

Active Learning

Shashank V. Parulekar

Very few lucky people are born with most desirable behavioral traits and values. Most of us have to learn them. A child learns when it is taught by parents, guardians, elders, and teachers. This is the commonest mode of learning. Its effectiveness depends on the content of the teaching as well as the teaching abilities and drive of those who teach. If they are good in all these respects, the child learns well. If they are not good, the child does not learn well. A drawback of this method of learning is that in case of the latter situation, the child almost never realizes that its teachers are not good enough. Even if the child realizes this, it cannot change its teachers, since there is no way it can change its parents, guardians, elders, or school-teachers. This learning is thus obligatory.

But it is not obligatory that the one sticks to the acquired learning. One can choose to think about the acquired values, beliefs, and behavioral traits. If a part of the learning appears to be undesirable, one can choose to unlearn it and then learn something better. If that does not happen, the chances are small that one matures from childhood to an ideal adulthood. A vast majority of us become adults just with time. Then they teach their successors what they believe is good or right. This vast majority of teachers of children are teachers by virtue of being parents, guardians, and elders, not because of their qualities or qualifications. Perhaps it is the tragedy of most of us that we have to do with such teachers. Perhaps a greater tragedy is that we do not realize by ourselves that we can have another method of learning, and no one tells us so.

It is really not very difficult. One just has to remain a child to a small extent, and use the inquisitiveness of the child to keep learning on one's own. Since there are so few ideal adults to learn from, learning by observing ideal adults is not enough. One has to actively observe others and use one's own judgment to decide what to learn. One can read the writings of those who were good, ideal, or near ideal adults. This helps decide what to unlearn, and what not to learn. If a lot of us, if not all of us do this, one day all teachers of all children may become so good, that there will not be any need for this active learning.