



# ***The Role of School in Contemporary Society***

***12 Lessons worth Teaching  
and Learning Today***

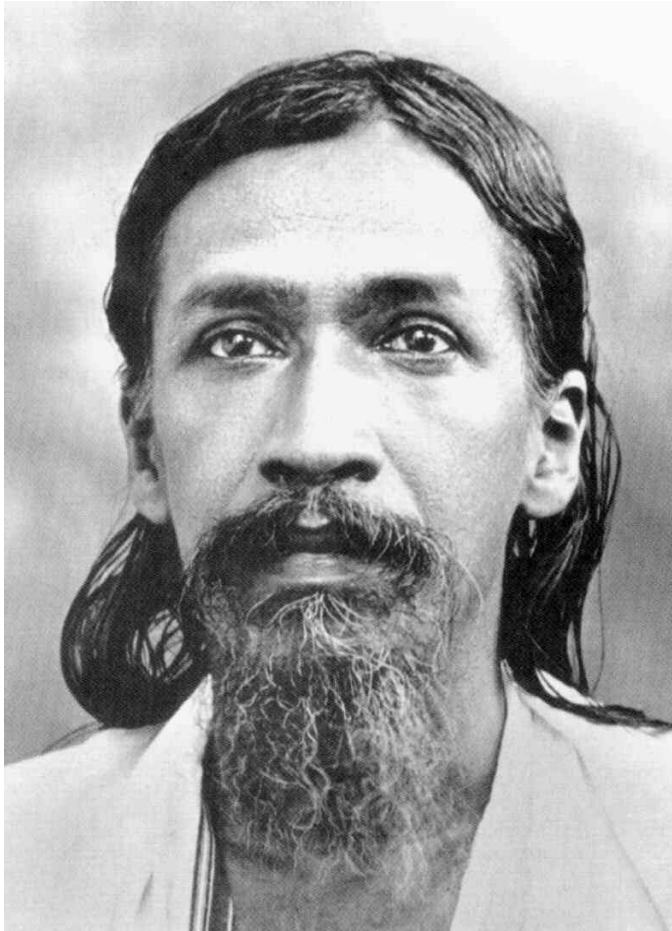
*Matthew Rich,  
Republic of South Africa*

# *The Future Health of Man*

*“The education that is given [in Indian schools] is one-sided, weakening, it is killing by inches. The children are made to cram to much of useless matter, and are incarcerated in school rooms (...) It is forgotten that the future health of man is in the child. It is forgotten that nature can never be cheated and things cannot be pushed too early (Vivekananda 1907: 9.546ff)”.*



