



Developing Young Leaders

Aditi & Yogita facilitated an 8-month long course on Leadership, for children aged 10 to 13 years. The following gives you a glimpse into some of the processes the children underwent in their journey of leadership.

GENESIS OF THE COURSE

THE NEED

Children these days have many choices to make and issues to grapple with – whether it is to do with their studies or friendships or their relationships at home, finding the balance between their own freedom and taking responsibility for the choices they make or being sensitive to others' freedom as well, asserting their identity while remaining attuned to their parents.

Peer pressure, media influence, conflicting values, varied expectations – all this amidst an education system that pushes them to perform well but is largely helpless to train them in personal skills, attitudes and qualities that will enable them to deal with life masterfully.

Therefore this course on Leadership.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is structured to take the children gradually, over a period of 6-8 months through several important issues and skills, along with



Horse Riding



River Crossing

assignments and support by the facilitators, so that the children not only develop but sustain the qualities of leadership. Such a prolonged engagement will ensure intensity as well as a balanced growth gradually.



There will be regular evaluation (self-evaluation as well as evaluation by the facilitators) through the course, to enable the children to live up to a certain ideal.

COURSE COMPONENTS

- **Personal Management:** Managing one's thoughts, emotions, space, belongings, actions. Learning to express clearly.
- **Work Management:** Accountability, Taking responsibility, Ability to plan, organise and execute.
- **Interpersonal Management:** Widening one's perspective, learning to listen.
- **Group Management:** Working in Cooperation, Learning to coordinate action.
- **Leadership:** Learning to Envision, to draw out the Best, to Harmonise, to Initiate Action. Learning to Obey, to take Risks, to try out New Things. Learning to be Silent.



COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

ACTIVITY: LETTER TO MYSELF

(to be written by the course participants)

Imagine you have reached very far in your life – as if you are a 100 years old. Now describe yourself at this age. Picture yourself healthy, successful and at peace. Become that 100 year old and write a loving letter to yourself now. What advice would you give yourself? What would you tell yourself to do now? What vision would you encourage yourself to fulfill?

A Few Responses

“I would like you to know that life is just like a game, you will have failure and you will also have success, it is just the way you want life to be. If you want your life to be sad, it will happen so you should always take life in a positive way and remember one thing – it's never too late to do anything and if one door closes so many others all open!!”

“I am a 100 years old man and even was a successful man. God had given me everything which I wanted. And now I want other people to be hard working so that they also become successful. At this age also I am healthy and go for walk and I am very peaceful. At this age also I want to play the guitar. And I even want to see the whole



world once again. At this age also I want to work harder so that I can achieve more in life.”

Through this activity the children could reflect on the quality they wanted to achieve in their lives – an important trait for leadership.

ACTIVITY:

TOP 10 QUESTIONS

The children listed out the 10 questions they found most important. Some samples:

1. Why do people litter?
2. Why do people kill animals and wear their skin?
3. How do we know how old flowers are?
4. Why is the earth round?
5. Why do some boys trouble girls?
6. Why is global warming happening?
7. Why are some countries enemies?
8. Why do people have wars for no reason?
9. Why does not the government stop child- and child domestic labour?
10. Will Amira still be my best friend in class 12 and after that?

1. Is there God?
2. Is there rebirth?
3. What happens to us after we die?
4. Is there any way to end the world?
5. Why can not people live in peace?
6. Is there anything known as perfect?
7. Why is there always a tear after every smile?
8. Why are there some people in the world who get anything and some don't get anything at all?



9. Why do wedie?

1. Who am I?
2. Who made me?
3. Who made the world?
4. What is football?
5. What is my strength?
6. Why did Titanic sink?
7. What is life?
8. What did God do to make us?
9. How did he make us?

Through this activity the children could share and discuss with the group some of the issues they found important.



ACTIVITY: WHO INFLUENCES ME

(WORKSHEET)

1. Who decides what programmes will I watch on the television?
 - I do
 - My parents do
 - Other:.....
2. Who influences this choice?
 - My friends' views
 - My parents' opinions
 - Other:.....
3. What about the kind of books I read or the music I listen to or the films I watch? Are the answers the same as above or are they different? How are they different?
4. Who decides how much time I will give to my studies?
 - I do
 - My parents do
 - Other:.....
5. Who influences this choice?
 - My friends' views
 - My parents' opinions
 - Other:.....
6. Who influences the way I dress, do my hair, my appearance overall?
 - My friends' views
 - My parents' opinions
 - Current fashion – what is generally considered cool
 - My comfort
 - My own views about how I should look
 - Media – the images I see around me (films, television, advertisements, etc.)
 - Other:
7. Who decides what else will I do besides studies (learn something else, for example) and who influences that decision?
8. How do I decide which friends I will have and who I will avoid or ignore or not be very nice to? What factors influence that decision?



Tree Climbing



Rappelling

9. When I am upset or feeling unhappy or angry, who helps me to take the right decision?

This activity helped children to evaluate their level of psychological dependence and independence as an important step in developing individuality.

ACTIVITY: TAKING INTERVIEWS & REPORTING

The Children had listed out some questions that were important to them. Through the course, the facilitators too had observed certain marked interests in the children. The Course ended with a 2-day residential camp. During this time, the children did activities to learn a few skills of Work and Interpersonal Management, such as Time Management, Incorporating others' ideas, Working in Harmony, Sharing, etc.

