

Fourth Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay
Memorial Lecture

Reviving Indian Heritage in Education

Professor Bharat Gupta

March 13, 2014



Centre for Cultural Resources and Training

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KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAY

Known in her student days as the ‘uncrowned queen of India’, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was a rare combination of beauty, intelligence, courage and commitment. In her person, since her early childhood, she assimilated the values imparted by her mother, grandmother, and the English suffragette Margaret Cousins; in short, a generation of women who instilled in her values which guided her life and work for over seven decades. Kamaladevi represented a generation of Indian women who were freedom fighters, in and out of jail, but also those who were responsible for freeing Indian women from the shackles of narrow social and economic boundaries.

In this long journey, Kamaladevi eschewed power, position, explicit political leadership. No public office could attract her, and, instead, it was the mission of alleviating the suffering of the people which was her calling. She was active in the movement of rescuing women soon after Partition. She gave her full energies to the Faridabad refugee camp. Cumulatively, her proximity to Mahatma Gandhi and conscientiousness of the creativity of economic disempowerment gave rise to the Indian cooperative movement. It was this movement, along with her work at the grassroots level and her advocacy, which resulted in the recognition of Indian handlooms and handicrafts. She not only nurtured craftspeople but also gave dignity and value to their products. All this and more has brought about a sea-change in the tastes of the modern generation. Today, the handicrafts sector is recognized both for its vibrancy and its market value in India and abroad. The institutions of the All India Handicrafts Board and the All India Handloom Board came into existence as a result of her active advocacy.

For Kamaladevi, life was an integrated whole – the hand, the heart and the mind, and an unflinching commitment went together. As a young girl, she had defied convention to be a theatre artist. The arts were her love and passion, be it music, dance, theatre or the crafts. There was not an occasion when

she did not discover a remote tradition of handloom or craft, or an obscure theatre form, to nurture it, to promote it and to present it.

And yet, there was a last mission to be fulfilled, to integrate the rich diverse and living traditions of our cultural heritage with the formal systems of education. It was her firm belief that unless there was equity between the creativity of the hand, the intellectual critical discriminating mind and the pulsating heart, a total human being would not be possible. It was this vision and conviction which motivated the Government to establish the institution of the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT).

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan

KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAY

Personal Details

1903 April, 3 Born at Mangalore, Karnataka
1988 October, 29 Died at Mumbai, Maharashtra

Major Publications

The Awakening of Indian Women. Madras: Everyman's Press, 1939.

Towards a National Theatre. Aundh Pub. Trust, 1945.

Socialism and Society. Bombay: Chetana, 1950.

Indian Handicrafts. New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1963.

Carpets and Floor Coverings of India. Bombay: Taraporevala, 1969.

The Glory of Indian Handicrafts. New Delhi: India Book Co., 1976.

Indian Carpets and Floor Coverings. New Delhi: All India Handicrafts Board, 1974.

Handicrafts of India. New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1975.

Tribalism in India. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

Indian Embroidery. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern, 1977.

The Glory of Indian Handicrafts. New Delhi: Indian Book Co., 1978.

Indian Women's Battle for Freedom. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1983.

Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces: Memoirs. New Delhi: Navrang, 1986.

Major Awards and Recognitions

1955, the Padma Bhushan of the Government of India.

1966, the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership.

1974, the lifetime achievement award of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Ratna Sadasya.

1977, the UNESCO Award for promotion of handicrafts.

1987, the Padma Vibhushan of the Government of India.

PROFESSOR BHARAT GUPT

Bharat Gupta, retired as an Associate Professor in English from University of Delhi. He is a classicist, theatre theorist, sitar and surbahar player, musicologist, cultural analyst, and newspaper columnist. His writings have altered the perception of ancient Greek drama as the 'origin of Western theatre' and established its utter closeness with ancient Indian theatre as part of an Indo European construct.

