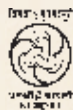




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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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Memorial Lecture



NCERT

Mahatma Gandhi
Third Memorial Lecture-2010

By Jatin Das

Education is the 'all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit'.

'Education must touch every aspect of daily living and help every man and woman to be a better citizen of their village, and therefore a better citizen of India and the world'.

'The real remedy [for exploitation and injustice] is non-violent democracy, otherwise spelled true education of all. The rich should be taught stewardship and the poor self-help'.

– MAHATMA GANDHI

NCERT MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

Mahatma Gandhi Third Memorial Lecture
NIE Auditorium, NCERT Campus

9 February 2010

JATIN DAS



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OUR OBJECTIVES

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an apex organisation, assisting and advising the Central and State Governments by undertaking research, survey, and development, training and extension activities for all stages of school and teacher education.

One of the objectives of the Council is to act as a clearing house and disseminator of ideas relating to school and teacher education. We have initiated the Memorial Lecture Series in order to fulfil this role and to commemorate the life and work of great educational thinkers. Our aim is to strive to raise the level of public awareness about the seminal contributions made in the field of education by eminent men and women of India. We expect that such awareness will set off a chain of discourse and discussion. This, we hope, will make education a lively subject of inquiry while simultaneously encouraging a sustained public engagement with this important domain of national life.

The memorial lecture series covers public lectures commemorating the life and work of nine eminent Indian educational thinkers and practitioners.

TITLE AND VENUE OF MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

Title	Venue
Gijubhai Badheka Memorial Lecture	Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai
Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar
Zakir Hussain Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Mysore
Mahadevi Verma Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal
B.M. Pugh Memorial Lecture	North East Regional Institute of Education Shillong

¹ More information on NCERT is available at: www.ncert.nic.in

Savitribai Phule Memorial Lecture	SNDT Women's College, Marine Lines, Mumbai
Marjorie Sykes Memorial Lecture	Regional Institute of Education, Ajmer
Sri Aurobindo Memorial Lectures	SNDT Women's College, Marine Lines Mumbai
Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Lecture	National Institute of Education, New Delhi

We invite persons of eminence from academia and public life to deliver these lectures in English or any other Indian language. Our intention is to reach a large audiences consisting in particular of teachers, students, parents, writers, artists, NGOs, government servants and members of local communities.

The Annexure (Memorial Lectures 2007-2008) provides a summary of the lectures organised in the year 2007-08.

In due course the lectures will be made available on Compact Discs (CDs) and in the form of printed booklets in languages other than English or Hindi in which it is originally delivered for wider dissemination. Each booklet consists of two sections : Section one highlights the purpose of the memorial lectures and provides a brief sketch of the life and work of the concerned educational thinker and Section two gives the lectures in full along with a brief background of the speaker.

We hope these lecture series will be of use to our audiences as well as the public in and outside the country in general.

I acknowledge the contribution of Ms Konsam Diana, Junior Project Fellow for helping me with the finalisation of this manuscript.

Anupam Ahuja
Convenor

SECTION 1
EDUCATION FOR LIFE, THROUGH LIFE
A GANDHIAN PARADIGM

ANIL SETHI*

One of the elements in Mahatma Gandhi's intricate home-spun shawl — that his life was — has been his contribution to educational thought. Gandhi's intervention in this field, as in many others, was a product of imaginative action as well as constant dialogue with others. First advanced in 1937, Gandhi's ideas of *Nai Talim* or 'Basic Education', (as he termed it), generated instant interest and controversy all over the country as they continue to do even today. Our fast-changing world — unequal, consumerist and poverty-ridden — can benefit from various Gandhian antidotes, not least his views on education.

We all know Gandhi was not a trained educationalist, teacher or philosopher. As with many other subjects, his views on education did not emerge from any theoretical engagement with the issue but from his wide public concerns. A prolific writer and debater, Gandhi would initiate public discussion on the burning questions of the day. His movements, based on mass-mobilization, were civic, participatory and dialogic in nature. Gandhi resisted chauvinistic and divisive politics of various hues as also the eschewing of debate and discussion that is so central a feature of such politics. He wished to establish dialogue with comrades, opponents and others alike, so much so that scholars refer to his political style as 'dialogic resistance'. From 1937 to 1948, therefore, Gandhi often

* Anil Sethi is a Professor of History at the National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi.

wrote about educational questions, first announcing his ideas on the subject in the *Harjan* of 31 July 1937 and seeking to establish a dialogue with others about them.

Issues of Basic Education have obviously been relevant beyond the context in which they first arose. Even so, it would help to clarify that original context. After forming governments in many of the provinces of British India in 1937, the Congress was called upon to expand and revitalise the country's educational system. But the financial resources at the disposal of the ministry in each province were limited and did not permit any increase in expenditure on education. Since Excise was a provincial subject, a way out was to tap it as a source of funding the schools as efficiently as possible. The Congress, however, was committed to prohibition as a matter of national policy. G. Ramanathan describes the dilemma of the party's ministers thus:

To introduce prohibition meant, on the one hand, the loss of so much revenue and, on the other, some additional expenditure to enforce prohibition. This two-fold drain on the resources would leave little in the hands of the ministers to be spent for nation-building purposes such as education. Thus ... the Congress ministers had to [either] defer educational expansion and proceed with prohibition, or to defer prohibition and use the liquor revenue for building schools and paying teachers. The problem was to devise a solution by which two ideals could be pursued simultaneously. In other words, an educational policy had to be evolved under which schools could grow without dependence on large financial resources.¹

As ever so often, Gandhi responded to the challenge creatively but also controversially. He offered a radical solution:

1. Primary education should consist of the present Matriculation minus English, plus a craft. It should cover the ages of 7 to 14 or more.
2. The craft should be chosen from among the main occupations of the people.