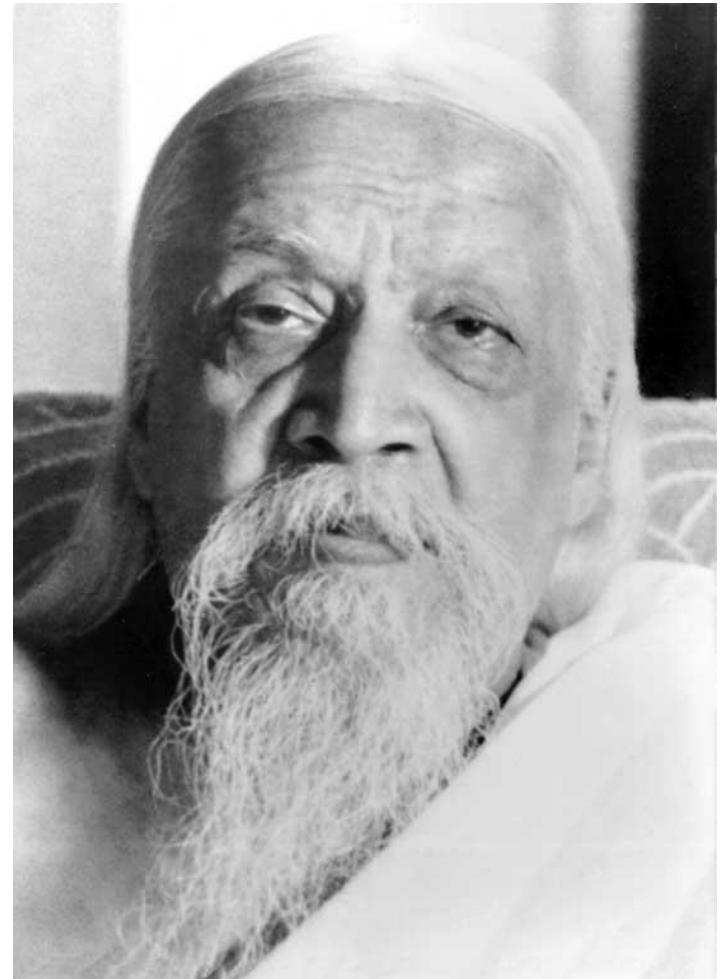
# *The Role of the Teacher*



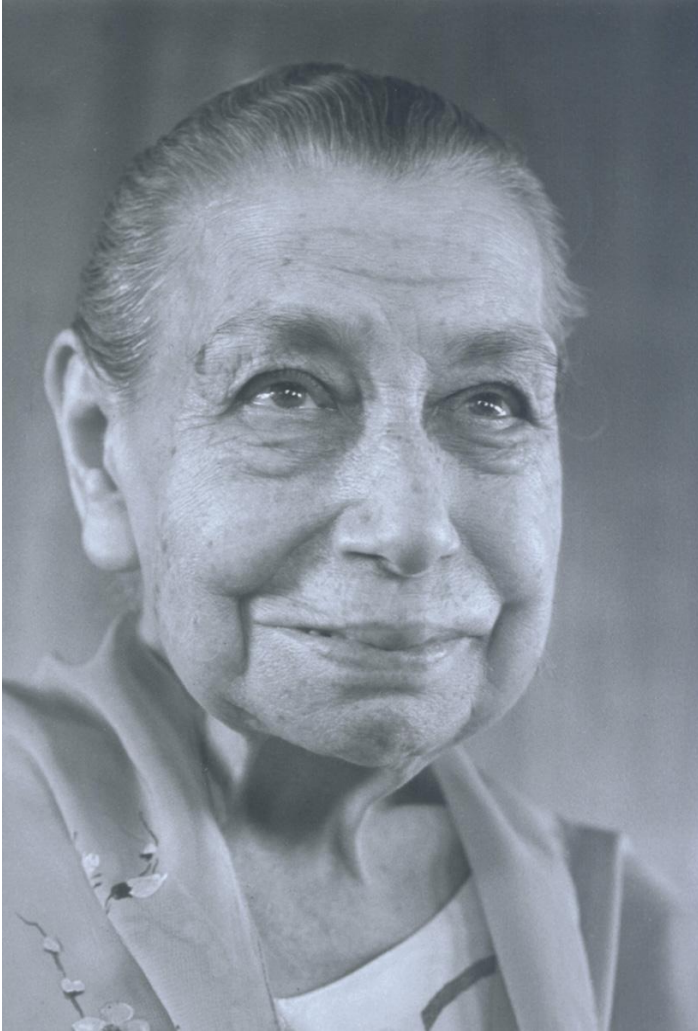
*“The teacher is not an instructor or task-master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupils mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him, he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface (Aurobindo 1972: 17.203ff)”.*

# *Consulting the Mind in Its Own Growth*

*“The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. To force the nature to abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth, and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul... (ibid.)”.*



# *Development as Evolution*



*“Therefore their [adults] reaction with regard to these phenomena is not happy and all their education consists in making the child as unconscious as possible in this domain, concentrate all its attention upon external things, and thus form the habit of looking upon those alone as important. This concentration upon external things is very useful; but it must be done in the proper way (The Mother 1972: p.79ff)”.*