He is trained in both, Western and traditional Indian educational systems. He was trained in sitar by Pt. Uma Shankar Mishra and was taught the classical texts by Swami Kripalvananda and Acharya Brihaspati. He was awarded the McLuhan Fellowship by University of Toronto, and the Senior Fellowship by the Onassis Foundation to research in Greece on classical Greek theatre. He has lectured extensively at Universities in India, North America, Europe, and Greece on Indian Music and theater theory and taught courses on these subjects there. He was a Visiting Professor to Greece and member of jury of the Onassis award for drama. He serves on the Visiting Faculty at the National School of Drama, Delhi, and as resource scholar at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and several other major centers and academies of the arts. He also gives annual public lectures in New Delhi at the Habitat Center and several other forums.

He has served as jury for the Onassis Prize for Drama.

His published books include: Dramatic Concepts Greek and Indian (1994, 1996, 2006), Natyasastra, Chapter 28: Ancient Scales of Indian Music (1996), Twelve Greek Poems into Hindi (2001), India: A Cultural Decline or Revival?(2008).

Prof. Gupta has lectured on Hinduism in several universities in US and Europe and spoken in many interfaith meets in India and abroad. He also speaks in conferences of traditional religious scholars and *pundits* on current religious affairs.

Reviving Indian Heritage in Education

Professor Bharat Gupta

In the delightful text *Panchatantra* of Vishnu Sharma, the teacher who succeeded in retaining the attention of three spoilt princely students (not unlike the little emperors who flood our rich Anglophonic schools today), and finally molded them into *pundits* of *raaja-niiti* or good governance, has given a serious caution:

*Udyamen hi siddhyanti kaaryaan.i na manorathaih/
Nahi suptasya simhasya pravishanti mukhe mr.gaah.*

Tasks are achieved by hard work, not by mere desiring/
Animals do not enter the mouth of a sleeping lion.

Our nation has been a sleeping lion for too long now. There have been fewer moments in recent history when governance, law and order and cultural tolerance have been at such low ebb. Vishnu Sharma has a message for the delinquent princes of democracy to which we must all listen although being teachers ourselves.

India takes its heritage for granted

When going out to seek our identity and culture distinguishing it with other nations, we often delude us by singing a self congratulatory song “*Saare jahaan se acchaa hindostaan hamaaraa*”. This self-congratulation, lingering from the euphoric days of our freedom struggle, sounds now like the thunder on distant mountains shedding not a glimmer of hope on our present lives. For most of us our memory is sharp enough to have seen a cultural decline that set in barely within a decade after freedom. Any analysis is sufficient to counter the smug belief, still fostered in schools and political speeches, about the superiority of our culture, once voiced in Iqbal’s song.

Very insidiously this rhyme nurses a misplaced conviction that while many other ancient civilizations were wiped out in time, India alone is indestructible, “*Yunaan-o-Misr-o-Romaa*

sab mit gaye jahaan se/ Ab tak magar hai baaqi naam-o-nishaan hamaaraa! / Kuchh baat hai ki hastee mitatee naheen hamaaree/ Sadiyon rahaa hai dushman daur-i-zamaan hamaaraa, Greek, Egyptian and Roman civilizations were wiped out from the earth/ But we alone have survived and kept our name and fame/ There is something that keeps our identity from elimination/ Although we have had enemies for centuries together.”

The song takes special pride in stating that while the Greek and Roman civilizations, the so called predecessors of the West, lost to ravages of time, Indian civilization alone remains immortal. Such headiness was excusable during the struggle for freedom but is hardly justified after more than half a century of self-misrule. Our name and significance (*naam-o-nishaan*) are now under gradual but marked erosion, fading faster than anything witnessed in the last millennium. The ravages of technology are greater than even those perpetrated by the plundering conquerors. In every sphere of life, it is now obvious, that India has not been able to internalize European technology to match its own civilization concepts, the foreign techno-*kaayaa*, into its traditional *dharmakaayaa*.