¹ G Ramanathan, *Education from Dewey to Gandhi: The Theory of Basic Education* (Bombay, 1962), pp. 3-4.

3. All instruction should be correlated to the crafts.
4. Such education should be productive and self-supporting.²

The last proposition advocated that schools financially sustain themselves through the crafts that children produce. It was this statement that attracted some hostility. Even a conference chaired by none other than Gandhi, and held at Wardha in October 1937, was not willing to offer unqualified support to the scheme. It toned down his suggestion, resolving only 'that the Conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of teachers'. Educationalists feared that Gandhian schools would reduce a vocation-centred education to child-labour. On the other hand, a fair degree of acceptability for the idea had also been created. A contemporary Government of India report, for instance, (drafted by the Education Commissioner, John Sargent), conceded the validity of Basic Education.

The Wardha Conference appointed a Committee, under the Presidency of Zakir Husain, to formulate a scheme of Basic Education for the country. The Committee perceived this new education as fundamental to the 'all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit'³ and to the creation of 'co-operative communities' in which 'the motive of social service will dominate all the activities of children during the plastic years of childhood and youth'⁴. The Committee's Report was categorical in stating :

The object of this new educational scheme is NOT [sic] primarily the production of craftsmen able to practise some craft *mechanically*, but rather the exploitation for educative purposes of the resources implicit in craft-work. This demands that productive work should not only form a part of the school curriculum – its craft side – but should also inspire the *method*

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³ *Harijan*, 31 July 1937.

⁴ *Basic National Education: Report of the Zakir Husain Committee and the Detailed Syllabus* (Wardha, 1938), p. 38.

of teaching all other subjects. Stress should be laid on the principles of co-operative activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning. [Emphases in the original].⁵

Objective commentators of later decades have made similar observations. Yet, this paradigm has too often been dismissed simply (and simplistically) as education through crafts.

Craft-work may have been central to Gandhi's tool-kit but this was not the 'whole truth' about *Nai Talim*. For Gandhi, local crafts immediately connected the young to the regeneration of the local economy, eco-systems, society, culture and the locally prevailing mores of physical culture. Thus, Basic Education meant the learner's active involvement with his or her existential condition and with her society so that she could work out her emancipation from drudgery and exploitation. As Gandhi stressed, 'education is that which gives true freedom'.⁶ His educational philosophy was closely related to his seminal concerns about the removal of tyranny and unfreedom: *Gram Svaraj*, local self-reliance, bread-labour, the need to arrest the various forms of alienation individuals and communities faced under conditions of haphazard colonial industrialization. It is not surprising that some of the most influential of modern economists also view development as 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy' and the spread of education as a critical component of that process⁷.

Contemporary cognitive child psychology too endorses many of Gandhi's educational ideas. Critics have shown how the child's immediate milieu may be used to teach Languages, Science, Social Studies and the Arts and how various topics can be taught by integrating knowledge and

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶ Quoted by J.D. Sethi in 'A Gandhian Critique of Modern Indian Education in Relation to Economic Development', *Gandhi Today* (Delhi, 1978), p.126.

⁷ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York, 1999), p3.

learning with real-life activities. In this perspective, children ought to be given opportunities to work independently of the teacher/ facilitator and to regularly work outside the classroom. They ought to be trained in small groups as well. It was, in fact, this orientation that had led basic schools to disregard the scriptural status of prescribed textbooks, so much a part of our textbook-examination culture even today. Teachers in these schools were expected to develop their own teaching-learning activities and materials. They were discouraged from using textbooks in the early classes and were advised to keep them to a minimum in later ones. Gandhi's rejection of textbook-centred instruction, seen by him as colonial importation, is well-known :

If textbooks are treated as a vehicle for education, the *living world* of the teacher has very little value. [Emphasis mine]. A teacher who teaches from textbooks does not impart originality to his pupils. He himself becomes a slave of textbooks and has no opportunity or occasion to be original. It therefore seems that the less textbooks there are the better it is for the teacher and his pupils.⁸

Nevertheless, as Krishna Kumar argues, if textbooks cause artificiality or drudgery for teacher and taught alike, the problem may lie in their poor quality or in related syllabi, not in the idea of using them.⁹

The relevance of Gandhi's educational views is further borne out by our accumulated grass-roots experience of the past six decades. Our activists and planners have looked upon education as a key factor in an integrated multi-level strategy to fight deprivation and under-development with learners, first-generation or otherwise, becoming effective agents of social change. But for this to happen,

⁸ 'Text Books', *Harijan*, 9 December 1939. Quoted in Krishna Kumar, 'Listening to Gandhi' in Rajni Kumar, Anil Sethi and Shailini Sikka (Eds.), *School, Society, Nation: Popular Essays in Education* (Delhi, 2005), p. 43.

⁹ Krishna Kumar, 'Listening to Gandhi' in Rajni Kumar, Anil Sethi and Shalini Sikka (Eds.), *School, Society, Nation: Popular Essays in Education* (Delhi, 2005), p. 44.

we need to devise a system that does not assume 'children are clean slates to write on'¹⁰. When, for instance, working children enter 'organised' education, they do so with skills, knowledge and social insights acquired as workers, so what is offered to them must build on their prior and on-going experiences. The knowledge and skills of their parents too, as Yash Pal passionately holds, must not be treated as redundant. What is taught to these children should be chosen and designed in a manner that enables their 'productively-educated' parents to help the children gain further education. Not only would this strategy, so evocative of Gandhi's 'education for life, through life', recognise the child's own experiences and activities at school, it would also ensure that the teacher and planner learn from an exploited underclass of landless labourers, rag-pickers, mechanics and the like. The experts must stoop to conquer. This was Gandhi's ideal of cooperative communities. All this also reminds us of that vital Gandhian link between political *svaraj*, people's empowerment in the localities, and wider social change, quintessentially Gandhi's 'gift of the fight'.¹¹

An important feature of *Nai Talim* must be underscored. The scheme did not contain any provision for religious education although the communal biases of some of its advocates may have been reflected in its implementation in the various provinces. Writing in early 1947 to E.W. Aryanayakam, the Convener of the Zakir Husain Committee on Basic National Education, Gandhi criticised the suggestion that the state should concern itself with religious education:

¹⁰ Yash Pal, 'Foreword' in Karuna Chanana (Ed.), *Transformative Links between Higher and Basic Education: Mapping the Field* (Delhi, 2004), p. 7.

