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Media Education For Attitudinal Changes In Children

By

Ashwini Jog
MEDIA EDUCATION FOR ATTITUDINAL CHANGES IN CHILDREN

Abhivyakti in its work has always been concerned with Communications. The different forms and styles of Communication and how they affect the state of well-being of an individual has been the focus of all Abhivyakti’s interventions. Intrapersonal, interpersonal, Group and Mass Communications and the dynamics involved in these are issues close to our hearts. It is in this light and perspective that we see Media, as a tool to enhance human relationships.

Human relationships cannot be better understood unless they are looked at from a perspective which sees the human being as a cumulative product of a myriad influences of various systems, Institutions, life experiences. Media is only one such influence.

Let us see the present context of our relationships. With the globalisation phenomenon the Community is being converted into a homogenous mass looking outward together. This process is however not controlled from within but externally. Hence this does not result in mutual cohesiveness among individuals but a cool detachment which pretends to ignore the existence of one’s immediate surroundings in the obsession to relate with the faraway. The value of looking at the “self” in integration with the surroundings has been replaced by the “self” as a consumer, a user of the surroundings.

The value of Consumerism pervades through all the systems that determine our existence. “Possessing” is the way of living. This has become the core value of all our interactions thus drastically changing our priorities of concern.

In the Institution of Family, the thrust is on defining the identity of the unit in terms of its economic implications. Those members who share a common right of inheritance to a common property are defined as a family. Peers, friends, associates who could possibly be sharing a deep emotional bond due to sharing of common life experiences do not come under the concept of a family.

In the Education system one can see a similar value. Acquiring high grades, excellent ranks are the sole indicators of a successful learning process and not the internalisation of knowledge. Introspective/analytical skills seem to be lacking in the current educational system.

All the other systems and institutions also tend to quantify the capacities of human beings. This results in trivialising the personal or local issues for the obvious reason that, that which is known to a large number of people is the most important.

We can thus see that the parameters which define our relationships with our surroundings are being aligned in a unidirectional way, over which we hardly have any control.
Through Media Education we aim to regain this control back into our own hands. We believe that the socio-eco-political-cultural environment of an individual determines her/his responses to the media as also the messages in the media are determined by the socio-eco-political-cultural background of the maker of the media product.

When we conduct Media Education courses we thus attempt to -
- raise a basic consciousness about the mere existence of Media around
- talk about what the media shows us and what we feel
- help to see that the media is influenced by who makes it and how
- help to see why we respond the way we do.

An understanding of this helps us critically review the messages as well as our responses. Through this awareness one not only deconstructs media messages but also sees how everything around is constructed including her/his beliefs and practices. When one learns to question the stereotypes, role models in media one automatically starts examining one’s own roles and responsibilities that have been internalised unquestioningly for so long. This awareness leads to freedom from unconscious prescription to externally determined values and norms. One starts questioning the origin of one’s choices. The journey into one’s familial, social, cultural backgrounds is thus initiated.

This process of questioning then would crystallise into a conscious building of relationships with one’s surroundings. The issues which directly affect our lives will be seen more clearly and their solutions will be sought after. Media would then be looked at as a tool to reach out to our own surroundings, network with our associates to aid in this problem-solving process. It would be a tool to exchange our views and ideas, thoughts and experiences and not to exercise unleashed power through deceptive images.

As stated earlier our approach is to see the human being as a cumulative product of a myriad influences of various systems, Institutions, life experiences. Thus even by altering one of these influences, namely the media, the cumulative product is bound to differ and thus the change starts travelling through a chain reaction resulting into a change of pattern of human relationships. This pattern however is now controlled from within and is far more enriching.