For those of us who are engaged in the vocation of education, reversing this tide of cultural decline and creating conditions for a cultural flowering is the main task and the purpose of our lives. For various reasons and we cannot wait to restore it. This needs a hard work, not a mere aspiration, *manoratha*, nor show-casing which has been our habit so far.

Guilt for the ‘Classical’ Heritage

Soon after our newly won Freedom we developed a syndrome which has made us unique in the nations of the world. We alone excel in belittling our classical heritage and have unfortunately codified it as a “Hindu past”. This classification began in the colonial period when non-European cultures were primarily seen in terms of religious denominations of the non-Christian colored races. They were further divided into two broad categories, primitives (African, Australian and American

aborigines) and statics (Asia and China). Within the Western world these approaches were countered first by Orientalists and later by Modernists, both not so enthused with Newtonian rationalism and the aura of cultural superiority it bestowed upon the European people.

But while the Orientalists contributed to the discovery of the East by the West, they also succeeded in creating a somnambulist reassurance in the minds of many Indians who never tire of reveling in the praise of India by Schopenhauer, Max Muller, Blavatsky, Whitman and the like. In spite of the Orientalists, administrators like Macaulay forged for India an education system which had little place, not only for Sanskrit literature, but for all the traditional arts and sciences like music, poetry, dance, theatre and painting, *Ayurveda*, *Rasaayan*, *Jyotisha*, metrics, etc.

This dichotomy continued well into the semi-century after independence and flourishes strong as ever. Even now, we have on one side Indologists, South Asian experts, Asian anthropologists, and ethnomusicologists etc., white, brown, black and yellow, native and foreign who would like a special treatment, almost protectionist, to be accorded to native cultures, and on the other hand we have the socialists, rationalists, scientificists, pluralists and globalists assured of the auto-built resilience and auto-generative capacity of native cultures. But neither side thinks that a formal educative system should have any role to play in the formation of culture. For them, as for Macaulay, culture can be extracurricular.

Indeed, it could be so for the colonizers who did not require culture for clerical/*babu*-work. But that it can be so for our future legislators, jurists, administrators, academics and scientists, is indeed a soft headed mushy belief that mocks the well known civilizational and educational principle that cultural values and behavior are not auto-generative but need rigorous instruction.

Modernity is an updating of Tradition not a break from it.

Soon after Independence we seem to have fallen into one of the traps of our own making. We made our perception of our

Past into schizophrenia; we either glorify it or degrade it. For reasons shown above, a disconnect with all the ancient systems of learning is complete. The break from the institutional structures of *gurukulas* and *vidya-ashramas* and the knowledge system of *Shastras* taught in them came into force in the British rule but we accepted the modernity of European system as a 'development' in the education system and never thought of it as a rupture and loss. Consequently the schizophrenia came to pervade not only education but every aspect of cultural life.

For example, medicine is divided into Ayurveda, Unani and Homeopathy on one hand and Allopathy on the other. We have succumbed to such an extent to the Western jargon, that we call Allopathy as mainstream medicine and our own ancient science as Alternative Medicine. With the recent global rise in the cost of allopathic drugs and failure to tackle degenerative diseases, we have come to realize how we missed nurturing a very effective and less expensive science that had helped us for centuries. By castigating the *Dharmashastras* and *Smritis* as no more than repositories of an ugly hierarchical caste-system we overlooked the normative *dharmas* or duties that were sustained by these texts in absence of which we are caught today in the pursuit of 'rights' as defined by the West and which are creating more dissensions than harmony in society. Our judicial system has become 'justice delayed is justice denied'; education has become certificate distribution rather than skill dispensation, and politics a profitable career rather than social service.

So far, we are groping for solutions only within the global modernity and are helplessly imitative of the Euro-American solutions. Such solutions instead of providing relief are providing greater disasters for us. They are even threatening to break up some cardinal social institutions such as family, marriage, parental care, patronage for art and education. A serious rethink on our Westo-philia is long overdue.