¹¹ 'The Gift of the Fight' is Rabindranath Tagore's phrase for Gandhian resistance. Tagore first used it when Gandhi was fasting in opposition to British Prime-Minister, Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award of 1932. See Jehangir P. Patel and Marjorie Sykes, *Gandhi: His Gift of the Fight* (Goa, 1987), p. 21.

I do not believe that the State can concern itself or cope with religious education. I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. Do not mix up religion and ethics. I believe that fundamental ethics is common to all religions. Teaching of fundamental ethics is undoubtedly a function of the State. By religion I have not in mind fundamental ethics but what goes by the name of denominationism [sic]. We have suffered enough from State-aided religion and State Church. A society or group, which depends partly or wholly on State aid for the existence of religion, does not deserve or, better still, does not have any religion worth the name.¹²

This statement is worth taking note of because Gandhi is all too easily characterised as not subscribing to the doctrine of the separation of religion from the affairs of the state. His life-long commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity and his passionate anti-communal work are often seen as based on an equal respect for all religions rather than on Western-style secular principles. His prayer meetings and his frequent references to a religiously-informed conscience influencing his politics tend to reinforce such a conclusion. But we must remember that his religious tolerance was strengthened by the Lockian doctrine that the state should not seek to intervene in the sphere of private belief – this was a purely personal concern. Gandhi brought religious discussion into the public domain only for promoting a ‘fundamental ethics’, harmony, fellowship and friendship. As and when he felt that the public use of religion can ignite conflict, violence or narrowness, he condemned such use and argued for a clear separation of the affairs of the state from religion.

Gandhi loved children. Majorie Sykes’s memories of him are full of children: ‘Children skipped and danced around Gandhi on his evening walks; they clung to his hands and chuckled at his jokes. Gandhi himself was absorbed and relaxed; for that half-hour he gave himself

¹² Gandhi to E.W. Aryanayakam, 21 February 1947, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi, 1999), Volume 94, p. 19.

up completely to his delight in the children'.¹³ It would be befitting to conclude this tribute to an extraordinary educator by recalling a volume of essays written by German teenagers entitled *What Gandhi Means to Me*.¹⁴ These children discuss a range of issues: from Napoleon to Saddam Hussein, from forbearance and inner strength to wealth and power, from fasting to modern medicine. The essays sparkle with a delightful honesty and a spirit of goodwill and human neighbourliness. They remind us that Gandhi saw education and health as the key to *svaraj* at the grass-roots. This is reminiscent of Marjorie Sykes's description of how Gandhi extended his understanding of *Nai Talim* while in prison in 1942-44. Education, he said, must continue throughout life, 'from conception to cremation'. 'It must touch every aspect of daily living and help every man and woman to be a better citizen of their village, and therefore a better citizen of India and the world'.¹⁵ He called for a comprehensive training in 'non-violent democracy': 'the real remedy [for exploitation and injustice] is non-violent democracy, *otherwise spelled true education of all*. The rich should be taught stewardship and the poor self-help'.¹⁶ Gandhi was exploring the dialectic between this all-important social education and the deschooled 'schooling' to be imparted to those between the ages of seven and fourteen.

¹³ Jehangir P. Patel and Majorie Sykes, *Gandhi: His Gift of the Fight* (Goa, 1987), p. 50.

¹⁴ Benjamin Putter, *What Gandhi Means to Me?* (Delhi, 2001).

¹⁵ Jehangir P. Patel and Marjorie Sykes, *Gandhi : His Gift of the Fight* (Goa, 1987), p. 120.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.121.

SECTION 2
ART AT HOME, SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY AND
IN PUBLIC LIFE

JATIN DAS

ABSTRACT

My generation imbibed the values of Gandhi's thoughts. He impregnated the whole nation with the ideas of dedication, non violence and freedom of speech. With those fervours, while in schools, I joined Seva Dal and did volunteer work.

I grew up in a traditional Hindu family and participated in innumerable festivals, puja and rituals, which inculcated me, without my knowldege, with a sence of arts and aesthetics as a way of life. My home and the town I lived in had the basic components of various forms of art. Home as such is a sacred place. Art was not a separate entity; it was a way of life, embedded in every activity. While growing up, I painted, drew, swam, gardened, and never thought of art as a profession or career.

I call my 50 years of work, I have done nothing but devote myself to my work and teach. My childhood Boy Scout temperament is still in me somewhere. Hence my indulgence and concern for art at home, in school, in the university and in public life. This is why and how I made the collection of artifacts, antiquities and handfans; to set up museums and collections for the future generations. I have served in different committees, both governmental and private, raising my voice, giving unsolicited advice for open-ended education, filled with arts and aesthetics, and art in public life. When you look at the interior landscape of

Indian culture, there is a rich, holistic upbringing at home and in society. Our rich cultural heritage still survives, but it is unfortunately not linked to contemporary life. My concern is both at the micro and macro levels, beginning at home and extending to public life.