One of the activities was Interviewing people at The Gnostic Centre and the farm, and find out answers to questions that were important to them. The children had to take appointments themselves, interview and take notes, and then prepare a report on the interview – all within a given time frame. Given below are a few samples.

Report 1

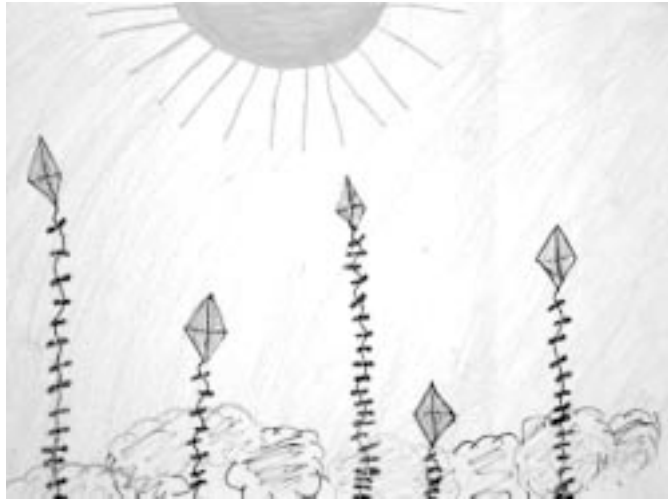
(based on an interview with Ameeta Mehra)
Interview with Miss. Ameeta Mehra was pretty good and very interesting. I got to know a lot about life and God. I was really nervous!!!

I: Where is God if he is there?

AM: Some sort of energy is the guiding force behind all events. It's most often invisible but in certain places the energy is stronger. If one wants to come in touch with the power or energy first one has to become quiet. So I think God is everywhere and yet nowhere.

I: What according to you is the purpose of life?

AM: There is something we have to do in life and each birth makes us more and more conscious about ourselves.



A participant's drawing

So, I think the purpose of life is to become more and more conscious about ourselves.

I: How can we come in contact with God?

AM: There are basically two ways to do that:

Prayer – At your age (13 years) you may pray and the prayers are often answered.

Nature – Nature has to do a lot with silence. So once you come close to nature, you come in contact with God.

I: Why is not life always fair?

AM: It is because God gives us complete freedom. So if you choose the wrong path, at the end it is all up to you. At times, the soul needs the experience of life – like if a person in the past life was a prince but in this life perhaps he needed to experience something different so he is born into a poor family.



Interviewing Ameeta Mehra



I: Why is not everyone equal?

AM: Everyone is born different and we all need experiences.

I: Why do people believe in God?

AM: God is not something that can be seen. Deep inside them is something they can feel.

Report 2

(based on an interview with Ritika Goyal)

Once there was a wise man who had all the answers, every one all over the world urged to visit him and ask him questions. One small boy thought how can one man have all the answers? He wanted to prove him wrong, so he got an idea: he would hold a butterfly and ask the old man, is this butterfly dead or alive? If the old man would say alive, the boy would crush it, and if he said dead, he would let it fly. The next day he went to the old man and asked. "Is this butterfly dead or alive?" The old man thought for some time and then answered: "It is in your hand."

There are a few questions from the story:

- Why is everyone's nature different?
- Can we change our nature or are we born with it?
- Why are we born?
- What is the purpose of life?

Here are some answers:

- 1) Interestingly each person's nature is the same but depending on each person's purpose, aim and experience, a particular aspect of one's personality gets accentuated.
- 2) All of us have all the natures, it depends on the environment and one's aim, how one wants to be. You can change your



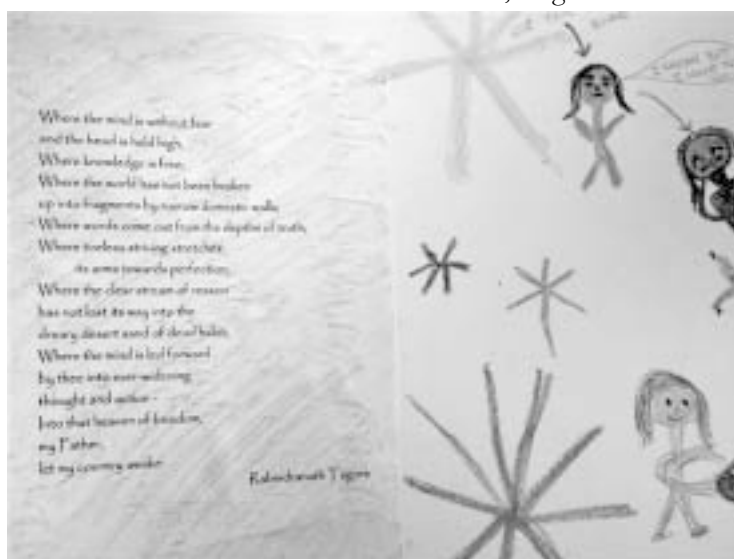
Interviewing Ritika Goyal

nature but it requires a lot of work, it is difficult, but it is not impossible.

- 3) Each person is born to fulfill an aim, each person has a different aim, every one has a soul, mind and emotions, together they come in a body and in every life the soul is evolving, we are born to evolve the soul.
- 4) To understand what your responsibilities are and then fulfill them.

Activities such as the above, discussions, reflectins, role plays, presentations, challenges mental, emotional and physical – all helped the children explore different aspects of leadership and become aware of where they stood, and the steps as well as tools they needed to take in order to go further.

Aditi, Yogita & Anuradha



A participant's drawing