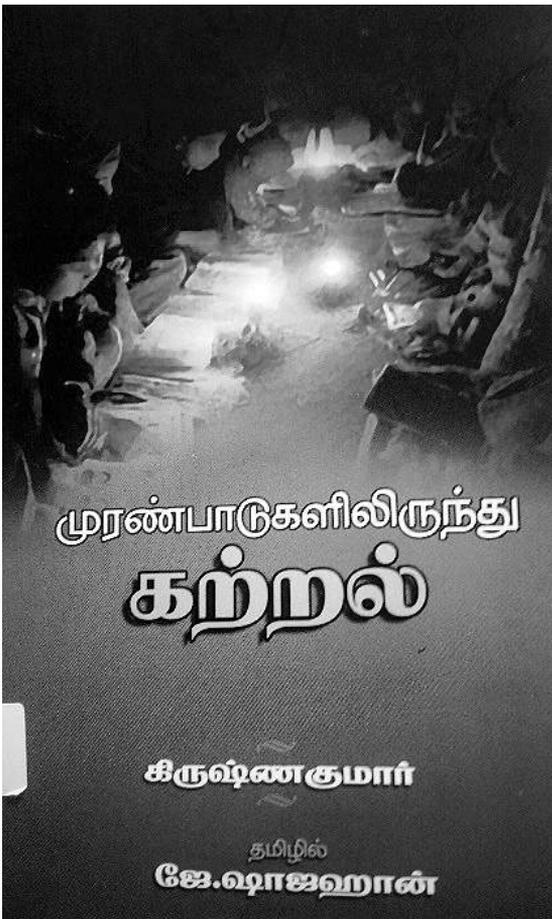


# Book Review on Learning from Conflicts - K. Krishna Kumar

The discussion with 12 teachers went on from 10:30 am to 1:30 pm at Mudaliarpet TRC. The facilitator started the discussion with the introduction of the author and the main theme of the book. She gave an example of how our teaching approach conflicts with practical life- 'we are saying not to touch garbage; but parents of our children must be cleaning out garbage. How are we discussing this in the classroom?'



(Teachers read 2 chapters. Each teacher took a part and read while others listened. Each reading was followed by a discussion)

## The discussion points are :

**Teacher 1 :** Teachers discussed how a text book is biased based on religion and gender. In text books we can see more reference of Hindu festivals and there is just mention of a few other religious festivals. Even in Manu Sastra we can see a detailed explanation of various punishments for each mistake; but we are teaching children to adjust, compromise, forgive, etc.

Our education aims at achieving equality in society. It also insists on secularism. But we have the practice of untouchability even now. The girl should change her religion to that of her husband or even wear burkha after marriage. Even a simple rule about crossing the road is followed by people only when it becomes law.

We, the adults, are responsible for most of the issues. Even in early grades like 4 we are asking children about their caste and, as well, allocating some kinds of work for boys and others for girls. Children are learning from us. Under these circumstances we must ask ourselves what is happening to the aims of education or the constitution?

**Teacher 2 :** When we were teaching a lesson on 'rights', and discussing the caste system, one group of children were looking at another group of children in the class. They know their castes but we don't know how to handle this.

**Teacher 3 :** Last week a boy came with toffees



on his birthday. When he distributed them, no one took. Then I called him, took a toffee and ate it in front of my children. After seeing me eating, all the children took toffees. This incident was surprising to me because I noticed this only last week. We are teaching one thing and learning something else from parents and society.

**Teacher 4 :** During election time, children are taking leave to join in canvassing, for which they receive money and food. They are not listening to us when we try to stop them.

We are talking about most things on the basis of Hinduism. We teach our children to find reasons based on who is affected by these practices. We should relate history to the current situation and

thus help them to understand. We can't change their elders.

**Teacher 5:** In grade 10 we have a lesson on Periyar. In that lesson he was asking if men can remarry, why not women. Even the girls could not accept this idea.

**Teacher 4 :** Even in EVS, 3rd grade we can see controversial pictures which is good. (In one picture everyone is reading; in the other picture, a mother and girl are doing the work while father reads the newspaper and the boy is playing) But answers to questions from children makes it clear that the mother should do all the household work.

**Teacher 5 :** In 10th grade history, there is a lesson on Europe. Students are struggling to understand. They didn't see the importance of learning this lesson. We don't have any information about India after independence. There is no lesson on Pondicherry history. We had a history book on Puducherry in grade 3, a few years ago but that has been stopped. We have a good history about 'Arikamedu' and Karaikal 'port'

Participants said that this discussion is useful and related to our classroom.

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