ART AT HOME, AT SCHOOL, AT THE UNIVERSITY AND IN PUBLIC LIFE

GANDHI: CHARITY AND IDEALISM

India being an ancient country has a rich cultural heritage. Great thinkers and seers who went deep into every aspect of life and then made treaties for high quality of human life, eventually aspiring for salvation. There was a deep concern for all species of life in nature to survive together. Gandhiji imbibed the spirit of India and used it for modern times. People in India lived together in cluster and proximity for sharing, comfort, and safety.

Gandhiji was an evolved soul. My generation was born a little before independence. So, the fervour of the freedom movement and its idealism was embedded in our upbringing. Our parents were immersed in the freedom movement. The stalwarts and the role models such as Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru and earlier Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Subhash Chandra Bose, Sri Aurobindo, Jaikrishnamurti and Vivekananda were the visionaries who shaped this country.

Way back in mid'50s when I was in school we revered Gandhiji and Congress Seva Dal. I enrolled as a volunteer in Seva Dal to distribute rice to flood victims. In our mindscape a sense of idealism, commitment, and dedication were engraved.

ROLE MODEL AND PARENTAGE

Art is an integral part of everyday life and not a separate entity. It starts at home.

Home as an institution was very sacred. The parents and grand parents lived together in a joint family, and their knowledge and expertise percolated down and nurtured

little children, and the mother was the nucleus. Mothers breastfed children, children were massaged in oil, bathed in water with turmeric powder heated out in the sun. There were ceremonies for the first grain of rice put in the child's mouth and the first time the child held a chalk stick and made a circle on the floor. This was the beginning of the learning process.

India had a tradition of oral learning and very few had access to manuscripts. The intangible intellect was given as much importance as the tangible knowledge. The eldest were role models for the little children who imbibed everything like a sponge or wet clay. Home is where everything stems: sharing with brothers and cousins, sitting together for meals, cuddling, playing with dogs and cats, where the mother keeps a vigilant eye on the child and the child grew up not only with love, care and affection but soaked in various rituals, *puja*, *arati*, chanting in the evening and festivals.

My father named his children after Rabindranath Tagore and his brothers such as Rabindranath, Sachindranath, Jatindranath, Dhirendranath, Birendranath and my sister Sarojini. My mother must have got married at 15 and discontinued her studies. She came to Bombay when my daughter Nandita was born and she recollected that she used to draw in school and had been awarded a Japanese doll for it. She didn't continue drawing but wrote poems instead all her life. At every wedding whether in the family or in the neighbourhood she wrote a poem which was quickly printed and distributed during the reception. She wrote poems on little scraps of paper or on a used envelope and put them under the mattress.

HOME

On the walls at home there were prints of gods and goddesses such as Jagannath, Saraswati, Durga, Kali and great men like Vivekananda, Ishwarchandra, etc. Photographs of grandparents also adorned the walls at home. The walls were white-washed every year and nobody brought shoes into the house. The gardens and the fields

had all kinds of vegetables, fruits and flower bearing trees and fish in the pond. The rice fields swayed and changed colour from green to golden yellow in the winter. There was enough food for the whole year. Nature, life and art were intermingled, which was a natural way of life.

Today a sea of changes has taken place not only in my home town but in the rest of the country too. The same house and fields are barren. The family buys even green chilies in the market.

In urban living, children are growing up in crammed concrete dwelling units, away from their ancestral homes and open spaces, spending their days with maids, household helps, or crèches and day-care centres. Of course, there is always an option for those who have children to plan to give up their job and stay home until the children start school. Those first five years are crucial to the child's development. Parents are to participate in the children's activities and their wonderland by drawing, dancing, singing with the children or putting them to bed.

MAYURBHANJ AND THE GREENERY

We were lucky to be born in a tribal district, and erstwhile princely state. However, a **model** town is semi-rural with the advantages of both urban and natural ambience. There were acres of land attached to the house, with all kinds of vegetables and fruit bearing trees and groves. I had a fairly sizable garden to myself and I used to look after it. My two younger brothers and I brought buckets of water from the well and watered the plants. I spent all my time in the garden or near the riverbed beyond the mango grove.

There was a Ranibagh– the queen's garden, may be 50 acres of land, with all kinds of fruits and flowers, *champa*, *nageshwar*, and magnolia were also there. There were Venetian ceramic stools to sit on and there was a miniature steam engine train for children to ride. This was the childhood of wide range of experience which was a way of life. All of this is gone, the mango grove has become a housing colony, Ranibagh has been plotted and sold.

ACHAAR VYAVAHAR AND SANSKAR (SENSE OF AESTHETICS AND REFINEMENT)

Living in a large joint family with three generations of people, I remember my grandmother saying ‘You pluck the flower to offer it to Krishna or for the hair of a lady or to put it in a vase. Otherwise, let the flower be on the plant.’ She used to make pickles and *badi* in the winter, and many women from the neighbourhood joined in. The process takes many, many weeks and the pickle and the *badi* were dried in the sun in large baskets. So, from the early childhood we had variety of recipes and dishes which have stayed on my palate.

I love cooking for friends and I have done it in many parts of the world though I never learned how to cook. The taste of the dishes I had at home done by mother and sister is retained on my tongue. Incidentally, many artists cook all over the world, and cooking is the greatest art of all. I would even go further and say that anybody who has had tasty food at home will be able to flourish in art. We learned by simple observation to show our respect to the elders by touching their feet and doing *pranam*. We did not have to be prompted by anybody to do so as children. For example, when my father was talking to his friends; we didn’t interrupt and did not walk across between them.

MEALS AT HOME

At meals we sat together on the floor cross-legged on *asthna* and ate in large *kansa thali* with bowls and each one of us had our names engraved on water glasses. We had to eat neem leaves with every meal in the summer. In the evening, at teatime suddenly the *Chhau* drums would vibrate like thunder, sending reverberations and shivers down the spine, and one would leave the snacks and rush to witness the *Chhau* dancers.