Classical heritage revives Civilization.

It is well known that Europe came out its Dark Ages by

borrowing Greek values. What came to be popularized as the “Greek miracle” by the West was actually a reconstruction of Greek history by the post Renaissance Europe to suit its colonial mission and was not entirely beneficial to non-European societies. But all the same the reading of the philosophical and scientific texts of the ancient Greek, the European nations were able to develop the modern natural sciences that provided them a technology and weaponry that was instrumental among other things in subjugating the rest of the world.

The debt the Europeans owed to the Greeks and the Romans was great and except in matters of religion which was castigated as idolatry, ancient Greek ethics, logic, poetry, politics and painting and architecture were imitated for over a period of 400 years. A new history was invented in which Europeans were made as successors of the Greeks and the boundaries of the ‘West’ (essentially the colonizer nations of Europe) were extended to cover the Mediterranean. The history of Western civilization now is said to begin with the Greeks where as for the ancient Greeks themselves the sources of knowledge were Asia, Egypt and Crete.

In contrast to the Europeans who borrowed a heritage from elsewhere, India has entered a syndrome where cultural revival from her own past is considered anathema. We have not freed ourselves from our Colonized Minds. The young and the old should be made to understand that our own classical heritage can help us recreate a new dynamic culture. Thus, a new turning point in the cultural life of the country shall be ushered.

Resources of Heritage for Education

What are the tangible sources of heritage that students and teachers need to include in the general curriculum? The beauty of all these resources is that they are user friendly, as a modern salesman may say.

They were made for formal and informal education in the classroom, in temples, in streets and family gatherings. They come in all forms from esoteric to utterly simple homilies and

enchancing art forms.

In a general manner the present day text books of school level include glimpses of heritage by acquainting the students with sacred and architectural sites, folklore and lifestyles of rural, tribal peoples, visual and performing arts and some literary figures and even the scriptural texts. But what they do not talk about or mention is the whole series of formal texts known as the Shastras of various disciplines.

This whole array of works, which covers all areas of knowledge, from the mundane to the spiritual, from political to aesthetic, from economic to judicial shows, that a high state of contemplation and assiduous application was the order of the day to maintain a civilization.

In any introduction to knowledge systems of other countries, they talk about ancient, medieval and modern texts. However, in the Indian curricula at all levels, the Indian Shastra not only has No Place, there is not even a mention of them.

For instance, a school text book with a section on economics may mention the name of *Arthashastra*, or even some of the subjects that it touched upon, but there is no account of the economic theory or vision of governance that it enshrines. At the university level, far from conducting research on such a vision and relating it to the modern economic conditions in India, all text books are by western authors written for and about the West. The same holds true of history, literature, linguistics, psychology, ethics, philosophy and aesthetics. Regarding sciences, it is taken for granted that there was no metallurgy, rational medicine, biology, astronomy, zoology, weaponry, water-management and study of plants and trees. Whenever and where ever a mention is made, it is cursory and ceremonial and often pompous. This reflects the cultural schizophrenia of modern India.

No Teaching of Religious Traditions

The biggest casualty in education has been suffered by the vast and diverse religious doctrines which are the richest and

maturest in the world. The principals of the secular state as we have envisioned and enshrined, have not been able to distinguish between teaching of religion and propagation of religion. It is presumed, rather espoused, by the policy makers in the field of education that giving a knowledge of religious doctrines of India to its children in schools and young in colleges would be the same as indoctrinating them and this would be setting up a religious war in teaching centers.

The obligations of societies professing pluralism go beyond mere tolerance of external markers. In such societies educational institutions are obliged to actively cultivate a reasonable acquaintance with the articles of divergent faiths and beliefs. But in India, we inherit the colonial British perspective. Religious and moral education has been kept out of school and college education as a guiding principle of the secular state. For example, in Indian educational system it is presumed that acquainting a Muslim child with Hindu precepts will obstruct his allegiance to his family faith and similarly teaching the basic tenets of Islam to a Hindu child will ruin his or her faith in tenets of parental Hinduism.

