



Bala Mandir Research Foundation
(Unit of Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust)



cordially invites you to the

S. Manjubhashini Memorial Seminar - 2017

Competition: Not the Best Strategy for Children

Date: Saturday, 9th December, 2017

Time: 10.00 am to 12.00 noon

Venue: Bala Mandir Research Foundation

No. 31, Prakasam Street
T. Nagar, Chennai - 600 017

Programme

- 09.30 am Registration
- 10.00 am Prayer and welcome address
- 10.15 am Debate - *Patti Mandram* - on competition and its effects presented by students
- 10.45 am Tea Break
- 10.45 am Presentation by Panelists

Panelists

Ms. Arundhati Swamy - *Head, Parent Engagement Programme, ParentCircle*
Ms. Kesang Menezes - *Co-founder, Parenting Matters, Certified Parent Educator*
Ms. Vidya Shankar - *Chairperson, Relief Foundation*

Chaired by

Dr. S. Anandalakshmy, *President, Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust*

Competition: Not the Best Strategy for Children

This year, we have decided to focus on Competition, with the conviction that it is not the best strategy for children.

Generally, people assume that competition for marks, ranks and medals is a motivation for children to perform well in academics, sports and fine arts. Competitiveness has virtually become the lifeline of the educational system. Alas! This also permeates family life. One competes with somebody; hence comparison is intrinsic to the concept of competition. "Better than" and "worse than" become the coinage: the nickel and the dime of assessment. There is comparison on every aspect of a child: beauty, height, skin colour (which are genetic and cannot normally be changed), as well as on school performance, sports and extra-curricular activities, tidiness, obedience and personal habits. The self-image of a child is all too often moulded by comments of comparison from parents and the inevitable neighbours, aunts and uncles! Lifelong animosities between siblings and cousins are thus created.

School systems tend to make ranking of children intrinsic to education, although there is no pedagogic evidence of its usefulness. Children get a great deal of satisfaction from mastering a subject or cracking a problem and teachers should capitalize on that motivation, not on comparing the speed or accuracy of two children. Wishing to compete with one's own earlier record is a powerful stimulus.

Teachers punish or humiliate a child who gives the wrong answer, treating not doing a sum or making an error in the spelling of a word, as a character defect, which is their moral duty to correct! What is worse, parents see the Report Card as a stepping stone to the dollars waiting to be made in Cyber-land. A small percentage do succeed, but the large numbers of children in India growing up with a 'Failure' placard round their necks, constitute nothing short of a national disgrace. We should have methods to deal with different paces of learning and varied techniques of teaching and the children's own aptitudes and preferences should determine their choices.

How do we create a classroom in which children are happy acquiring knowledge and learning life skills? How do we combine the surge of joy that comes from mastery, with good peer relationships? How do we conjoin competence with cooperation? Can we run a school where compassion is as valued as excellence in Mathematics?

These are some of the questions we hope to answer.