Many of us must have had similar upbringing at home and some of us might have been luckier than the others. In joint family we shared everything and when the relatives visited we shared our blankets. When 20 kg of fish was

caught from the pond 10 kg were distributed to the neighbours and relatives. From all this and much more, a sense of creativity stems.

MUSIC AT HOME

We had a large Philips radio and my sister would tune to classical music so everyday in the house there was music. In the evening my sister-in-law would recite bhajans and we would repeat. Wherever we were, we had to rush at a particular time for the evening prayers. At the same time the Jagannath temple *aarti* orchestra resounded in the neighbourhood. In the town, during Saraswati, Ganesh *puja*, etc., there would be cultural programmes for the whole week and traditional music and dance performed in front of the diety and we would sit through the night to witness all of it.

In my home town there were many temples, a church and a mosque, all religions living comfortably together. As a matter of fact, my mother adopted Sher Ali, the tailor, as her son, and he would participate in all our functions. This little town had a large library with rare books, a council hall with Italian marbles and light fittings. There was a museum, a zoo, and a municipality more than 150 years old. The raja's marble statues carved in England were in place, and there was a lake full of lotus flowers. The memory of my childhood is still fresh in my mind. Aesthetics was a way of life, it was not studied. We used to have an annual week-long classical music concert to which A.T.Kanan, V.G. Jog and *Bade* Gulam Ali Khan and others were invited. I think I was ten or twelve years old, and my friends and I would carry musical instruments to the stage for them. Sanjukta Panigrahi was a little girl and did Odissi dance, and Kalucharan Mahapatra was the *guru* and Hari Prasad Chaurasia would accompany him on the flute.

Even in an urban setting in Delhi, Mumbai and elsewhere, those who do not have land to grow plants can do so living even in a flat. They can grow plants and vegetables in pots and children can see them being watered, grown and flowered. Frankly, plants and trees are very

important. Children should be taken to gardens and parks to roll on the grass and see different kinds of trees and flowers. This is where schools can compensate what families cannot provide in smaller dwellings. Hang a rope-swing to a tree and a child will enjoy it immensely, and there are many songs pertaining to *jhula* a teacher can sing. As a matter of fact, in our country there are folk songs for different seasons and different occasions.

FESTIVALS, CEREMONIES AND RITUALS

Coming from a middle class Hindu family every possible cultural religious festivals of the season were celebrated at home and in town-*Ganesh Puja*, *Saraswati Puja* and *Jagathdhatri* and *Durga Puja* were celebrated. There were larger than life size *murtis*, first armature with straw and then cladding different layers of clay and finally painted over and the jewelry and the decoration in *solarpit*. We had witnessed the celebration of these icons in different seasons. There was a *Pujaghar* in the house and during the Lakshmi Puja beautiful *dhokra* brass figurine came out of the bamboo basket and cleaned with tamarind and ash and shine like gold. In the evening we all washed our feet and sat cross-legged for *aarti*. The *Pandit* came and opened the *pothi* on a carved bookstand and chanted *shlokas* from *Upanishads* and *Bhagatwad purana* and my grandmother and mother sat listening and I disappeared to the garden where I spent all my time. Though I didn't understand a word, the music of the chanting still rings in my ears.

My grandmother kept muslin *dhoti* and *angavastra* twisted in wrinkles on the *ulna* and my father and I occasionally went to the Jagannath temple bare feet and witnessed the trinity Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra black, white and yellow bodied minimal large iconic sculptures. During the *aarti* the musicians played their traditional instruments.

PUJA, PAINTINGS AND MURALS

During the Lakshmi puja all over Orissa and Bengal villages, women do *Chita* and *jhuti* with rice paste on freshly

applied cow dung on mud walls. They were not formally trained in this art, but picked it up through their growing years. My grandmother, mother and sister embellish the walls till late in the night before the *puja*. The fist and fingers impression was the symbol of *Lakshmi pada* and the illiterate people also understood the symbolism. This is a very ancient art form which is now gradually disappearing. The *Saura* tribals in Orissa and *Warli* tribals in Maharashtra do similar drawings with earth colours on mud walls with rural stories. The *Kachhi* in Gujarat embellish their walls including their granary with clay low relief. In *Madhubani*, people make lovely murals on their walls with fine lines with twigs, narrating everyday village stories.

In a wedding the *chitrakar* comes and does a *mandala* within which the bride and bridegroom are drawn with some symbolic designs.

Everyday, all over Southern India, women clean their front verandahs and the entrance floor and put a slurry of the cow dung and make various patterns with rice flour welcoming the God's and the guests.

TRIBAL AND FOLK ARCHITECTURE

The tribal people in Mayurbhanj and other parts make beautiful mud houses with inner courtyards and terracotta pictures with shining bronze-like bodies. They paint their walls in layers of different earth colours.

The Mayurbhanj district in Orissa, bordering Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, has large settlements of tribal people and they come to the town for work as daily labour and a large number come on different days of the week, bringing their vegetables, forest produced crafts, basketry and so on for sale and on their way back they play drums and flute and sing.

A farmer comes back from the field and after his meal spends time on the verandah doing a craft work, and in the evening he takes *mridhangam* and sings. So, life and art overlap and one flows naturally into the other.

In our traditional holistic upbringing, art was not treated as a separate entity from the day-to-day life. Art was not just painting, dance or music. It was all in one.

