

A New Education for a New India: Integral Education



Shri Kireet Joshi lights the inaugural lamp

a 4-day Conference (Nov.2nd-5th, 2000) by The Gnostic Centre, New Delhi held at Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi attended by teachers, counsellors, principals from 111 schools

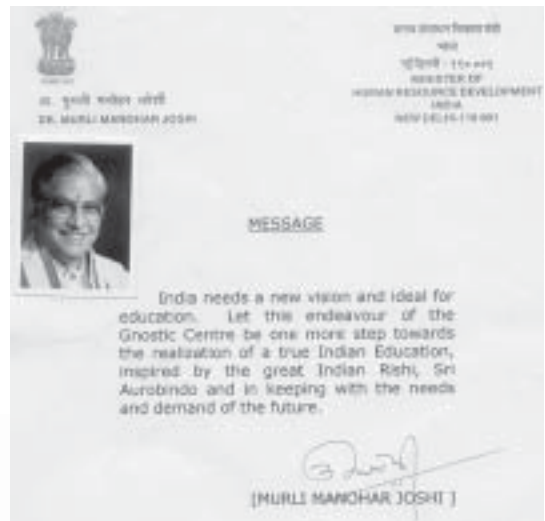
Inaugural Address

On Thu.2nd November, on behalf of the Honourable Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Murli Manohar Joshi, the 4-day conference: A New Education for a New India – Integral Education, was inaugurated by Shri Kireet Joshi. In the inaugural address Shri Joshi emphasised the need to build a new synthesis – between the old and the new, the East and the West, the individual and the collective, keeping in mind Sri Aurobindo's in-junction –

A harmonious collective aspiration can change the course of circumstances



Ameeta Mehra: Welcome & Introduction to the Conference



'We do not belong to the dawns of the past, but to the noons of the future.' Extending his support for this endeavour, Shri Joshi concluded with these words:



Shri Kireet Joshi: Inaugural address

'I am happy that in this Conference, the experiments made under the inspiration of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will be especially highlighted, and I am convinced that these experiments have developed special techniques and methodologies which need to be widely understood and practised. ... I am sure that during your explorations in this Conference, a new opportunity will be offered where the concept and practice of integral education will be pursued in a spirit of impartial quest and enthusiastic search, so that a new India can be built on the basis of authentic knowledge, integrality and completeness. ... I am sure that you will work out the implications of the methodologies and contents of this concept of education, and I shall be very keen to learn of deliberations and also your proposals as to how to make this vast concept of integral education viable in our country.'

The audience comprised of distinguished guests from educational institutions, school principals, teachers, teacher-educators - totaling 450.

Multimedia Presentation

The inaugural address was followed by a 23-minute multimedia presentation on the Conference theme, prepared by The Gnostic Centre. The presentation traced the introduction and the impact of British education on India, post-1835. It put forth the inner dilemma of the student and the teacher, of all those involved in the educational process, when caught between their own dreams, aspirations, potential on the one hand, and the demands of the 'system' and 'administration' on the other hand. The presentation provided insights into the inner shift that each one of us has to make in our own attitude towards the entire issue and review it in a larger perspective. It presented a way forward despite the system and even within the system, that each one of us can take today.



Special Message

Dr. AN Maheshwari (Chairperson, National Council of Teacher Education) began the second day with presenting a Vision for Teacher Education in India.

Five Elements of Education

For nearly 4 hours, on the morning of the 2nd day, about 400 teachers listened in rapt attention to Sraddhalu Ranade (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry) as he explained the various aspects of Integral Education - the multifold personality of the child, the crucial role and influence of the teacher, the freedom-oriented methodology, the interaction between student and teacher, the learning space. Sraddhalu took up issues of discipline, freedom, concentration, in his talk. He made the concepts vivid with personal anecdotes and practical guidelines based on his own classroom experience. At times he encouraged the audience to reflect or engage in a brief mental activity there and then, or a guided meditation, in order to understand the concepts better.



Mental and Vital Education in Classroom Practice

The afternoon session by the Gnostic Centre team, concretised the morning session by going into the details of Mental and Vital Education. The session began with a 20-minute multimedia presentation that gave an overview of the main features of Mental and Vital education and how it could be implemented in the existing system.

Thereafter, Ritika Goyal (Treasurer, The Gnostic Centre, and a practising lawyer at the High Court) engaged the teachers in a dialogue on 'What is the Mind'. She challenged them to extend their mental boundaries by getting out of the set and safe definitions and arrive at their own clear understanding of the Mind, its nature and functions. Through various questions and activities Ritika guided the teachers to gain a new insight into the true role of the Mind, its limitations as well as its strengths.