Hence, India prefers not to teach the precepts of different religions and especially not even of her majority religion of Hinduism to her own school children lest this kind of teaching shake the faith of the children in their parental interpretation of religion. The Indian policy makers are further afraid if religious instruction is given, the State may be accused of promoting one religion over another or of even pushing religious values over and above the so called atheistic/agnostic/secular values of life that for some reason have acquired the aura of being more liberal, democratic and modern than religious ethics. In other words, it is presumed that knowing about the faith of others, and of the majority Hindu adherents of the nation in special, is detrimental to the security and freedom of a child's beliefs.

In India, another irrational fear has been practiced now for more than half a century ever since it was enshrined in the Constitution as an unwarranted phobia, namely that teaching of religion may end up as teaching of the majority religion, that is

Hinduism and this may result in a religious oppression of religious minorities like the Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs and atheists. Therefore, these minorities are not only 'protected' by the lack of religious education, they are given a Constitutional concession to open and manage religious or other institutions where freedom to teach their particular faith is guaranteed. In other words, it is presumed that a minority child is likely to be harmed by exposure to the faith of the majority and hence, no general religious instruction in state schools is given, but a majority child is not likely to be harmed if he/she attends a minority school class in a minority institution. *This theory of education is based on phobia and exclusion and instills a suspicion of faiths other than one is born into. Such a kinky pedagogy can only breed intolerant and ignorant members in a society who to satisfy their religious thirst can fall prey to any unhealthy cult ranging from aggressive dogmas to terrorism promoted from within or outside the nation.*

Family, not an Efficient Teaching Space

One often hears the prescription that religion and its values are best taught by the family and the State far from having an obligation for providing education about religious matters should keep even the public media, such as news prints, television and public utility spaces sanitized from religious controversies. Besides promoting the tyranny of the Euro-centric post Enlightenment secularity, this notion simply overlooks (or secretly galore in) the fact that the family is no longer capable of giving proper religious instruction of even the faith it professes and least of all of the faiths of others. As a matter of fact most families, even the well-versed ones in religious concepts have a sectarian idea and irrational emotional attachment to their faith. *They teach hostility and prejudice to other faiths. In fact, it is the prejudice instilled by families that pours into the public space as strife and the more deprived the public education about religious matters, greater the chances of conflict.*

If plurality is to be promoted then a new public space for religious dialogue must be created. Seminars and conventions that are being so frantically arranged now all over the world

cannot resolve prejudices that families have instilled for generations. The family is not expected to have a pluralistic and wide vision approach to religion that instruction in public spaces needs to evolve for a better world. Older societies had chosen to demarcate social norms for adherents of divergent faiths in stricter terms. But people were more aware of the fundamentals of each other's religion or sect. For instance in ancient India, a Jain child may not have gone to the same educational institution (*ashrama*) along with a Buddhist or a Vaishnava child, or may have never shared lunch with a child that came from a family of the followers of Shiva, but the pedagogy of the times as practiced in schools of all denominations, had a vigorous system of teaching the precepts of other systems even though for the purpose of refutation. In other words, a Jain child or a mature scholar would surely know the precepts of all other sects. And so would a Buddhist or a Shaivite scholar. But what is taught nowadays in schools and universities the world over is not the way to distinguish between the why and how of different faiths but a namby-pamby multi-cultural-ism constantly reeling under the weight of some ideology, usually western, be it neo-colonialism, senile socialism or a carpetbagger globalization.