Each form of art shares aspects with the others because poetics and musicality are inherent in all aspects of art and so is it in life. The so called modern education system has created much division. Today, a dancer is not exposed to sculpture or painting and the architecture student studies Le Corbusier but has not seen different parts of India as per its diverse climatic conditions. So, various forms of arts are disjointed and completely divorced from life. A teacher in school draws a mango instead of taking the student to a mango grove to smell, draw, and then eat the mango.

MY GURU

There was a head master who was a *sadhu*. He was a learned man all in one. He was my guru. He sang *bhajans*, did clay modelling, painted pictures, and taught yoga. He was the one who taught me yoga. He also cooked wonderful dishes and grew vegetables and herbs in his little lush green garden. I have not met anybody like him since.

A friend of my brother who studied art at Tagore Shantiniketan would return home every summer. In the summer, while everybody had their midday siesta, I would go to him in the scorching sun to learn how to paint flowers and birds. My eldest brother used to study at the university and he used to bring Japanese oil pastels for me. All my brothers and sisters used to draw and paint but somehow they didn't continue.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Every school, I believe, should have a sand and clay pit for children to make clay pinched toys and figurines. Normally schools have a dedicated place for art class and art rooms where there is coloured paper on the walls on which children's paintings are put up, whereas, there should be boards, which have neutral colours on which the paintings stand out.

Many schools that I have visited only had art in their art class whereas all the school walls are naked and hungry for visuals. The schools should be designed in such a way

that classes can be held outdoors under the winter sun because the concrete and cement is cold inside, the building instead of being like an army barrack block should be a cluster of rooms around the inner courtyard with a tree in the middle and benches to sit around. The inner courtyard could be used as an extension to the classrooms. There should be a vegetable patch for children to see them grow and if it's a residential school then there could be a cowshed for milk as well as a *gober* gas plant for cooking and the cow dung can be used as manure for the vegetable garden.

ART CLASS

Varied forms of art could be taught in the schools. There should be a music teacher, a dance teacher, a painting teacher and also a traditional crafts person should be invited for stone carving, clay modelling, block printing, etc. There should be a carpentry section where children can use pieces of wood to construct and make architectonic structures. When children go to kindergarten they miss home and the parents as well as their familiar environment. School has to be an extension of home. Amongst the teachers there should be an older woman who the children could go to cuddle and sit on the lap. Schools should pay more attention to art than anything else playfully, like singing on the swing, painting on the floor, and dancing to a rhythm from a *dholak*. The teachers for painting, dance, and music should work together in structuring the approach in a natural fashion and treating each day and each season differently. Learning could be made a lot of fun. The upbringing at home and in primary school is the most crucial for the child's development. Therefore, as much time as possible should be spent with plants, animals, puppetry and such other creative methods, Teaching methods could be magical so as to hold the child's attention.

SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS FOR THE ART TEACHERS

The art teachers of different schools should be invited and/or exchange programmes for different schools so that the

expertise, experience, observation of teachers can be shared. This alone brings freshness to the approach for the teacher and the school. The music teacher and the mathematics teacher can work together in a structured mathematical, rhythmical cycle. It could be so arranged that while the children are painting there could be soft music playing.

THE ART ROOM

Cheerfulness is the core of an art room. The room should be designed with large windows for natural light. Little children can have low desks with drawers for the art material. Soft pin-up boards should be put up all around the school walls for art work. There should be dedicated boards for the drawings of the day, poems of the week, etc.

THE ART TEACHER IN SCHOOL

Humanities are given less importance than science subjects. Some schools do not have an art teacher. Art as a subject has been abolished in some states. But the fact is that art as a subject can help with the child's development and the child can develop through it more than from other subjects. Art and science are not only both sides of a coin, but also like sugar mixed in coffee. The process is science and the outcome is a piece of art. There is art in nature. Every activity in life involves art and science. The real creator is nature.

The art teacher can help all the other departments for visual aid. Anybody who has done a course on art does not necessarily become a good teacher. The parents' role is taken over by the teachers in school and vice versa. The art teacher in primary school is more important because he has to inspire the children not only to draw, but to dance, sing and play with clay and sand. Little children are natural artists. If you provide them with a blackboard, floor, wall or paper they draw on it. Whatever comes their way the teacher has to be vigilant, and not to guide them but to provide them with the material and inspiration. A little child puts his hand into the ink, takes his palm

impression, and is astonished with the print. That tactile experience is important. Sometimes they even draw on their clothes and get delighted. The teacher should also be careful not to compare the children's work. Instead he or she should inspire and encourage all of them.

Teachers should essentially be a part of the painting group along with the children. As a matter of fact the art teacher should regularly paint, sing, dance, and hold exhibitions every year in the school. Quite often school authorities stop the teachers from continuing their practice whereas, I would like to suggest that teachers have a studio adjacent to their art department. The teacher should never even correct any painting on the surface of the child's work. The teacher should sometimes take children to the garden and show them trees, skies and clouds and encourage the children to draw some objects from memory, some objects by looking at them.

Take for instance objects like banana or mango. The teacher should bring these fruits for the children to draw and offer them to eat so that the experience is complete.

In higher schools, quite often children give up art and more attention is given to science. As a matter of fact, equal weightage to the arts and to science makes the growth of the child holistic. Our education system seems very dry and does not make learning fun. I think visits to museums should be a part of the curricula so that children can be exposed to crafts, sculpture, paintings, etc.

At the university level, the syllabus is very trite and regimented and there is not much input of traditional art form. There is hardly any concept of visiting faculty and study of medium and material. There should be more exposure to our own heritage like visiting museums and drawing after the master pieces. A senior MFA student does not even know how to clean a brush properly. It seems that even the academy institutes have now been commercialised. Most of the institutions in our country do not have a museum, gallery, or archive. Students should be given a forum to exhibit their artwork inside the

university and the market forces should not be allowed to enter the educational institutions. The faculty should be practising individuals. There should be dedicated studios within the institutions for them to continue their own work, and even hold exhibitions and display teacher's works. The government should make special funding for faculty to set up the cluster of auditorium, library, museum, gallery and archive as a must for all schools, universities, and colleges.

