



Anecdotes from L'avenir



A busy vegetable market...

A lot of learning is happening at L'avenir these days. The younger group (age 2-3 years) is working on the theme 'Vegetables' and the older group (age 3-4 years) on 'Germination.' Therefore every day the children are engaged in exploring and doing different activities with a lot of fun. One day the older group children got an invitation to visit the vegetable market which was set-up by the younger group. Each child had to carry some money so that they could buy some vegetables from the stalls. As per each child's demand we gave them a few strips of paper with numbers written on them (as money) – it was interesting to watch how each one thought and specified an amount – 'give me four rupees', 'give me two',

and so on. After receiving the money everyone got busy in buying vegetables. An hour of selling and buying brought tremendous joy amongst the little ones. This small event also left an imprint in our memories, for us to reflect and understand each child's psychology.

First interaction: As I entered the market, I found our cute vegetable sellers screaming, saying, 'Didi sabzi le lo..., sabzi le lo...'¹ Some of them were sitting in their stalls and some were carrying the basket on their head. So I stood near a stall that was set up by our junior group's Ishaan. Right opposite to Ishaan's, Vedantika had set up her stall. Quietly she was observing me when I was talking to Ishaan –

Didi: Hello Ishaan... what all vegetables do you have in your stall?

Ishaan: Aaloo, Nimbu, Mirchi, Capsicum, aur kuch nahi² (*pointing with his finger*).

Didi: I want to buy Nimbu (*lemon*). So how much money do I have to pay for it?

As soon as I finished my sentence, before Ishaan could say anything, a sweet voice intervened from the opposite stall:

Vedantika: Didi, meri Nimbu achchi hai, aap mere se le lo!³

After selling her fresh lemon to one customer, Vedantika got busy negotiating price with other customers:

Asha di: Vedantika... yeh carrot kitne ka hai?⁴



Veda: Four rupayi ka.
 Asha di: *(holding one carrot in her hand)* Aap ko nahi lagta aap thora zyada money maang rahe ho... Thik hai, aap mujhein three rupees mein de do.
 Veda: *(taking away the carrot from Asha di's hand)* Phir to aap rahne do!
 Yogita di: Veda yeh kheera kitane ka hai?
 Veda: Teen rupaye ka.
 Yogita di: Kuch kum kar do... do rupaye ka de do.
 Veda: *(thinking)* Kya karun, pata nahi... lekin paise to dene padenge!
 Yogita di: Haan bilkul...



Hard bargaining...

How about that for smart business dealing?

Second interaction: After selling all her vegetables Tarini was fully engrossed in counting and collecting her money. As she arranged it nicely, I went to her and said –



Didi: Hi Tarini, I think you have sold all your vegetables?
 Tarini: Yes, look I have got so much money *(with a proud smile on her face)*!
 Didi: Oh yes I can see, in fact you have kept the notes so nicely! Tell me what are you going to do with your money?
 Tarini: You know... some money I will give to Tavish *(her elder brother)* and with some money I will buy a Teddy Bear, a gift for my baby Tarini *(her fantasy baby toy)* and a Barney.

What a wonderful way to spend money. Have you ever thought how you spend your money and for what?

Third interaction: Our sweet Zorawar was very happy as he had bought a few items from



the vegetable stall. As I was standing in front of the classroom door, very happily he showed me all his vegetables saying, ‘Didi, dekho maine four money ka four vegetables kharida,’⁵ and without stopping quickly went inside the classroom and kept them in his bag. As we didis were discussing about taking the vegetables back from the

children in order to prepare some dish the next day, we did not notice that Zorawar had overheard our conversation.

After some time when I went into the classroom I found him very tense and sitting alone, holding his bag tightly. I was puzzled to see him sitting alone so I questioned, ‘Hey Zorawar why are you sitting alone? Let’s go outside and play with others!’ Zorawar refused to go, saying, ‘Nahi aap log mera sara vegetables le loge.’⁶ He then told me that he had overheard our conversation. As I was carrying the other children’s vegetables to keep them inside their bags, I assured him that no one would take his vegetables. Then I asked him, ‘What all have you bought and what are you going to cook with it?’ I was quite amazed to hear his defined answer – he took out all the vegetables from his bag and said:

“Sabse pehle main iss nimbu se meetha nimbu pani banaunga, lekin thora rahne dunga. Phir iss aaloo ka finger-chips banaunga. Uske baad main capsicum and cucumber ka salad banaunga aur usame jo thora sa nimbu tha usko main isme dalunga.”⁷

Isn't it a remarkably clear answer that one can get from a 3½ year old child? Who said that young children cannot engage in abstract thinking?

✍ Sunaina Singh

¹ Buy the vegetables.

² Potato, Lemon, Chillies, Capsicum, and nothing else.

³ Didi, my lemons are good, you buy from me!

⁴ Asha enquires the price of the carrot; Veda tells her it is four rupees. Finding it a bit expensive, Asha asks her to give it for three rupees. Veda promptly takes the carrot from Asha’s hand and says, ‘Then you just let it be.’ When Yogita enquires about the cucumber price, Veda quotes three rupees. Upon Yogita’s wanting to buy it for two rupees, Veda thinks awhile and says, ‘I don’t know what to do... but you will have to give money,’ to which Yogita says, ‘Yes, of course...’

⁵ Didi, see I have bought four vegetables in four rupees.

⁶ No, you people will take away all my vegetables.

⁷ First of all I will make sweet lemonade with this lemon, but I will keep a little aside. Then I will make finger-chips out of this potato. After that I will make a salad with capsicum and cucumber and I will put in it that little bit of leftover lemon.