Anuradha (Secretary, The Gnostic Centre) added to this the explanation of the 5 stages of Mental Development and the mental faculties that need to be developed at each stage. Through classroom examples, anecdotes and questions, she put forth the need to develop the capacities of concentration, widen-

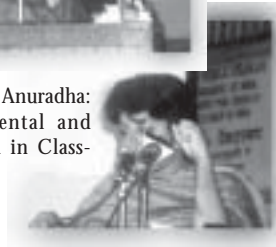
ing, organisation, control and silence at the mental level. Anuradha also touched upon Vital Education and the need for gradually replacing the lower desires and needs with higher ones.

The teachers were invited to reflect upon the following:

- Reflect upon the way you plan your lessons. How often do you consciously plan to train in the students Concentration and Interest?
 - How often do you consciously plan for Self-observation, Will for progress, Replacing the lower with the higher?
 - What are the opportunities that exist in your daily interaction with students to develop: Observation, Reasoning, Memory, Judgment, Imagination? How often do you utilise these? Why? Why not?
 - What are the opportunities that exist for Self-reflection, Higher aims and motives, Progress?
 - How often do you utilise these?
- Do you feel that your subject has the natural potential to develop a particular faculty or a particular quality? Which ones?
- Plan an activity to do so.



Ritika Goyal & Anuradha: Workshop: 'Mental and Vital Education in Classroom Practice'



And as Home Assignment:

- Think of some of the common problems that students manifest in the following areas and your response to them.
 - * Mental
 - * Vital
- How do you deal with these generally?
- What is the consequence?

The chief objective of this session was to engage the teachers in a reflection upon their own classroom practice with regards to the development of the student's mind and vital. It set the tone for the session on the following day.

From Teaching to Facilitation

Two days of collective invocation and aspiration had left their impact on the collective consciousness and the ambience of the auditorium. The morning of the 3rd day there was a conscious shift in the atmosphere. A sense of deep serenity and quietude, combined with intense and purposeful energy - at peace with itself, dynamic and ready for far-reaching action - emanated from Ameeta Mehra (Chairperson, The Gnostic Centre) as she gently unfolded the mysteries of Facilitation, through stories, role models, reflective questionnaires, guided meditations. She focused on actually facilitating in that one session the attitudinal shift that is required in each one of us, to evolve from teaching to facilitation. Till now the attention had consciously been



on addressing the mind. But now the focus deepened to bring about a qualitative shift in the Conference - from the mind to the soul, to that innate quest in each one for Perfection and Excellence, for Integration. The teachers had expressed this need in various ways in their application forms itself - a need to learn how to cope with stress, how to contact the inner peace, how to meditate. Ameeta took up these issues practically.

She specified 4 requirements in order to make the shift from teaching to facilitation:

1. To be a Visionary
2. To be a Reflective Practitioner
3. To Awaken the Interest of the Child
4. To be a Living Example

The teachers were invited to put down on paper their AIM as a teacher, their Vision and visualise it at various levels of their being,



Ameeta Mehra: Talk:
'From Teaching to Facilitation'

so that it could become a reality in their lives. This was done through the following worksheet:

- A. Formulate as precisely as you can, your AIM as a Teacher.
- What is your Vision as a teacher?
 - When you teach your subject, what is it really that you are teaching?
 - Is it the content, or is the content an occasion for the facilitation of a larger vision?
 - What is that Vision and Aim?
 - How conscious are you of it, and how far do you think you are practising it everyday?

B. MENTAL

- What are the faculties and skills that you need to develop?
- What steps are you taking, or planning to take towards a further growth and development of your mind?



C. VITAL

- What kind of person do you want to be?
- What attitudes/qualities do you see yourself acquiring and developing as a teacher?
- What would you like your emotional state to be, your relationships to be?

D. PHYSICAL

- What kind of body - physical health and fitness would you like to maintain?
- Are you doing anything for the continued fitness and health for your body? What?
- What else would you like to do?

E. PSYCHIC

- What do you do (or would like to do) for the enhancement of your inner well-being and growth?
- How much time do you give yourself - for the nourishment and growth of your deepest self?

The next step was to learn some ways of Self-observation and self-organisation, so that each could live up to their vision and develop in themselves gradually the qualities needed. One was the practice of writing a Self-reflective journal that helped one to discern one's own movements of Light and Shadow (in relation to one's aim, aspiration, ideal) during the day. The second was the practice of the Three Principles of True Teaching:

1. The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught.
2. The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth.
3. The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be.

