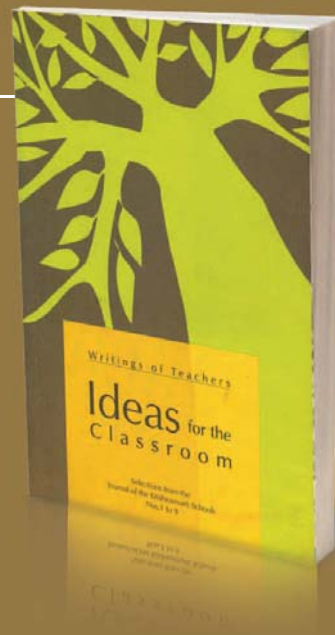


# BOOK *Review*

By Indumathi S.



## **Ideas for the Classroom:**

Selections from the Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools; East West Books (Madras) Pvt. Ltd. (571, Poonamelle high road, Aminijikarai, Chennai - 600029); Pages: 191; Price: Rs.200

‘Ideas For The Classroom’ is the compilation of selected articles from the first nine issues of Journal of Krishnamurti schools. The book “provides a wide-ranging sampler of work of teachers who straddle the middle ground between philosophy and practice. Many are a practical recounting of ideas or course-work that were tried and worked in classrooms. Some are in the nature of reflections on practice that have a direct bearing on what we might do or not do with our students. Others describe alternate kinds of curricula or new kinds of learning environments. Together, they represent green shoots breaking through the brown scrubland of the educational landscape.” (Introduction-page viii)

The book has not left untouched any aspect that teacher would come across. It has variety of articles on the content (science, mathematics, history, geography, economics etc), on assessment and specifically reporting, field trips, observation, nature walks, media literacy, arts, library and so on. It not only has samples from the classroom experience, but also articles on curriculum, reflections on education, how children learn etc. Most of the articles are reflective in nature and clearly describe what was appropriate, what went well in the classroom and what did not work. The pieces also portray the

teachers/ authors as one of those who use their ‘agency’ to present the content lending to deeper enquiry, develops resources and support material and draw up their own curriculum based on the locale of the school. The book also serves as an example for teachers of primary to secondary level. There are a lot of examples from teaching middle school level which are definitely wanting, as most of the experiments and innovations tend to happen (in Indian context especially) at the primary level.

The articles, for example, ‘The Chemistry of Everyday Life’ and ‘Observing the Universe’, would definitely create a sense of curiosity to immediately try and test in the classroom and ‘Understanding The Media’ may help realize why it may be important to do a project of that sort. Similarly ‘Reporting on the Kindergarten Child’ and ‘Reporting on the Junior School Child’ would make the teacher feel, “and finally I found a good example of reporting after all this CCE training on rubrics, tools, etc.!” ‘On the nature of a walk’ and ‘Learning through Birds’ give important guidelines for planning a nature walk and observations that children could make.

The article, 'A Science Curriculum in the Making' is an example of a curriculum developed by teachers. The curriculum is simple, it clearly articulates the objectives, core experiences and skills that children would learn and carries a brief note on evaluation. What is interesting is that it conveys what it has to in a few pages, and does not run into pages like any other curricular document. It is simply evident that it has been developed by teachers, for teachers, to use the same and test what would work and what might not.

The author's claim, "All the activities and ideas mentioned here are equally possible in a large school. The important thing is for us to realize that when we trust children, we give them the freedom and space that they need, they grow in responsibility and discover the joy of reading" in the article, 'Any Takers for the Open Library' (118), points to the fact these innovations and ideas can be tested in any kind of schools and tries to break the perceived myth that these are possible only in alternative small schools. Most of the articles can be tried irrelative of the classroom size with appropriate planning or by making students work in small groups.

The organization of the chapters can be explained in the book. Some are examples of teaching – learning process whereas some articles like competition and its educational consequences, curriculum for an inquiring mind are those which throw some perspectives. Hence some categorization of articles would help the readers quickly help choose what they want to read or focus on. Also some articles may not be immediately relevant to teachers like Teaching History- learning to look into the mirror as it may be difficult to draw out the implications for classroom. Some articles have illustrations- pencil sketches and that makes it real. More illustrations and other forms of presenting the text could have been explored.

Considering the number of such resources available for teachers this book is a good start and an early initiative (considering it was published in 2007). More of such resources are necessary for teachers and this book hence serves a good example of compiling teacher's work and reflections. I would thus recommend this book not only for teachers but also for educators as it dwells on various aspects like curriculum and gives a broad perspective on teaching- learning processes, classroom management, assessment, school processes, etc.



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