MAXMULLER BHAVAN-CHILDREN'S ART WORKSHOP

I did a workshop some 35 years ago in Maxmuller Bhavan in Delhi where I insisted that with children their parents and all teachers participate. We sat around a mango tree and since it was the season for mangoes, baskets of raw and varieties of ripe mangoes were brought. Everybody had the ripe mangoes and the raw ones with salt. Some were circular and others we scooped with a spoon and the mangoes came in yellow and orange colour. I had asked a folk singer to sing songs of the season so we sat quietly under the mango tree, looking at its branches and leaves, even noticing the bird's nest on its top. Then everybody did the drawing in pastels and water colours. The parents were first hesitant but then they were all suddenly engrossed in painting and drawing. There was pin-drop silence. Even the naughty children were busy and quiet. Recently, I met some of those children's parents and somebody approached me, hugging me, and touching my feet, all the while talking about the taste of mango still retained in their mouth.

When we were children we were given *khari*, a soft stone like chalk, to draw on the floor. This could be wiped enabling us to draw again. The floor was the space for the child. In the urban setting, with limited space parents can put up a blackboard at a low height with different colour chalk sticks for a child to draw. Every child relishes drawing and even a restless child becomes calm for some time. This is not only true for children but for every human being. Writing is not drawing but still an art and a lot of people

do not write letters anymore. They communicate by email and SMS, which to me seems impersonal. This communication system seems mechanical, synthetic and dehumanised.

TOYS FOR CHILDREN

Children put everything in their mouths because their experience is tactile. The toy manufacturers in India have copied the western plastic toys and the figuration is not Indian, toy guns are offered to children. The toys these days are not child friendly, infact they seem to have a negative and violent effect on the children. There are many colours for children that are toxic whereas, in the entire world the art material for children has to be non toxic and the garments for children has to be made in natural fibres. Yet in our country children's clothes are made out of synthetic polyester and the society and government have not paid any attention to it. So, a child is exposed to all kinds of pollution. Now, there are designer clothes for children with all kinds of writings on the front and back, making children look more adult.

In our country there is a variety of traditional toys made out of organic material in different parts of the country, which are very beautiful and child friendly. The Andhra lacquer wooden toys, Benaras painted toys. The only family left in Benaras who still makes some only sells a few because there are no takers and people have no interest in these traditional toys. The lacquer terracotta toys in Orissa that I grew up with are no longer available. There are only two families in Orissa who still make them. These toys are waterproof, child friendly and harmless. My grandmother used to take me to the fair and festival markets and used to get me terracotta toys which I kept carefully in my almirah and have continued collecting these toys for 40 years and I am working on a book on the subject.

The Barbie dolls, Spiderman, and Superman toys are manufactured in millions and have taken over the markets all over the world. Chinese manufacturers have cleverly designed toys and guns, tanks for children, making it more

attractive with lights and mobility, run by battery, which sell in large quantities, not realising their impact on children.

The books that are produced in the west sometimes are sold by Indian publishers mostly have a hard cover. Not only are they more expensive but actually are not child friendly. There are books with drawings of figures or animals with numbers in it to fill with colour into the area. This particular exercise is boring and limits the child from free expression. Frankly, for little children there should be no art books. They should be given borderless space such as a floor or a wall or a drawing board or sheets of used paper and be free to paint and draw what they like. The illustration of children's books should be large and simple with primary colours, local storage, and local flora and fauna. The paper for the books should be thicker. There should be no horror stories for toddlers.

In the early'60s, in Bombay, Leela Naidu – the actress who died recently – and I did art classes for children. I recall one child who painted one page completely black with a dot in the corner saying in Marathi “this is *bhoot* and that dot is me hiding.”

Children are Godly innocent and have no lateral reference. They are spoiled by their environment, parents, society, television, toys and many objects of industrial produce. Mostly a child draws the father or mother or the puppy or draws just from inherited memory.

ART CAMPS: CHILDREN'S ART COMPETITION

I have been to thousands of children's art competitions, art workshops and schools. I have seen beautiful paintings and drawings from the dream world of children upto the age of six or seven. However, older children's painting and drawing become archaic and mechanical simply because the input is given by teachers, parents, and books. Frankly, I think education really destroys the creative pursuit and natural growth of a human being. There are too many do's and don'ts, unnecessary audio, visual, and intellectual information, and instead of encouraging the natural process we are being regimented to right and wrong, good

and bad. Hence 'rubber stamped' human prototypes are produced.

A child draws on whatever surface comes his or her way. Mama scolds a child that he or she are drawing on the sofa and spoiling the walls. Instead they could get a roll of paper and stick it on the entire wall at the child's height that would become the child's universe to draw on. Parents watch adult movies in front of the children and expose them to visual pollution. The child is like a sponge and wet clay, he absorbs everything and gets automatically moulded to not only what he hears but also what he sees.

I smoke a cigarette but I don't smoke inside the house. I smoke in the garden, hiding myself from my child. One day he observed that I was sitting one leg on the other smoking and flipping the cigarette. The next day he sits exactly as I had and flips his fingers, telling me he is smoking a cigarette. When he was five, one day, in my studio he saw me painting with ink. I had a mug of ink, a broad brush and a thin brush. I had wiped the broad brush on the edge of the mug to reduce the ink and painting. The eyes of my child lit up and he wanted to paint. I gave him a sheet of paper and thin brush but he insisted on taking the broad brush and did exactly as I did to squeeze the brush and painted. He is now six and half and I never teach him anything about painting. I only gave him pastels pencil, crayon, ink, water colour, paper to draw and paint. I don't even disturb him when he is drawing. He is hooked on the Krishna and Ramayana story from television and often he draws the Kalia, the snake and Krishna.

