

Tawalai Workshop

Tawalai is a small village near Indore(MP). It has a residential school for Tribal children. The workshop was initiated by my colleague Kirti Trivedi (a professor at IDC). The school head master, a Gandhian in the footsteps of his father was brother of Kirti.

Myself, Kirti, M.S.G. Rajan and Sudeep Mistry (a M. Des student who was doing a special project on child education) went from Bombay.

We had little experience in conducting such workshops. We learnt that 'Drawing' was not taught (fortunately) in the school. While talking to teachers we came to know that a wild wolf had been prowling near the village a month back and also attacked few persons. It had caused a sensation among children as well. We came up with an idea of asking the children to draw the incident. What came up was a surprise.



Courtesy: prof.Kirti Trivedi

The drawings were wonderful as you can see on the cover page of "Abhikalpa" an IDC magazine edited by Kirti Trivedi. No child had seen the wolf. A cow, crow or a rat which scared the children got transformed into a scary wolf in their hands. No line was erased or redrawn. We had asked local teachers to do the same exercise. Teachers were struggling to make pictures of wolf which they had seen in books, after erasing several times. Drawings which they produced had no confidence in them and looked lifeless.

We started the workshop with an interesting session from Kirti. In the evening of that day we played foot ball with children. This changed the whole equation. They loosened up, lost the fear of Bombay people and freely participated enjoying the workshop.

On the third day we had a brain storming session with children to choose themes for making a Mask. They had no idea of what “brain storming” is But once we initiated the session, names of various animals, birds started coming. One girl said. “Aam ka Ped” (“Mango Tree”). I was wonder struck. I could have never thought of a “Mango Tree” in my wildest of imaginations for a “Mask”. They all drew and painted on the pre-cut cardboard Masks which we had carried from Mumbai, to make our task easy. One boy asked what colour he should use in the background for a tiger mask he was painting. I asked him when does a tiger hunt, in the darkness or day time. He said, ‘of course in the darkness’, and started painting black background!.

Third day was the last day and they all made wonderful masks .There was a great excitement as they all wore them. We said “bye byes” in the dinner time as we were to leave early in the morning. It was a memorable experience. Next day we got ready early morning to leave. We were waiting for the “Bus” which stops nearby. Then the surprise came. We saw whole lot of Children bringing 4 garlands for all of us.. We came to know that they gathered the flowers in the wild and worked whole night to make the ‘garlands’ themselves. It was a touching experience, making it a most memorable incident in my life. Unimaginable are the ‘treasures’ in store for little efforts you put in the 'untrodden path'.