

THE SACRED CLASSROOM

Truly, we cannot as teachers love our children unconditionally if we don't learn to love ourselves.

Jayashree Ashok

“The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master; he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not impose. He doesn't train the pupil's mind; he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and help and encourage him in the process. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows it where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface.”

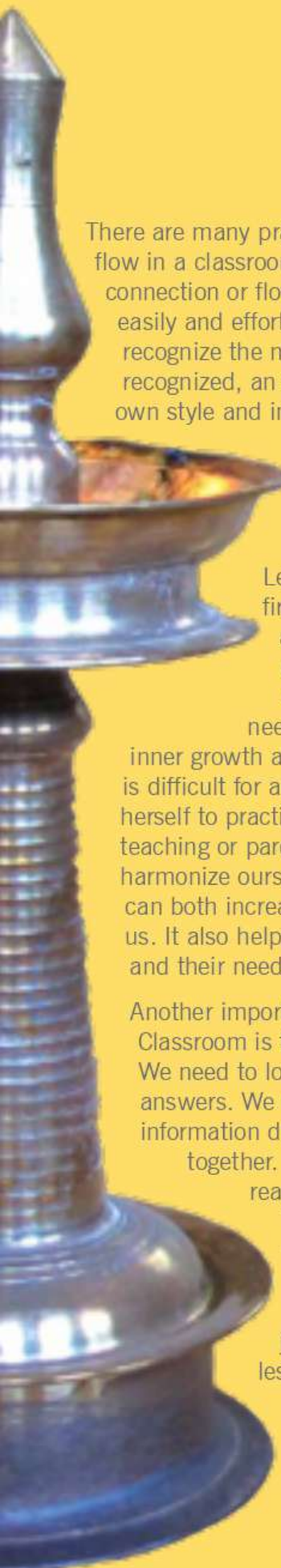
Sri Aurobindo

True learning is a meditation - complete absorption in the present moment. Certain sacredness exists in this moment of discovery, this moment of wonder. It is time to bring back the sense of sacred into our classrooms. Our children are sacred and so are we. Together we need to recreate the sense of wonder about life, living and this purposeful journey of our soul on earth. As we learn, we involve our whole being – physical, emotional, mental. Any lesson has the possibility of touching our core – our soul. How is this possible? Let us explore some options in this article.

Sacredness is the very pulse of a classroom. The word sacred may mean different things to each of us. And yet it has a common goal of touching the heart. It is the heart beat of a classroom, the pulse, the peace, the harmony, the noise, the sanctity, the discoveries, the challenges and the triumphs. It implies a sense of togetherness. Sacredness is reverence and respect. And so much more. Reflect on what sacred means for you. True learning is heart centered. It happens when our hearts are touched.

The foundation for a sacred classroom is love. An unconditionally loving space full of awareness and acceptance. Rudolph Steiner gave lectures in 1909 where he explicitly named love and devotion – which he referred to as the two components of reverence – as educative forces for developing the next stage of consciousness. The word 'love' is rarely mentioned in educational pedagogies. The word seems out of place in a world of exams and tests. And yet love is clearly central to the overall development of all human beings. Children thrive in a loving atmosphere. The unconditionally loving presence of a teacher/facilitator is the core of a sacred classroom. Her most important task is to establish a heart connection guided by spiritual wisdom with the children in her learning circle.





There are many practical ways in which the heart flow in a classroom can be opened. Once this connection or flow exists – learning happens easily and effortlessly. What is important is to recognize the need for this. When the need is recognized, an awakened teacher can use her own style and inner wisdom to create this.

Truly, we cannot as teacher's love our children unconditionally if we don't learn to love ourselves.

Learning to love ourselves is the first step towards co-creating a sacred classroom. Just as children are sacred, we are sacred too! As teachers we need to make time for our own

inner growth and spiritual nourishment. It is difficult for a teacher who does not heal herself to practice the principles of spiritual teaching or parenting. We need to take time to harmonize ourselves. Our own inner journeys can both increase the abundance and flow in us. It also helps us understand our children and their needs better.

Another important aspect of The Sacred Classroom is that we are learning together. We need to look within ourselves for answers. We really need to switch from information driven teaching to learning together. In today's world information is readily available on the Internet.

There is no need for a teacher to dole out information. The need is to for a teacher or facilitator to participate in a joint joyful exploration of the lesson. And truly listen to the inner response of children to these lessons. And encourage children to listen to their



An opening ceremony led by Rathy Nair, Creative School

own inner responses. Every moment brings in new learning. We learn a lot from the wisdom of children. Openness to each child's unique style helps us be appreciative of their special talents and areas of challenge. As teachers, we need to be flexible, humble and yet stay in charge. It's ok to not "know" everything. We need to recognize that information is not the same as knowledge.

Lessons must be explored through joyful learning and experientially. Interconnected learning can use several components including arts, music, materials, resources, videos, activities to study any subject material. For example Mathematics can be taught very effectively through cooking! Science and Arts can be integrated in many ways. Life lessons are not subject divided. Instead a single lesson can cover many subjects. Learning in an interconnected manner helps a child relate learning to life. Engaging the child in hands on activities really maximizes participation. It is also important to leave room for a variety of interpretations, experiences and answers.

Reclaiming sacred is a journey. It does not happen overnight but in small steps taken everyday. Children (and adults!) need repetition. Little things matter. And it is truly worth it!! ♦