

Learning on Stage



- **Abhishek Goswami**

A 24 day theatre workshop held in Jaipur for school children in the summer of 2012

Theatre workshop provides a platform where children can come out of their regimented academic pattern and explore various faculties for their holistic development.

Many believe that schools are not providing the right ambience for children to grow as free and independent thinkers. They instead encourage competition, social division and make children believe that one's success is someone's failure. This kills spontaneity and naturalness in children and makes way for development of a regimented mind.

To move away from this controlled system, many have tried to use innovative ways of schooling that can contribute to social integration among children which is essential for their natural growth.

One such innovative space for self-exploration is the theatre workshop which provides a platform where children can come out of their regimented academic pattern and explore various faculties for their holistic development.

Drama is a successful medium to explore life and relationship between self and surrounding. The process places the children and their developmental needs at the heart of its work, cutting across the social divisions and subjects.

The overall goal of the theatre process is to foster a positive self-concept in children of varied backgrounds by encouraging them to explore life by assuming roles and by acquiring acting skills. The imaginative exploration involves the setting up of a dramatic situation, acting out that situation, communicating within that situation and reflecting on the consequences. It also helps a person develop emotionally, physically, imaginatively, aesthetically and socially - by giving form and meaning to experience through 'acting out'.

It also fosters positive group interaction as children learn to accommodate with others in order to pursue shared goals. The entire process thus not only paves the way for self-development but also towards a process of socialization in order to develop the group as a whole.

In addition, growth in the drama and theatre space parallels the natural development of children. This growth is thus fostered in an atmosphere that is non-competitive, cooperative, supportive, joyful, but yet challenging. It can enrich their lives by their learning to respond to life's challenges in a humane and constructive way.

The Azim Premji State Institute for Learning and Development, Jaipur, organized a 24-day theatre and drama workshop for children belonging to the age group of 9 to 15 years, in May-June 2012.

The objective of this workshop was to enhance positive social relationships and coordination amongst children coming from different socio-economic backgrounds of the society through drama, theatre activities and allied arts.

During the entire tenure of the workshop, the children were to be sensitized towards self, family, education system and the society they live in.

The workshop culminated on 17th June 2012 in very informal way. Parents of the children participating in the workshop witnessed four short plays developed, rehearsed and enacted by the children themselves. Children chose four different folk stories as the main theme of these short-plays. An Exhibition was also put up, on the last day, of exploratory writing and drawings made by the children during the workshop. Below is a summary of the essence of the workshop through a set of pictures and a list of takeaways for children attending this process-oriented drama and theatre workshop:

- Positive and realistic self-image.
- Self discipline and self-confidence.
- Ability to concentrate
- Extension of physical and vocal capabilities
- Imaginative and creative ways of solving problems
- Ability to express and control emotions.
- Sharper observations of people, situations and the environment.
- Ability to recall and use sensory information.
- Ability to make considered decisions, act upon them and accept the results.
- Sense of responsibility and commitment individually and to the group.
- Initiate better, organise and present a certain task.
- Develop a sense of inquiry and commitment to learn.
- Ability to contribute effectively and constructively to the group process.
- Extend understanding of, acceptance of and empathy for others.
- Respect for others-their feelings, ideas, abilities and differences.
- Abilities to offer, accept and reflect upon constructive criticism.

Drama process images

Children rehearsing for enacting a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society through Games



1 2 Theatre exercises

3 4 5 Improvisations

6 Sharing of ideas

7 8 Drawing and painting

9 10 Parents' participation in a summer workshop and joint reflection on drama process by children and parents.

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