Ameeta invited the teachers to reflect upon their own mode of learning and the factors that had helped or hindered their learning, as well as the role of Interest in learning. She took up the issue of teacher-student relationship and the influence that the teacher can exert by being a living example, a role model instead of a sermoniser. She encouraged the teachers to reflect upon the qualities that they would individually need to develop in themselves in order to teach with this orientation, as well as the qualities that they would need to reject or overcome.

Ameeta introduced the 3 learning stages of Information, Assimilation, Utilisation that one needs to plan for in order to ensure interest, understanding and retention. Thereafter, the teachers were once again invited to examine their present way of teaching and identify the areas in which they needed to bring about a change. The teachers were given individual worksheets to design a class assignment in their own subject area, keeping the following in mind:

1. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Principles of True Teaching and the Three Learning Stages.
2. Your aim as a teacher, and the Vision you have set before yourself.
3. Some aspect of Self-reflection and Self-observation on the part of the student.
4. Build into it a self-evaluation and self-reflection on your own teaching method and attitude - To be a living example and a Self-reflective Practitioner.
5. Choose one mental or vital faculty/quality that you would like to encourage your students to develop, and include that into your planning.

This served as an assimilation and utilisation activity, as the very act of putting the concepts into practice, brought up real questions.

These were addressed in the post-lunch session by a panel comprising of Ameeta, Sraddhalu and Anuradha. The individual work and dialogue culminated in the formation of small working groups, primarily based on subject areas, to chalk out an action plan for change in classroom practice, within the broad framework of a particular subject.

Psychic Education: Developing the Powers of Concentration and Meditation in Teaching and Learning

The morning of the 4th day focused on understanding what is the Psychic and how can one come in touch with it. Ameeta guided the teachers through meditation to contact the inner presence, the inner light, the inner guide that is the psychic being

or the *chaitya purusha*, present in each one of us. She explained its importance and its role in Education, and offered some practical ways to create a psychic atmosphere in the classroom (of silence, clarity, beauty, order, joy, harmony). She invited the teachers to integrate this aspect into their planning, for the afternoon presentations.



Ameeta Mehra: Workshop: 'Psychic Education...'



Sraddhalu Ranade, Ameeta Mehra, Anuradha: Panel feedback on Presentations

Presentations

The final session of the Conference, on the 4th day, brought all the participants onto the stage, in small groups, to present their planning of a different approach to teaching. The teachers had been given the following assignment as a group:

As a group, choose one subject or class assignment/project, and plan keeping in mind the following:

- The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Principles of True Teaching and the 3 learning stages.
- Your aim as a group and the goal you have set yourself.
- One mental faculty and one vital quality or attitude that you would like to encourage the development of.
- Take up one or more issues that are presently a bottleneck for you, and to find a creative solution for it, together. Look at the possibilities that exist; see the glass full, rather than the glass empty. For eg.:
 - a) How could you manage a large class-size and yet facilitate well?, or
 - b) How could you operate within the constraints of the present examination system and yet be able to fulfil your role/vision as a teacher?, or
 - c) How could you teach in such a way as to give some amount of individual freedom and space for creativity and cater for different levels of learning of your students?

The presentations once again brought to light areas that had been understood and assimilated and those that required further work. It was clear that we had come a long way from the 1st day of the Conference, and also that some seeds had been sown, and these required nurturing - a process both individual and collective. The Conference concluded with a quiet meditation.

Exhibition



A report on the Conference would be incomplete without a brief look at the most beautiful and insightful exhibition that was put up by The Gnostic Centre, on various aspects of Integral Education. Combining text, visuals and worksheets, the exhibition proved to be a much sought after resource for the teachers who spent some time daily, going over the material and taking notes for future reference. The Exhibition detailed out the fivefold education - Mental, Vital, Physical, Psychic and Spiritual - explaining the nature and methodology of each. It also presented material on the Five Elements of Education - earth (the student), water (the teacher), fire (of knowledge), air (methodology) and ether (learning environment), providing insights into how each could play its role in an Integral Education.

Literature and Information

The Exhibition was supplemented by literature and audio-cassettes on Integral Education and Self-development - yet another resource for most of the teachers.



Feedback

At the end of the 4-day Conference, the teachers put down their response in the form of a feedback. A glimpse is offered here:

HAS THE CONFERENCE CHANGED YOUR PERSPECTIVE IN ANY WAY? HOW?

Yes. To be able to appreciate the child's development of the mind and heart above the academic parameters.

Teacher, Bluebells school, Kailash colony

Yes, it's made me more passionate about my job with the challenges they pose

which are to be dealt with a new perspective.

