

# **Montessori education: Chennai Corporation shines a new light**



**K. Bharathi**

**Professor. For contact: [bharathichandru14@gmail.com](mailto:bharathichandru14@gmail.com)**

It was a special child. When called out by anyone, it could not turn its head. The woman teacher in the Montessori section took the child to the class with confidence after assuring that she would take care of the child.

In a few days, a magical change took place in the child which had started aping the activities of other children. Sensing the change, a boy in the class said to the teacher lovingly, "Miss, nowadays this guy turns his head if anyone calls him. He will soon become alright." Hearing these words, the teacher was moved.

The Montessori children are like this. It defies understanding what magic the tools the children use do cast on them. The more the children use the tools, the more the values of fraternity and fellowship are cultivated among them.

## **Another example**

A girl child had the problem of urinary incontinence and so she has a diaper built into her body. Whenever the diaper felt like itching, she would hoist her shirt up and set right the diaper. Seeing this, a boy in the class laughed at her. Another Montessori boy chided that boy mildly, saying, "It is our child. Should you laugh at her?" and turning to the girl, he advised her, "Dear, you should not lift up the shirt like this."

The Montessori teachers have shared many of their experiences and a notable one is as follows:

Once a pair of parents left their son on the bench in a park and went walking. The child hardly willing to remain idle started collecting trash strewn on the floor and putting them in a trash can. An elderly man noticed this and told the boy, "Little child, why do you do this? There is a woman for this job. She will take care of it."

The boy turning to the old man asked whose park it was. Pat came the reply, "It's ours." Then boy smartly said, "In that case, is it not our duty to keep our place clean?" and resumed collecting trash.

Taken aback by this intelligent answer from the little boy, the old man asked him where he had learnt the practice. The boy said, "In school."

"Which school?"

"The Corporation school," answered the boy.

With curiosity raised, next day the old man straightaway went to the school in question to know for himself what was special about the school. There he was quite impressed by the way the Montessori classes are conducted in the corporation school.

The teachers, who have shared these experiences, are those well trained in the Montessori method of education. With their help and with the cooperation of an NGO, the Chennai Corporation has successfully conducted 50 classes in 15 schools. Besides, the Montessori education method has been popularized in over 30 schools run by Chennai Corporation.

### **Elegance and social awareness**

A kindergarten class is usually imagined as one where the children run here and there, indulging in fun and frolicking. But a Montessori class is different. Their educational tools are stacked in rows on the racks at a height depending on the height of the children who choose their tools from them.

It is quite normal for the children to make mistakes while handling the educational tools. But they themselves learn elegance and deftness as they seamlessly learn the process. They celebrate the success, jumping in joy after they are done with a task quite successfully. Then they don't need anyone's recognition at all, as they bask in their own glory.

We have a preconceived notion of child upbringing. We interfere in children's activities and correct them whenever they make mistakes. How far that is a mistake on our part is borne out by the way the Montessori classes are conducted.

Before embarking on a task, the Montessori children sit on the mats unfolded over the floor. Their activities would be confined to the borders of the mat. While stepping out of their mat for reaching for the educational tools, they make it a point not to inadvertently trample on the other children's mats. Through this method, the children are imbued with the values that respect one's own space as well as the space of others too.

### **An educational method invented by a genius**

This educational method was invented by Maria Montessori, a genius, who had observed very keenly the nature of children. If a child is taught through this method within two to six years, education will be as easy as cakewalk for the child. The children taught in the Montessori system will amazingly be proficient in addition, subtraction and division of four digits well before they step into the class 1.

Mathematics and language are instilled quite naturally into the children's brains. Not only education but also the sublime values of self-esteem, respect for fellow humans and social concern are taught to them. In this regard, the Chennai Corporation's initiatives are shining a new light.

**Translated by V. Mariappan.**