# *Using the Rights of Freedom*



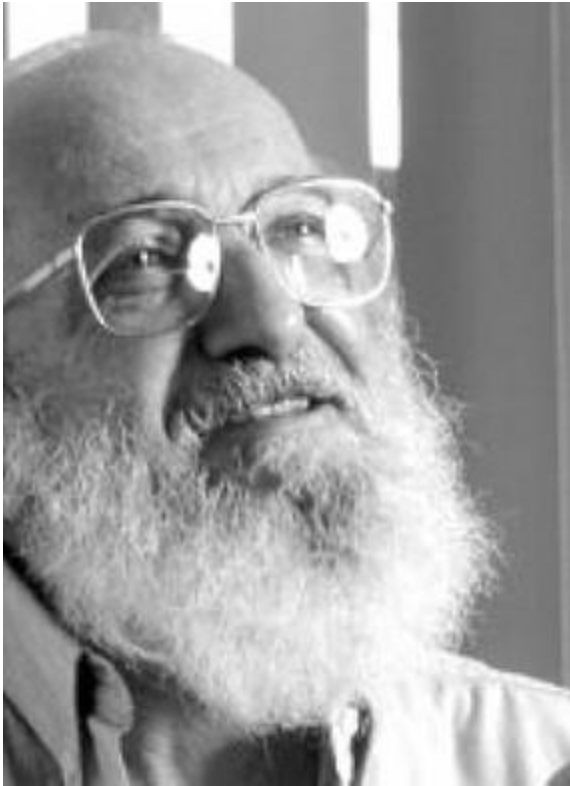
*“How can we speak of Democracy or Freedom when from the very beginning of life we mould the child to undergo tyranny, to obey a dictator? How can we speak of democracy when we have reared slaves? ... How can we expect them, when school life is finished, to accept and use the rights of freedom (Montessori 1963: 47ff.)?”*

# A Cosmic Task

*“It is, then, not so important which facts one teaches the student, because very often these facts are already obsolete by the time they can be used. It is more important to help him to develop his potentialities so that he can rely on his own ability to cope with the unexpected and solve whatever new problems may crop up. He must be helped to feel independent in his own world and to develop the vision that will help him as an adult to maintain the environment in such a way that the unending, creative and gigantic cosmic task of man can continue (Mario Montessori 1987)”.*



# *Educational Banking*



*“A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified...The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to 'fill' the students with the contents of his narration” (Freire, 1998: 54)”.*



# *Lesson #1: Creating Freedom to Learn*

- 1. Abolish compulsion*
- 2. Abolish punishment and reward*
- 3. Abolish segregation*
- 4. Stop limiting children's freedom of movement*

# *Lesson #2: Inclusive Decision Making*

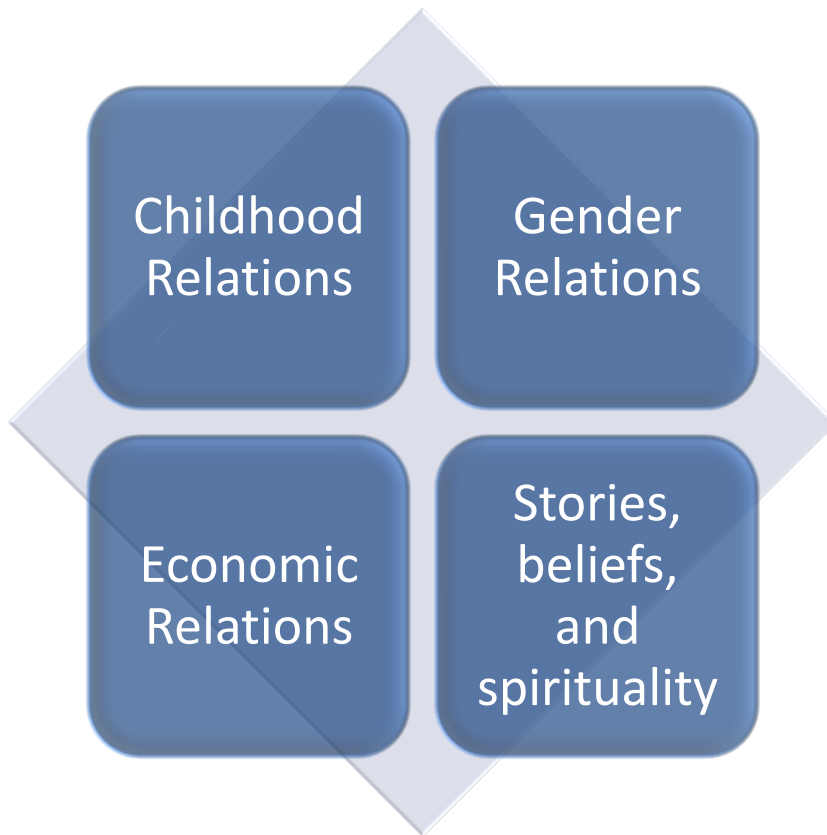
- *What we need today is not women and men who can slot neatly into our electoral democracies and put a cross in a box every couple of years. Rather we need people who are proactive decision makers capable of mobilizing resources in their communities and make use of the rights of freedom.*
- *Inclusive decision-making at every level of school operation.*
- *A wide variety of approaches.*