Teacher, Bluebells school, Kailash colony

The conference has made me aware of the narrow perspective in which I worked and the greater possibilities that lie ahead.

Teacher, St. Francis de Sales Sr. Sec. school, Janakpuri

I feel we could now move a step ahead in breaking through the conventional methods and limitations faced by us.

Teacher, Our Lady of Fatima Convent school, Gurgaon

Yes, it has made me believe more strongly in myself and my capabilities and given me enough motivation (or renewed energy) to keep at some things I had visualised. Now with this guidance I'll actively pursue.

Teacher, Modern school, Barakhamba road

It has ignited the inner spark in me. I'll try to ignite this in my students too. I'll also try to search within myself if I have all the qualities of a good teacher. I'll also try to find some time for myself.

Teacher, CRPF Public school, Rohini

The most important change that I have felt is the change in orientation. It is important to focus on yourself as a person and try to bring changes in what you can change, rather than blaming the system.

Teacher-educator, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee college

The Conference has shown me a path - which I can now visualise very clearly - the path of development/growth with a right attitude in my personal as well as professional sphere of life. It has instilled the courage to face and cope with CHANGE.

Teacher, Presentation Convent school

I was on the verge of losing all my hope in teaching. But, now I am rekindled with the true spirit in teaching.

Teacher, DTEA Sr. Sec. school, Moti Bagh

TO WHAT EXTENT DID THIS CONFERENCE FULFIL YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

I've received more than I had expected definitely. I had not expected it to be so interesting and having that influence to transform me. It is a step which will lead me to higher goals, I hope.

Teacher, Ramjas school, Anand Parbat

I am going back learning a few things, and this makes all the difference! I listen, I meditate, I do and I remember.

Teacher, Delhi Public school, Ghaziabad

In so many ways, for school definitely, my home, my attitude towards my children, I've become more tolerant and I'm applying the near to far technique, it works wonders.

Teacher, Vivekananda school, Anand vihar

It has been an experience of life time.

Teacher, SSLT Gujarat Sr. Sec. school

It was highly interactive giving us a chance to practically access different situations.

Teacher, Bluebells school, Kailash colony

It did not altogether answer my academic queries but instead gave me a lot more in terms of

personal enrichment - something I had neither expected nor anticipated.

Teacher, Eicher school, Faridabad

It has helped me to hope to achieve what I thought was impossible. It has given me a deeper insight to true education and reinforced principles which I knew - Rekindle the inner light in me.

Teacher, St. Francis de Sales Sr. Sec. school, Janakpuri

The Conference has succeeded in mobilising the inertia that had gripped for so long.

Teacher-educator, CES-CERT, Pitampura

IN WHAT WAY HAS THIS CONFERENCE CHANGED YOU AS A PERSON?

It has reminded me to follow my vision in life. It has taught me to be a beautiful person so that I may make everyone and everything around me beautifully.

Teacher, DAV Public school, Sant Nagar Burari



I have inculcated a feeling and a thought - to learn more and look at the positive side.

Teacher, Delhi Public school, Ghaziabad

To remain unperturbed in any circumstances.

Teacher, Bal Bharati Public school, Pitampura

It has helped me to become more reflective, i.e. reflect upon myself, how I conducted my class, what more could I have done. The most important thing is that it has encouraged me to meditate and concentrate, a thing which I [had] lost.

Teacher, CRPF Public school, Rohini

Touched me spiritually.

Counsellor, Montfort school, Ashok vihar

I've become a little more determined to improve myself. I can see my drawbacks in BOLD LETTERS and shall improve them for myself.

Teacher, Bluebells school, Kailash colony

Hereafter I'll make a conscious effort to be a living example and teach children because that's the best way children would learn.

Teacher, DTEA Sr. Sec. school, Moti Bagh

Made me re-look at my vision as a counsellor. I am now beginning to look at it more as a passion than as a 'job', 'career' or even 'profession'.

