



Colloquium: Nature as the Mother of Learning

Speaker:
Dr. Claude Alvares

Date / Time:
November 21, 2013 - 4:00pm - 5:30pm

Venue:
10th Floor, Pixel A, Azim Premji University

Abstract:
Importing natural learning principles into educational institutions and why.” We struggle, we fail, we fall because we give too much attention to culture and too little to nature in our learning environments (especially formal educational institutions).

In fact, most of our learning procedures in school and college actively militate against the inherent capacities to learn that nature has endowed us with. This is the principal reason why students hate school and young people avoid college classes. If attendance at class is made voluntary, classrooms would be empty.

Why should this be so? Don't we have more books, more research, more technology, more institutions for learning than any time in the past?

Easier access to information is nowadays mistaken for wider avenues for learning. In fact, there is very little correlation between the inflow of gadgets and the enhancement of learning potential. Human beings have learnt the art of surviving for thousands of years. Now with all the knowledge they have at their disposal, that survival seems threatened.

It is not only our pedagogies that violate natural principles of learning. Our agriculture is based on processes that violate elementary principles of plant and soil design. Our civil and mechanical engineering remains largely contrary to nature's engineering techniques. The evidence is unmanageable pollution.

Learning emerges fastest when natural principles are respected, not overruled, suppressed or marginalised. We therefore need to look at these principles more closely, bring them on board and associate them with our learning environments. I assure you life will become easier and more joyous for all concerned.

A Note on the Speaker:

Dr. Claude Alvares, is without a doubt among the most formidable thinkers of our times, scholar, activist, political and cultural critic. His work over the years has created frameworks with which we are able to engage actively, with debates around the politics of knowledge, the politics of science and development, modern education and ecological politics. His scholarship is wide a but he does not work within the confines of established academic disciplines.

His writings are well known and range from writings in Indian newspapers and magazines to a number of books, of which his best known is *Decolonizing History* which challenges, Western interpretations of societies like India and China. Other books include *Science, Development & Violence*, *Fish Curry and Rice*, *The Organic Farming Sourcebook* and *A Farewell to the Eurocentric Imagination*. He has also edited *Decolonising the university* recently published by USM Press.

Dr Alvares coordinates the Multiversity Project which seeks broadly to decolonize thinking and curricula in our universities. Talking at the launch of the multiversity project he states, "the multiversity is started with one overt aim: to attempt to generate and support, in the place of the present "educational system," better, diverse and more effective learning opportunities that would stimulate, rather than suppress, the inherent creativity of human beings. If, during the processes unleashed by the Project, the influence of the present day ubiquitous education system is undermined, or if we are able to encourage large-scale or significant desertion from its ranks, so much the better for all the living species on this planet and also for the earth."

He lives in Goa and heads the Goa Foundation (an environmental action group), is part of the Organic Farming Association of India and is editor of the Other India Press (a leading alternative publishing group).