Shastras had a greater scientific temperament than Moderns

At this point let me define what is a Shastra, "*Shastram iti shaasanopaayam*". It is a text that has after an effort of centuries compiled knowledge about a science or art such as metallurgy, botany, sculpture, architecture, music, drama or medicine. That area of knowledge or *vidyaa* was also given the name of *lakshya*, as it was the targeted or aimed for a well defined purpose in life. To begin with a simple example, the art/science/*vidya/lakshya* of making perfumes was called *gandha-shastra*. As the text provided us a method/system/discipline/*shaasana* for putting the knowledge of making perfumes to a practical use, it was called a *Shastra* of *gandha*. This text or *Shastra* would have many aspects to it which were called *lakshanas*. Being full of *lakshanas*, a *Shastra* also called a *lakshana-grantha*. A *Shastra* thus was the practical method of perfecting a *vidyaa*. *Shastras* were not just theory but result oriented as they had a target/

lakshya and derived their reputation from the degree of success they promised.

It must be noted that unlike the modern texts, no Shastra would stop at theory but also show the application or *viniyoga* of its science. Purely theoretical texts such as Upanishadas were not called Shastras. The ancient system thus prepared the student for immediate practice after graduation. Unlike the modern system of education that leaves the student in lurch with only theoretical guidance, the classical system provided full preparedness for a vocation. It is true that at a higher level of specialization some would go for theory (*aachaaryas*) and others for practice, just as Vishnu Sharma was a scholar of *raajaniiti*, *dharma*, and *niiti* while his students were to be the rulers.

Integrate classical vidyaas into curricula at all levels

If the untouchability of Shastras is shed from our modern minds, they can be incorporated into a very seamless way into education from school to university. This would require the skills of those who understand the methodology/*lakshanas* of the *Shastras* to integrate them with present day syllabus. But the task is neither undesirable nor a wild goose chase. The ancient systems of knowledge were rooted in application/*prayoga* unlike modern romantic pedagogy that presumes an automatic transformation of theoretical skills into ability on ground. Older systems can be utilized now to provide for more stable models of governance, ethics, aesthetics and other aims of life.

A much more detailed analysis is warranted to demonstrate how this incorporation of so called traditional knowledge be made. But here it is important to indicate the need of a major shift in the organization of our teaching programs.

Create a Teacher Centered System

Most of us forget that for almost a millennium, India maintained a system of higher education, which was availed of by many neighboring civilizations, including China. This traditional system, of *guru* and the *gurukula*, had centered entirely on the

teacher and his direct relationship with his disciple was rigorous and demanding and yet flexible. It used emotional ties to create long-term obligations and accountability. In spite of its hierarchy, it had an admiration for the individual excellence (*pratibhaa*) on the basis of which sometimes very young persons were elevated as head-teachers, or *achaaryas*. Recognition of talent is a phenomenon that seems to have disappeared in modern India.

In the traditional system of education, pedagogy was looked upon not as an instrument of knowledge but as a catalyst. Epistemologically, it considered teaching as “awakening” and not as “transference” of knowledge based on “course-work”. The student was regarded not as a clean slate, but as a seed to be nurtured by the psychic ability of the teacher whose methods were flexible and suited to the individual student. In the traditional system the teacher was a free decision maker in his realm.

Despite the obligatory support by the state and the community close to the location of the *ashrama*, monitoring of teaching institutions was distant and indirect. In brief, the teacher was trusted and left alone. The present system of lecture and examination needs to severely cut down and the teacher student dialogue as in the past should be made as the basis for teaching and evaluation.

We will need a thousand times more teachers and teaching spaces for that but the results will be spectacular for a nation of which the bulk of the population is the youth and children. The present system which has made even the classroom teaching into distance education will not give any returns no matter how much money is poured into it.

Administrator Out, Teacher In

Western pedagogy ushered two major changes which must be reversed. It not only brought in print technology to replace the oral Indian method, it also removed the teacher from the center and brought in the academic administrator. The European system derived from the paradigm of the Christian seminary

where the emphasis was on the learning through regimen. The ecclesiastic head here was more of an administrator and less of an intermediary between the novice and knowledge.

