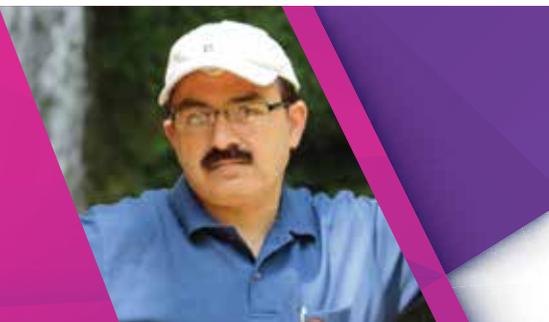


## The Mathematics Class

Saud Ahmad Khan



Dr. Radhakrishnan says – ‘The teacher has a very significant place in society. He is the centre of transference of social traditions and technical skills from one generation to another and is helpful in keeping the light of Knowledge burning.’ The teacher is the foundation or axle of all educational programmes. In this article, a teacher has tried to relate the attempt made in class to arouse the interest of girl-students in Mathematics.

I, Saud, have been teaching Mathematics to students of Classes 6, 7 and 8 in the Azim Premji School for the last five years. In each class there are three to four students with little interest in Mathematics. Two years back, there were three such - students in Class-6, and their behaviour with classmates and teachers too was not proper. Speaking loudly in class, using bad language and quarrelling was usual.

I thought of working separately with these three students. As a first step, I started going to their homes and talking to their parents. I discussed with them regarding their behaviour and work at home. I came to know quite a few things, including that the parents also had sometimes had problems with their behaviour. They assured me that they too would take care of the children at home and co-operate with me. I told them that the responsibility regarding their studies was mine whereas being parents, they should take care of their behaviour and the dress they come to school in etc. I also took their permission to give them special maths coaching for half an hour after school.

I now started working with the three students after the regular classes in school. I first got them to connect with easy questions. I would ask them what they understood about a question they were able to solve and what they didn't, about some other question. I discussed the difficulties they faced in solving questions, and these were the things I understood:

- fear of maths
- being inattentive in class
- not understanding the basic concepts
- no help at home

I did not have solutions to all their problems. Together we decided that we would not think about the past, but would solve the questions and again go over them after three months. We just did not realise how time flew by. Effort and co-operation bore fruit. One could see a difference in them now. They started gathering information about the subject, discussed things with teachers and students, completed their work and, most important of all, understood the work they did - and shared it with others.

It now seemed that I had fulfilled the parents' hopes with their co-operation and faith – this faith was, in fact, the faith I had in those students. All parents were concerned about their children. They had understood the point about the seriousness of studies and so they would talk to me every now and then over the phone. The hard work of the past few months was now visibly bearing fruit. There was a change in the children's behaviour towards their fellow-students too. They started enjoying the process of finding solutions to questions in the class. Teaching-learning is a two-way process in which I too learnt a lot from them.

I find what Rabindranath Tagore says to be very apt – a teacher cannot really teach unless he himself too is not learning because a lamp cannot be lit up by another until and unless one has its own light.

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