Counsellor, Cambridge school, Srinivasपुरi



Participants

DELHI

1. Air Force Golden Jubilee school
2. Amity International school, Saket
3. Apeejay school, Saket
4. Apeejay school, Sheikh sarai
5. Army Public School, Dhaula kuan
6. Arwachin Bharti Bhavan Sr. Sec. School
7. Bal Bharati Public school, Pitampura
8. Bal Bharati Public school, Rohini
9. Bharati Public school, Swasthya vihar
10. Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan - Mehta vidyalaya
11. Bhavan's Sawan Public school, Bhati mines
12. Birla Vidya Niketan, Pushpa vihar
13. Bloom Public school , Vasant kunj
14. Bluebells International school, Kailash colony
15. Cambridge school, Srinivasपुरi
16. Convent of Jesus & Mary, Bangla sahib
17. CRPF Public school, Rohini
18. Dashmesh Public school, Vivek vihar
19. DAV Centenary Public school, Paschim enclave
20. DAV Public school, Sant nagar burari
21. DAV Public school, Shreshtha vihar
22. Dayanand Model school, Patparganj
23. Delhi Kannada school, Lodi estate
24. Delhi Police Public school, Safdarjung enclave
25. Delhi Public school, East of Kailash
26. Delhi Public school, Mathura road
27. Delhi Public school, Rohini
28. Delhi Public school, Vasant kunj
29. Don Bosco school, Alaknanda
30. Doon Public school, Paschim vihar
31. DTEA Sr Sec school, Moti bagh
32. DTEA Sr. Sec. School, Lodi estate
33. East Point school, Vasundhara enclave
34. Evergreen Public school, Vasundhara enclave
35. General Raj Public school, Hauz khas
36. Green Fields school, Safdarjung enclave
37. Guru Harkishan Public school, Purana quila road
38. Guru Harkrishan Public school, Hemkunt colony
39. Guru Harkrishan Public school, Kalkaji
40. Guru Nanak Public school, Rajouri garden
41. Happy Model school, Janakपुरi
42. Kendriya vidyalaya, JNU
43. Laxman Public school
44. Lovely Public school, Priyadarshini vihar
45. Mahavir Model School (Jr. & Sr.)

46. Mirambika
47. Modern school, Barakhamba road
48. Modern school, Vasant vihar
49. Montfort school, Ashok vihar
50. Mother Teresa Public school, Preet vihar
51. Mount Carmel school, Anand Niketan
52. Naval Public school, Chanakyapuri
53. NC Jindal Public school
54. Preet Public Sec. School, Preet vihar
55. Presentation convent school
56. RAK Child Study Centre, Lady Irwin college
57. Ramjas Public school (Day boarding), Anand parbat
58. Ramjas school, Anand parbat
59. Ramjas school, RK puram
60. Red Roses Public school, Saket
61. Sardar Patel vidyalaya, Lodi estate
62. Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar, Kalkaji
63. SSLT Gujarat Sr Sec school
64. St. Anthony's Sr. Sec. school, SDA
65. St. Columba's school
66. St. Francis de Sales Sr. Sec. School, Janakpuri
67. St. Paul's school, SDA
68. Summer Fields school, Kailash colony
69. Tagore International school, East of kailash
70. Tagore International school, Vasant vihar
71. The Mother's International school
72. Universal Public school, Preet vihar
73. Vidya Niketan, Saket
74. Vivekananda school, Anand vihar

Teacher Education Institutes

1. Aditi Mahavidyalaya, Bawana
2. CES-CERT, BBPS, Pitampura
3. DIET, Ghummanhera
4. DIET, Keshavpuram
5. DIET, Moti Bagh
6. DIET, Rohini
7. Gargi college
8. Lady Shri Ram college
9. Maharaja Surajmal Institute, Janakpuri
10. Shyama Prasad Mukerjee college, Punjabi bagh
11. Vivekanand college, Vivek vihar

Educational NGOs

1. Schoolnet India Ltd.
2. Search Educational Trust

ANDHRA PRADESH

1. Sri Aurobindo International school, Hyderabad

GUJARAT

1. Anand Niketan, Ahmedabad
2. Dakshin vidyalaya, Navsarjan Academy, Nargol

HARYANA

1. Chiranjiv Bharati school, Palam vihar
2. DAV Public school, Gurgaon
3. Dronacharya Public school, Gurgaon
4. Eicher school, Faridabad
5. Golden Jubilee Airforce school, Gurgaon
6. Our Lady of Fatima school, Gurgaon
7. Rotary Public school, Gurgaon
8. Ryan International school, Gurgaon
9. Vivekananda Public school, Gurgaon

ORISSA

1. New Race: A Centre of Education, Balasore

RAJASTHAN

1. Mayura school, Jaipur

UTTAR PRADESH

1. Amity International school, Noida
2. Army Public school, Noida
3. Bal Bharati Public school, Noida
4. Cambridge school, Noida
5. Delhi Public school, Ghaziabad
6. Delhi Public school, Noida
7. Delhi Public school, Vasundhara
8. Rajghat Education Centre, Varanasi
9. Vishwa Bharati Public school, Noida

WEST BENGAL

1. Free Progress Academy, Purulia

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