From this example, the European University system came to focus on course work, which was taught and tutored, but never considered to be “revealed” by the teacher. A collective body gave the final degree. In short, the personal bond between the student and the teacher, the psychic nurturing, which existed in the Indian or in the Greek tradition, did not obtain in Europe.

The British tinkered with the idea of “Oriental education” before enforcing their own system. Apart from its educational content, methodology and technology, “Oriental education” would have been unacceptable to the British, as it would have retained the primacy of the indigenous teacher, the traditional notion of the *achaarya* who was beyond their ken. *So instead of introducing new learning into the indigenous set up, they preferred to promote institutions in which the teacher was made a cog in the wheel.* The system revolved around the principal in the school, the vice-chancellor in the University, the director or the academic administrator, in a research institute. All of these were directly appointed by the State. *This was unthinkable in traditional India, even in the period of Islamic governments.* Before the British, the governments never appointed the teachers but only supported them through charity.

During the struggle for independence, many institutions were founded and supported by non-governmental trusts that worked with exemplary zeal for the promotion of nationalism and indigenous ideas. But in post-British India, public keenness to invest in education eroded overnight as it was presumed that the new Socialist State should be able to shape a fresh system more responsive to national needs. This proved to be a tragic error. The state, while it took upon itself totally to bear the burden of education, did little more than preserve the colonial set up aimed at producing graduates to fill the ranks of its bureaucracy.

India needs to De-Centralize Education

Time has come to rethink up the Delhi controlled education

which operates through massive organizations like UGC, NCERT, CCRT, etc., that direct and fund the institutions from schools to universities all over the nation. Ancient India was far more democratic and decentralized than it is today. Governments did not make the syllabi as it was not the job of the king. While there were few great empires, value systems and knowledge was sub-continental through the formation and study of Shastras. Funding was local and yet there were more all-India scholars and teachers travelling and settling around the country. Today funding is largely central but appointments are mostly local. As the business people are getting more mobile, teachers are becoming more home-stuck. While we go on singing our songs of plurality, we are creating a depressing uniformity with Delhi-dictates. The recent attempts to create organizations of accreditation and evaluation for the whole country will further uniformity and suppress innovation. It is better to leave the evaluation to the employer and identification and encouragement to the State governments.

While we may put our minds to the systemic reforms in education, we must not forget that non consumerist values which have taken over education must be put aside. We should teach cooperation and not competition and nothing is better for that than the Arts.

Arts as Integral to Education

Ancient India had a better record of providing the essentials of what the West has called liberal education rooted in Anthropocentrism. It was done through the Arts which were considered sacred and not just beautiful as in the West. As belief in the other world, *paraloka* and rebirth was strong, some activity to earn merit for future life was obligatory. For this charity, religious rituals and the pursuit of the arts were prescribed as undisputed methods. Art was often called a “sacrifice” (*yajan*) which needed a little or no money. Besides spiritual merit, practice of and patronage to the arts provided refinement, subtle pleasure and a fair name. In societies, called “shame cultures” by anthropologists, where a sense of shame (“*aidos*” as in Homer or “*lokaranjana*” as in Bhavabhuti) compels individuals to strictly live up to social

obligations. If art is spiritually meritorious (*shubham* or *mokshada*), pleasurable (*rasaanubhooti*) and a bringer of fame (*yashakari*), then it also becomes a major economic force and devotion to it becomes a social instinct. It is no exaggeration to surmise that it has been so in most periods of Indian history. Enough proof of this is scattered all over the subcontinent in the great architectural and sculptural ruins of edifices that were raised not in one glorious period of a few hundred years, as was the case in Greece or Mesopotamia, but for two millennia. In an easy guess, one might say that India produced as much architecture and sculpture as rest of the world together. And it is also true that these extensive feats in stone were enlivened by a matching achievement in painting, poetry, song, dance and crafts which did not leave such imperishable traces. In other words, Indian society invested more heavily in the arts as a habit than most other cultures, and that too, not as an indulgence or escape but as a noble aim, as a worthy *purushaartha*.

