

# A Teacher's Musings

MY government school is situated about sixty km from Uttarkashi, about 2-3 km off the main road. There is a steep climb and it is in the middle of some villages, surrounded by beautiful mountains on which cattle graze.

I was appointed as Arts teacher last October and am in charge of arts and culture. I have always had a close connection with theatre and this interest enabled me to reach out to the children I teach. Despite this area not having basic facilities, there are mobile towers on every mountain. Whether the children possessed art materials or not, every one of them had a mobile phone. So last year, I spent all my energies getting art materials together for my classes.

Sitting under the winter sun, the children and I met to discuss matters. We broke away from convention and the usual classroom atmosphere and the interactions became very pleasant. There were about 350 children from classes 6 to 12 and sometimes I would be teaching more than one class at a time. We did not even feel the passing of time – the children were so absorbed in their work that they worked through their lunch break.

Up to this time the children had considered Art as just another subject like Maths, mechanically drawing stones or fruit or flowers. I tried to make it different and interesting by moving away from the set syllabus. We drew varied flora and fauna, particularly leaves. The children themselves collected 40-50 types of leaves and, to tell the truth, it was the first time I had seen such shades of green and the delicate tracery on the leaves.

I also taught them about primary colours and the combinations of red and yellow which created orange, red and green which made black, or red and blue resulting in purple..

I remember when the children had not got their art material for a long time last year, I supplied them with pencils and water colours. Although no payment was made, I am satisfied that they were used. A great attitudinal change took place.

Ninety per cent of the children could not even draw mountains properly. Sitting as they were in the lap of so much beauty: the glorious mountains, with deodhar trees in the distance and other greenery had not given them an idea of true beauty. The children only wanted to complete the set syllabus and write tests. No one bothered with what they had actually understood or learnt.

My objective has been to keep the course in mind but teach them other related things, answers to questions such as What is Art? What significance does it have in our lives? My endeavour has been to change their perspectives. Art is very important for an individual's development and is clearly visible in our lives, our clothes, our homes. My aim is to inspire some of the children to take up careers in Art, but whatever they do, they should have an artistic outlook. This is my earnest wish.



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