# *Lesson #3: Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Livelihood*

- *We need to equip children to be productive in such a way as to sustain themselves and uplift their communities in the face of great uncertainty.*
- *Teach practical crafts and trades*
- *Use community resources*
- *Supply opportunities for productive labour*
- *Swadeshi*
- *Work as exchange*

# Lesson #4: Skills for Peace and Social Transformation

## Pillars of Dominator Political Agenda (Eisler)



- *Peaceful approaches to conflict resolution*
- *Natural compassionate language ([www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org))*
- *Teaching skills for self-connection and self empathy ([www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org))*
- *Teaching non-violent resistance*

# *Lesson #5: Applied Ecoliteracy*

- *Children need to understand our place in the complex web of life (ecological system)*
- *They need to understand the effects of their choices (ecological, social, economic, etc)*
- *Reduce, Re-use, Recycle*
- *Egocentric, sociocentric, world-centric, kosmcentric*
- [www.ecoliteracy.org](http://www.ecoliteracy.org) and [www.greenteacher.org](http://www.greenteacher.org)

# *Lesson #6: Teaching Children vs. Teaching School*



- *Increased individualization*
- *Increased focus on holism*
- *Freedom from institutionalization*
- *Freedom from the culture of the expert*

# *Lesson #7: Spiritual development*

- 1. Offer opportunities for exploring a range of approaches to spirituality, religion, meditation, and introspection*
- 2. Draw importance to the cosmic task*
- 3. Create places for stillness and devotional practices*
- 4. Draw attention to the beauty and unity of the creation (universe) using appropriate questioning techniques to guide self-discovery*
- 5. Adults should work on their own spiritual practice*

# *Lesson #8: Developing a Bulletproof Crap Detector*

*Teachers should embody the following characteristics:*

- 1. They refrain from telling learners what they "ought to know",*
- 2. They talk to students mostly by questioning,*
- 3. They reject short, simple answers to questions (from others as well as themselves),*
- 4. They encourage peer interaction and are not judgmental regarding what is said in the context of these interactions,*
- 5. They resist the urge to summarize what learners say, but rather ask for clarification when required,*
- 6. They allow the direction of their teaching to develop naturally in response to the interests of their learners,*
- 7. They pose problems to learners rather than solutions, and*
- 8. They assess their efficacy by measuring changes in learners enquiry behaviours (Postman & Weingartner 1969: p. 34ff)*



# *Lesson #9: Dialogical Action*



# *Lesson #10: Purposeful Activity*

*“Normalization is achieved through purposeful activities carried out with exactness giving rise to interest. This leads to repetition resulting into concentration. A sort of transformation takes place within the child and what you witness is an individual who is respectful not only to others but also to everything else in the environment. This is the individual who is at peace within and without. A phenomenon yet to be comprehended and put into practice even by Montessorians let alone the rest of educators (Kripilani 2002: Lecture 28)”*

# *Lesson #11: Nurturing Expression*

- *The importance of conversation*
- *Create many informal and spontaneous opportunities for expression*
- *Model open and creative sharing*
- *Create opportunities for engaging in the creative arts (visual arts, creative writing, dance, drama, music, etc)*
- *Redressing our prejudices*

# *Lesson #12: Developing an Integral Worldview*

## **The Big Three (Hochachka)**