With the advent of modern technology in India also arrived very subtly an alien work ethics in which not to work for economic gain was considered as synonymous with parasitism. Every artistic preoccupation or deeper intellectual pursuit came to be regarded as a non-productive burden. Thanks to the Protestant Reformation in the West which denigrated art as pandering to baser instincts and the Christian iconology as a perversion of the true religion. Puritanism travelled to India via Orientalism and became part of the so called Indian Renaissance. Some leading figures often others preached a puritanical lexicon based revival of tradition in which verbalization was held in higher esteem than ritual practices and the dogmatic rhetoric hushed up artistic expression. That art can be emotionally elevating and hence contributive to the general health of society became questionable. Not only is the doctrine of art for art's sake or the theory of "*rasa asvaadana*" still an anathema, art for the sake of the sacred and spiritual is also suspect. It is viewed as a valourisation of priesthood and labeled as "Brahminism" by some sections of our modern elite.

Inclusion of Arts as practical and theoretical should end the

dichotomy that exists today between formal syllabus and extra-curricular activity. Arts should be incorporated NOT as extra-curricular but should be evaluated and marked as other curricular subjects. They should be taught in all classes in the school curriculum right from primary classes till the last class of the school. The children are needed to be encouraged to develop a more of a play-like atmosphere in tuning themselves to Arts and entirely so in the lower classes through music, painting, theatre, recitation, and such arts. There should be a gradual transition from the experiential in the lower classes to the conceptual in higher classes. At all levels students shall be involved practically in learning about the *darshanic* and *dharmic* heritage through Arts. In order to provide room for heritage activity and not impose additional work load on students, obsolete and repetitive content from the various existing subjects, can be shed after proper scrutiny. The transition from the lexical to the artistic provides an entirely different ambience in the portals of education, which is delightful not burdensome which is playful not tedious, which is cooperative not competitive and which makes pupils sensitive, caring and creative.

I am sure that by altering our teaching this way we shall live up to the ideals of great Indian teachers like Chanakya and Abhinavagupta, Aurobindo and Tagore, and last but not the least, of Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay to whom my lecture is a humble tribute.

ABOUT THE CCRT

The Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) was established in May 1979 as an institution to bridge the gap between the systems of formal education, and the diverse, rich living cultural traditions of India. Its principal aim and objective is 'to draw upon all the cultural resources and interweave them into the educational system at all stages of formal and non-formal education'. As, for example, to use the traditional arts – ranging from pottery, carpet-weaving, print-making, block-making, different forms of puppetry, and multiple forms of music and dance – as pedagogical tools in disciplines such as mathematics, chemistry, physics, not to speak of history and the social sciences.

In order to meet these goals, several innovative schemes have been evolved. At the level of programmes, regular workshops are held for educational administrators and teacher trainers; orientation and refresher courses for teachers; and workshops and camps for students. Finally, for the identification of cultural talent and scholarships, the CCRT serves as an institution for a Government of India scheme.

Towards fulfilling these objectives, the CCRT collects and documents material, and prepares audio-visual kits, which are used in different configurations, to promote, say, the study of a regional culture or a specific art form, and knowledge about the people who create these art forms.

Institutionally, the CCRT has established a wide network with the SCERTs and, of course, the NCERT. Today it has three regional centres – in Udaipur, Hyderabad and Guwahati.

The CCRT has played a vital role in concretizing the noble ideals of fostering national integration and cultural identity amongst the student and teacher community in India. In a land of such rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage, it is

important for young people to grow up with an understanding and deep appreciation for their culture and that of others.

The CCRT owes its genesis to the vision and efforts of Shrimati Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, who served as its first Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, respectively, and to the support of the Government of India, Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, during the 1970s.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan