

## **Game shows as a medium of psycho-education**

- The most famous Indian treatise on philosophy, 'Bhagwat Geeta' is presented as a part of the epic Mahabharat, which is a unique collage of intentions, emotions and relations. This inclusion is considered as one of the factors which has popularized the Geeta ever since.
- Plato's original philosophical writings were neither popular, nor are they readily available. But his dialogues with his pupils in simple language have survived centuries.
- J. Krishnamurthy's books are an intellectual challenge to the reader, barring one, in which he answers queries of school kids. It is such a simple and lucid book, yet brings the complete ethos of his vision about mankind and mind.

The message therefore is clear and universal. Serious themes need not be presented always with bookish faces and elongated phrases. At times, such themes enter hearts of people when lucidly told in an interesting way, capturing the audience's concentration and imagination.

In the last twelve years, while working at IPH, this is one of our important learnings. Make things interesting... and having ensured that, work on the depth of the information, to be presented. We have freed our community programs from the shackles of the 'set tradition' and 'Gheesa-peeta sequences'. We consider, emotional graph of the audience as a major parameter in designing our programs. And we dare to innovate...

With strides of media and omnipresent television, the concept of a game-show has become very popular with our audiences. Many such shows on the small screen, hang on the periphery of becoming frivolous and childish. Yet their influence is to be seen to be believed. Relatively better amongst these, like KBC literally captured the nation, for some time.

The idea of using this format for psycho-education came up as a flash, while planning our Maitra anniversary program three years back. After discussion a rough format emerged. The focus was to be on 'communication'. The teams were decided as, Teachers, Parents, Youth and Adolescents. We thought of some experts from the field of education, literature, and media to give their opinions. There were interesting rounds such as each team, creatively accusing the other three, and in turn, every team answering those accusations. A poem was given to be interpreted visually. The teams were told to dramatize scenes. There was a round in which, 'down the memory lane' track was played by each team. The teams were initiated to put themselves in the other team's shoes. This was a round on 'role-reversal'.

Each team consisted of three participants. We chose them carefully. As anchor of the show, it was important that I have a personal rapport with each one of them. We titled the show... "Kaho na pyar hai". The actual presentation amazed all of us. It lifted the whole show out of the ordinary, giving audience many rich moments, colored with a variety of emotions. An eight hundred strong audience sat for three hours on a rainy evening without a whimper, enjoying the show. And there was so much to learn. This learning was not deliberate. It came as a part of the whole process of unfolding the game show.

At the end, the genuineness and spontaneity of the participants carried the day. A new tradition was born. Now Maitra Anniversary had a format.

Second in the line was, 'Kshanbhar bola'... or 'Talk just for a minute' competition. The theme was 'relationships'. Over hundred participants from all age groups filled up entry forms. Thirty were selected. We had a panel of experts reacting to their spontaneous speeches. According to the age of the person, a topic was given. An elderly mother-in-law talked about, "my daughter-in-law is like my daughter; but not my daughter". A seven year old girl talked about, "what it means to have grandparents". A middle aged working lady talked about "me and my balancing act". A topic was given. There was a gap of 20 seconds filled by live-music provided on electric guitar by one of our IPH clients who is an accomplished guitar player. Then the person had to talk for one minute on the topic. (Actually we were giving 2 to 3 minutes per person).

After every presentation, experts reacted to the contents. A whole spectrum on changing relationships was portrayed and issues regarding gender roles, social conditioning, and value conflicts came up for discussion. Participation of people gave the whole show liveliness. Prizes were given more as a matter of fun and for acknowledging the enthusiasm of participants.

After the success of this experiment, we took 'media-education' as the next theme. Commercial cinema, songs, advertisements, serials, music, music videos and print media were taken as representatives from the media-world. The entire show was audio-visual and a complete CD was prepared with clippings from films, TV serials, ads and music videos. I designed the questions and rounds but the CD preparation was done very professionally by Abhivyakti (a NGO from Nasik). This audiovisual added a whole new dimension to the Media Quiz.

There were teams of parents, grandparents, adolescents and youth. After a particular clipping was shown, questions were asked on the theme of 'media-appreciation'. There were questions on merits-demerits of an advertisement, there were probes on appreciation of music, and there were questions on film-making: its craft and contents. For each round there was an expert's panel led by noted film director Dr. Jabbar Patel. It was a feast of information and lively anecdotes. After the program was over, a parent came to me and said, "Now my family will view television with a different vision".

At the beginning of the current year, we had a workshop on event management for our team members. This was titled as 'Sanyojan'. Maitra anniversary event was given for designing to Kuldeep, Monika and Chinmayee (student-observer). They came out with a new game show, 'kaleidoscope'.

This was to be a show of spontaneous 'improvisations' by theatre personalities. Popular stories will be given to the teams of performing artists with one variable changed, in today's context. For example: 'Shrawan and his parents: Shrawan in New Jersey & parents in Dombivli'. We worked on different stories and formulated interesting topics such as:

- Ekalaya of today
- Shivaji & Jijabai in a modern Penthouse & Jijabai telling stories to Shivaji.
- Love, 1950 - 2010 - 2050
- Ganesh festival 2020 and many others.

The teams had one writer-director and three actors. Popular names from today's media participated (detailed report of this show appears in this issue). For almost 2½ hours, without break the audience was getting drenched in waves of laughter. There were many subtleties in the satire and the humor had many colors including black. Pungent psychosocial comments appeared in the flow, and the tempo of the show could be described as 'whirlwind'.

Many such issues of how flexibility of attitude helps coping up with change were discussed in the gap between two presentations. The process of analyzing and accepting CHANGE was highlighted. The core issue of SYNTHESIS between NEW and OLD as a strategy was addressed. The role of empathy in the process of coping up was focused. All this was achieved thro' audience reactions and I, as an anchor went on filling the gaps.

Again the enormous talent and spontaneity of performers took the show to dizzy heights, beyond our expectations. The energy level was so high that the audience gave curtain-call after the show and stood-up clapping the performers. It was truly a satisfying experience and the IPH team, which had worked relentlessly for success of the show, had a happy sigh of relief.

Looking back, the experiment of designing such shows of 'EDUTAINMENT' can be a very effective strategy for increasing mental health awareness. It helps the process of 'de-stigmatization' to a great extent. The barrier between people and mental health professional is effectively bridged. On such occasions, we make it a point to declare our forthcoming activities and these receive a boost in terms of attendance and participation.

Mental health awareness has to go beyond routine 'talk-seminars-exhibition' format & should explore new designs which will reflect the changing times. Through *Jidnyasa*, *Manovikas* and many such programs, IPH has relentlessly experimented with this theme. Game-shows for psycho-education can be termed as one more creative experiment, borne out of the entire IPH experience.