

Mr Chaitanya

Panel Discussion

Good afternoon everybody. Thank you team Maithri for allowing me to present my work. Thank you Amukta for recognising my work and feeling it worthy to share with such a distinguished audience. Today I'll be talking about the psychology of the third plane child. There is a 'needs of the young adult'- farm school program devised by Dr Maria Montessori which include the integral elements which are required by the adolescent for their development and then the plan for studying above.

The four planes of development- we have the constructive rhythm of life which is ideated by Dr Maria Montessori from birth to the adult at the age of 24. The ages of 0-6 and 12- 18 ie, the first and the third plane, are the planes of instability and growth, whereas the second and the fourth plane which is from 6-12 years and 18-24 years is a period of stable growth. In 0-6 years, the psychic child is born and during 12-18 years the social man is born. Let us look at the physical characteristics of the third plane child. At this stage, the child hits puberty, there is a rapid growth in the body which is uneven. The limbs grow first, then the chest grows and then the muscles start strengthening. The body construction of the child becomes very awkward at that stage.

The voice starts cracking for the children at this age, there are a lot of hormonal changes in the children and this is also a stage where they are predisposed to certain forms of diseases and weaknesses. This can be compared to the first plane where the child is showing rapid physical changes in the body. Let's move on to the psychological characteristics. Due to the hormonal changes and growth of the body there is a discomfort in the child. The child is no longer as confident and as comfortable as the child in the second plane. The second plane child is a go-getter. He knows what to do, he's ready to take those

risks. But the third plane child is slightly distant. There is also hesitation and self doubt in the child, sorry, young adult right now in this stage. Part of this is attributed to the hormonal changes in the young adult. This is the period of creation of the social man. This is the young adult who is trying to enter society. There is a creation of social justice. They are looking beyond the aspect of right and wrong. The second plane child is usually content with what is right and what is wrong. It doesn't matter if the reason behind it is justified. If it is right, it is always right, and if it is wrong, it is always wrong. The third plane child is looking at things subjectively and not objectively. If a person does something right, but his intentions are wrong, does the act qualify as right? They are in that dilemma and they are finding their character, their base line for all those ideas.

This is also a period of creation of personal dignity. The reason is because, they are moving out of their family, they are moving into society and they need to find their space in society. They want to become a contributing member of their society. But finding their place at that time is very crucial and the dignity that they get from society and people around them gives them the confidence to move forward in a very positive way. In general the adolescents should be given more respect than they deserve. They should not be judged on their mistakes. They need to be given more respect so that they are put on this positive path of confirmation. They are also very sensitive to rudeness. The second plane child just brushes it off. The third plane child is different. If you have interacted with a 13 year old, even the slightest hint in your face, they will realise that you are not happy with them. So we need to be very clear with them. Our approach should be such that, they are given space to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. They need strengthening of self confidence.

This is also a plane where there is a lot of tendency for creative work. There is a slight decrease in the intellectual capacity of the child and

he is not as explorative as he was in the second plane, but there's a lot of tendency for good, physical creative work.

What are the needs of the adolescent? The adolescent needs care and protection for his development. He is transforming from the child in the family to the young adult who is moving into society. He is about to become a contributing member of society. The young adult, to move into society, needs to be a part of it. To be part of society, he needs adult like work. Work is very important in Montessori where every human being is a born worker. This work is different when compared to the other two planes. This work is meaningful in context to the society. It should be based on the needs of the society. Young adults serve by meeting the needs of the society. And what it does to them is that it makes them feel very valuable. Through these works, they explore different concepts through which they can become contributing members of the society, and finally choose one which can be their own career or their profession. The other thing is adaptation. Adaptation is very important.

If we think of the society we are living in, I would say it is very dynamic, because it is no longer a period where skills or professions are handed over from the older generations to the newer generations. Traditional work is being changed or being completely obsolete. New forms of skills have come into action. These are rapidly changing and they are not even transient. How do we convince a child who is trying to be part of society to be very confident and be a part of and adapt himself to that change? So that is where our preparation lies. We need to be able to prepare the child to be a part of the society. That is adapting himself to the change that society is going through. I will also be talking about moral development of children at this stage. Moral development is helping them decide between what is right or wrong and letting them take their time to decide. We must not blatantly say whether it is right or wrong but try to find the true meaning behind this thinking and understand how their character is

developing and work with them. Here we work with them as their friends. Because they need somebody to connect with. It goes a long way in developing their self confidence.

The other thing is economic independence. Economic independence is not children living off their money and living on their own. Economic independence for a young adult is basically being able to take care of himself and sustaining himself. That means he is able to function in a setting and he is able to manage that setting and he is able to reap benefits out of that system and he is able to manage the benefits that he gets. So we need to give them opportunities for economic interactions with the children and this is very important for him to develop personally. So this will help him manage himself and become more independent. In the first plane it is physical independence where the child is independent with his immediate environment, the second plane has cultural independence, the third plane is in terms of economic independence, where they are putting themselves into society by being a part of it. Dr Montessori emphasises a lot on being a part of society and adaptation to the society and the third plane is really the development of the social man. This economic independence helps the young adult and it is derived from fruitful work. It is the work that the society needs.