Children should be exposed to nature and all of its elements, the sky, the cloud, birds, animals, trees and flowers and they pick up whatever they fancy.

Once there was an English lady, a friend of mine, who came to my studio with her son who was eight and I gave him some paper to draw and he said 'uncle Jatin I can't draw.' I asked 'Says who?' He said my art teacher told me that my drawing is not good. So, the teachers and parents can be very cruel other than books and television.

Colonial British organised children art competitions with awards. As I have mentioned I have been to many of these but I insisted there should be no awards such as first, second, third, and the horrid consolation prize. Little children's paintings are wonderful. I sometimes envy their naivety, spontaneity and imagination. I have always insisted that all little children who paint should be given a return gift of some art materials.

Now there are thousands of art competitions in India, organised by multinationals and other corporate houses where they give expensive awards such as televisions, watches, cash, etc. to evade tax and there are some companies who print their logo on three-fourth of the paper and leave one-fourth for the child to draw on. So, everything marketing. Some teachers in school put the name of the child and class on top of the painting and some teachers even sign and give marks to the paintings!

MUSEUMS AND ART IN PUBLIC SPACE

Museums in our country were originally set up by the British and had become merely storehouses of antiquity. They are not connected to our education system even though students of all subjects can refer to museums as a source of information, especially art and architecture students. Sixty-two years after independence, we haven't thought of developing the concept of museum as a learning centre, a resource centre, and how to make it livelier. We have hardly set up five museums and the National Craft Museum has about 10% of the Indian craft. The State Emporium is selling industrially produced figurines and there are not enough publications on the various forms of weaving, painting, architecture, etc. We have economic and political history in our school and university education, yet the cultural history of our tangible and intangible intellectual property has never been exposed in our learning process. Hence, engineers, doctors or politicians have no idea of the ethos and cultural heritage of our country. This is how M.F. Hussein has come to be threatened by political groups for painting Sita; because

the public at large has not been exposed to our sculptures, miniatures, and poetry. In architectural studies, foreign modern architecture is taught and there is not enough input of traditional Indian architecture. During the colonial period, the education system was to make us clerks, and we haven't given enough importance to art and culture as the backbone of our nation. Even today, the folk, tribal, and classical art forms have survived but these rivers are flowing separately and drying up. Traditional artists, we call craftsmen, and the modern artists have taken the centre stage, though there is enough verve, strength and richness in traditional art forms. There was a proposal for setting up district level museums, which has not been implemented, and innumerable artifacts of our country have been pilfered, stolen, and sold abroad. Pandit Nehru promulgated in the Parliament that 2% of the total cost of a building should be set aside for works of art and decorations, which has never been followed. We have the Commonwealth Games, where billions are spent, but there is no concern or any attention given to art in public life, such as murals, sculptures, etc. We erect ugly sculptures of leaders in various parts of the nation leading to no space for piece of art for the public to view, though there are millions of sculptors and painters in the country. The Lalit Kala Academy brings out contemporary artists' books, and color reproductions but they are not acquired by schools or colleges. Indra Gandhi National Centre for Arts has numerous publications on art, unfortunately lying in the dark. The Publication Division of Information and Broadcasting Ministry has similar publications. All this should be printed in large quantity, which should reach the libraries of all academic institutions. The metro stations have no works of art. Art students could be asked, to do murals. The walls of all the buildings and facades are hungry for murals in a country where there is such a rich heritage of arts. The new airports are mere reproductions of other airports round the world, without any art in them, or a display of traditional folk art. We must wake up and not only make ourselves visible to the world but conserve our art form by making our next generation interested in it.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

JATIN DAS

Jatin Das is an artist who has lived in Delhi for 41 years. He was in Bombay for ten years where he studied Art in the Sir J.J. School of Art, the oldest art college of the country. At seventeen he went from home in Mayurbhanj, Orissa to Bombay (now known as Mumbai).

He paints, draws and makes murals and sculptures. One of the largest murals done in the Parliament – 'The Journey of India: from Mohenjodaro to Mahatma Gandhi' is made by him.

He has been a professor of Art and has lectured in Art, Architecture and Traditional Art in India and overseas.

He has held more than 55 one-man shows. His collection of arts, crafts and antiquity is being donated to the J.J. Centre of Art being set up in Bhubaneswar. His collection of handfans, over 26 years, is one of the largest private collections in the world. There is a proposal to set up a *Pankha* Museum in Delhi. Jatin Das also writes poetry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PROFESSOR ANIL SETHI

Anil Sethi is Professor of History at the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi. He has been a Commonwealth Scholar at St. Catharine's College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK from where he got his Ph.D for a dissertation that dealt with religious identities in nineteenth and early twentieth century Punjab. He has also been a Centre of Excellence Fellow at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo, Japan.

Anil Sethi has taught at various universities: Delhi University, Osaka University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, University of North London and at the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. He has researched the history of communalism, especially its linkages with everyday life. He has also helped develop an oral archive on the Partition of India. His interests include the social and religious history of modern South Asia and History Education.

At the NCERT, Anil Sethi has helped develop various History textbooks. He has written a chapter on the Partition of British India for the Class XII textbook, *Themes in Indian History* (Delhi, NCERT, 2007). He has also written for the History textbooks of Class VIII and Class XI. Sethi has lectured and imparted training on History Education and Social Science Education including Education for Peace. His publications include *School, Society, Nation. Popular Essays in Education* (Delhi, Orient Longman, 2005) that he co-edited with Rajni Kumar and Shalini Sikka.