

Inclusive education, a perspective

Let our children know that virtue alone can give them freedom

Jayanta Bhattacharyya

The day set off like a tango. A group of young musicians were returning home, exhausted yet exuberant after a jazzy night show in a college campus. One had locks curling down his shoulder, the other had stubs drilled in his ear lobes, the girl wore a freely frock far shorter than the line of 'civility', another girl with an outrageous shaved head wore a T-shirt notoriously quoted. I was walking down the street; long steps and longer thoughts defined my status, something in the air atrociously ridiculed my designation, my profession was questioned at the corner where the street bent right and I failed to hear them laugh yet could see them boogieing with joy.

I am an educator. I believe in inclusive education. How do I include them in my system of mediocre conformism?



Reeta Chatterjee, Principal & Administrator, Apeejay Schools, Kolkata

A Chetan Bhagat novel might have a similar opening but unfortunately this is a note from the desk of the Principal of a School, completely baffled at the crossroads of cultural ethnicity. I was quite apprehensive at the sight of the young boys and girls defying moral policing at the wee hours of the day who were none other than my acquaintances. I knew them; some of them were my students. What understanding do I have of this potent sight seen early in the morning as an educator?

J Krishnamurti emphasises that the right educator, seeing the inward nature of freedom, helps each individual student to observe and understand his or her own self-projected values and impositions; he helps him or her to become aware of the conditioning influences about him or her, and the desires, both of which limit his mind and breed fear. That is, we as a harbinger of right edu-



The student edition of the Times of India you hold in your hand today is not an ordinary edition. This is the fourth edition in our special series which are being exclusively edited by Principals and school students to bring you a direct feel of what a youth newspaper should read and look like. This time we invited Reeta Chatterjee, Principal & Administrator, Apeejay Schools, Kolkata to visit our premises, write the stories for this edition and edit it for you. We believe when it comes to bringing out a newspaper for students and young readers, there is nobody better than you who can guide us in our efforts. The school Principal here firmly believes in the importance of inclusive education...

cation should render our students a life bereft of fear and anxiety; and all our trainings, academic or co-academic, shall deliver the child a life unique and special reflecting the inner truth. But we as an authority are obstinately scaring their wits out and are attempting to force them to conform to a mediocre life assuring them a strange sense of secu-

urity. We relentlessly curb their wildness to groom them into identical robots, skill full and efficient without any distinctive identity of their own. We push them hard to be 'successful'. Success is a strange phenomenon in modern times; it has no element of satisfaction and peace in it. Then why do we endorse it with such vehemence? There

comes the band of bizarre young musicians designing a separate groove of success for themselves completely negating our belief system. The happiness that I saw on their faces after a hard nights banging of heads and screaming is nowhere closer to the moments we offer them on a prize giving day, the ones that we work hard to design to honour our scale of success.

What is missing? The elementary policy of educating our future generation has gone wrong somewhere. We are still groping in the dark. Misinterpretations and misleads have piled up for years and we have a gargantuan task to relocate our goals and redefine our terms and terminologies. We are suspicious and scared when we confront a challenge thrown across our long sustained perception by a young mind looking more like an alien with a metal piercing his or her eyebrows. It's the thought of getting overthrown from the traditional and redundant value system that makes me scared and the same time I fail to shut my conscience which urges me to question my belief. The new generation with a neo-lifestyle and newer ideals of growth is a puzzle for all of us to resolve; a challenge for the new generation educators to understand the significance of INCLUSIVE learning system.

Inclusive education does not limit us to the specially able children alone but also these outlandish thinkers and rebels of modern India. Please do not read me as a promoter of shallow copycat generation of the western life style. I am sincerely talking about the indigenous young rebels of life; our own children who are intelligent, innovative, sharp and pioneering but so different. I think it is no time to ponder on principles and clichéd ideals but to be concerned with things as they are, not to tamper them or attempt to influence them but help it to grow as it wishes to. Like a tree in the wild and not a bonsai pretentiously green on the window sill. Let our children understand freedom and the order that follows it, let them know that virtue alone can give them FREEDOM.