It might be the immediate society, school, the home or the colony that they live in. But it is purposeful work, not unnecessary work. The work enriches the society in which the young adult lives. It teaches them the value of time and their own powers and it also enhances academic education. There is a small study on this by Mary Leon. She started self help groups in 1837 in America. Children who were not able to afford education were given part time jobs or given work in institutions associated to the schools in which they were studying. The children can earn their fee and study. The outcome of that program was that, many children who were working were actually doing better at their education. This goes to show that children whose needs are

being met are able to do better. It's not about spending more time on making money. It's about independence and finding their own place.

Talking now about the Farm School- The school functions to cater to the needs of the physical and psychological needs of a young adult. Preferably the school should be closer to nature in the countryside, in a rural area where there is lot of open space for the children. The food should be non-toxic because of the bodily changes that are there. A good non-toxic diet will be beneficial for the children. To work on land is very important for the children. They also need a hostel where they reside. They need to have occupations which is meaningful work that they do. They need to have a shop which is an interface between the school and the society. They exchange and understand what the needs of the society are. They also need to have a museum of machinery.

Agriculture is the turning point in human history. It has developed remarkably through centuries of human work and starting with agriculture gives the adolescents a vital starting point to understand the effort that human beings have put to come to the point where we are today. It is an immense option for the scientific study of human development. You can study plants, animals, geography, everything. Everything is connected to the land. It also helps us to study ancient civilisations in terms of agriculture- what have they done, what are we doing, and how is it so different from them, what are the benefits, etc. When we think about agricultural practices, I don't think we are in a position to say that we are having the best of food on our table today. Understanding where and what is happening is very important. It is also a source of economic activity for the children.

The children who are becoming independent by themselves as a unit are given responsibility to take care of their hostels. They are responsible of managing their administration. Their maintenance and their finances. The program is not run by adults. It is run by the

students in collaboration with the adults. It is not imposed but it is in collaboration that this higher level of independence and responsibility is given. They also manage a guest house where visiting parents can come and stay or visiting faculty can come and be taken care of. Occupations are the fruitful work which is meaningful to the society. It is the work that children do and gain benefit out of it. The work should be culturally appropriate.

Back in America, they produce maple syrup etc. Which are locally available resources that they have. Here we need to understand what is the need of our society. What is the immediate requirement of the school and we should try to cater to those needs. These are operated and maintained by the children. I'll give you an example of the operations that we planning to start from next year. Some of them are operational and some of them are in their beginning phase. We have our elementary children doing gardening activities. We've tied up with the Department of horticulture, Telangana and they have assisted us by providing us with a good terrace gardening facility. Since we are in an urban space, we cannot afford a lot of land. There are children mostly 11, working with Bonsai trees.

We currently have mushroom cultivation in our school which is done by the elementary children as part of their project in Kingdom Vegetalia. The brilliant thing about this is that when we produced this and thought we had to give it to the parents, the catch was, how do we set the price for it. Children came together and they had a lesson on profit and loss. They decided the price for which we could sell it to the parents. The tricky part was how to calculate the profit percentage. They were discussing 1% or 2% should be good. That is the moral level of the child. When I told them the food industry runs on 100% profit, they said 'oh that is not correct'. They said, let's meet on common ground and decide it later on. We also have bees, we take care of honey bees, this occupation will be taken over by children next year. Last year we had a harvest. Bees are the best pets for me

because they are in constant mode of production and they are always there to serve you, in a very selfish sense.

I worked with a couple of adolescents and we built a boat. This I believe is an ideal work for children who exude a lot of energy and an ideal scientific exploration. We made this boat, took it to Tungabhadra, and we actually sailed it. So we had three adolescents and four adults doing this. Apart from this we are also trying to explore different ways of agriculture. There is something called a shop- a place where trade of goods and exchanges takes place. It is an introduction to the society where they understand what the society needs and takes and caters to those needs. It is also a study of commerce and exchange. It starts right from barter system to understanding currency as a tool rather than the entirety. It also helps them understand trade across history.

The plan for study and work is actually divided into three parts and you must understand that the work is important. Study and academics comes from the work that they do. Everything is tied to the work. It is the work that takes predominance and lessons are given to the children so that they are able to do something better in the work. We have opportunities for self expression, education in relation to scientific development, and education in preparation for adult life. In opportunities for self-expression they need ample opportunities and techniques to express themselves. Their learning is not expressed just in a written format. That is the mainstream trend. Expression can be anywhere. It could be dance or anything. So children need these keys, they need these introductions into the express world of dance, music and language. So that they comfortably express what they learn. Expression is the key for whatever work we do. There should be some form of expression in any work that we do which portrays their understanding. Education in relation to the psychic development which is language, mathematics and moral development, these are more to do with the development of the brain. Mathematics of the

language, semantics of the language etc. These help them develop key skills required to function and communicate. Education for the preparation of adult life includes three aspects. The study of earth, and living beings, which is the study of botany, zoology, geography etc. The study of human progress and building up of civilisation which is study of physics, chemistry and all that human beings have done, and the study of mankind which is the study of evolution and what human beings have come to. The key aspect that we try to promote here is that our ancestors both known and unknown, have given us a lot.

We need to portray them as our heroes and we need to understand the work that they have done in a very positive way. That is the underlying principle of how we function in an Erd Kinder program. Here is a quote which I found very inspiring by Dr Maria Montessori, “There are two faiths which can uphold humans. Faith in God and faith in oneself. These two faiths should exist side by side. The first is for one’s inner self and the second to one’s life in society.”

Thank you.