through the peer-to-peer work that is promoted with this approach.

In conclusion, the focus of such a class is clearly more on learning than on exams. The rationale is two-fold. To be a support for exam classes, both psychologically and academically, and also to show students that when these are integrated, learning is made more exciting because it brings together the inner and the outer. At that point, taking an exam is a good option, but by no means the only one. What matters first is that the learner becomes critically engaged with learning through a *critique of the thinker and his or her thoughts.* After all, it goes to the heart of what Krishnamurti

wanted for his schools, and, at least based on my experience, it makes for good teaching practice too.

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1 A more or less imposed knowledge that, if not challenged passes as Truth—something to be accepted and followed—rather than something constructed that must be deconstructed and meaningfully re-appropriated.

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3 Paul, Richard, and Linda Elder. *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking-Concepts and Tools.* Third ed. Dillon Beach: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2003.

4 See also my discussion of identification with knowledge in:

Claris, Lionel. "Partial and Total Insight: Constructivism and Krishnamurti's Pedagogy." In *Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools.* Chennai: Krishnamurti Foundation India, Issue No 15, January 2011. http://journal.kfionline.org/article.php?issue=15&article=9

5 "To discover one's own talent and what right livelihood means" www.brockwood.org.uk/intentions.html

6 Hampshire College's online digital archive together with my own. I want to thank Ralph J. Hexter, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor of the University of California, Davis, for having kindly provided me with a copy of his 2005 inauguration speech as President of Hampshire College.

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8 Krishnamurti, J. First Public Question & Answer Meeting at Rajghat, 28th November 1981. (accessed at www.jkrishnamurti.org/)

9 If we had the space here we would go into the notion of 'pre-reflective consciousness' in the philosophies of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Judith Butler, and Slavoj Zizek's critique of it, especially in his latest book "Less Than Nothing" (2012) in which he

argues instead for a 'pre-transcendental gap/rupture'. See also particularly:

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10 See also Slavoj Zizek's discussion of "thoughts without a thinker" in his comparison of psychoanalysis and Buddhism in:

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11 Proposition 5.631 in:

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