Hichki - Yes if the teacher wants, they can beat it

By Simran Sadh | Apr 2, 2018

While watching the movie Hichki today, at various occasions I found myself saying to those around me 'you know this happened in my class as well'. This, I owe to my 6 months of internship experience in a government school and 4 years of critical exposure to the education system.

The movie is about a teacher Naina Mathur who is struggling to get a job as a teacher despite her outstanding qualifications due to a "speech defect" (Tourette syndrome) and when she finally gets a job in her dream school she is further faced with many challenges. She is supposed to teach a class that is just as much excluded from the school as Naina is from the society.

The movie successfully sheds away the various notions that people in general have come to associate with the teaching profession. When Naina reaches out to the houses of her students after none of the parents turn up for the P.T.M (Parents Teacher Meeting), not only does she establish the fact that teaching is much more than a 8 to 2 table-chair job but also does away with the perception that parents of these children are not concerned and interested for their education. Naina after seeing her students out of the school premises understands the hardships they face and the daily struggle these children go through even for basic facilities like water and electricity.

How can then there be any comparison between the students of 9-A(students from well-to-do families) and 9-F(students enrolled under EWS quota)? Doing so will only be contradictory to the objective of providing equal opportunities to students from EWS. Also when we talk about equal opportunities of education being provided to every student in the school, then how the question 'school mein har bacha thode na intelligent ho sakta hain' is to be answered? If your answer is in line with the 'blame the child' ideology then yes, system needs to be re-looked at.

When the school claims that these 14 students are a 'bad influence' on other students as they were found indulging in fights, gambling, smoking etc. in the school premises then the school is defying the fact that students bring in experiences from their personal lives and it's the school's duty to intervene and not punish such behaviours. However in the movie as well as the school experiences I have encountered the child is not only punished physically but also emotionally so much that she starts questioning her own identity just as the character Aatish is traumatized as the school mocks his identity as a cycle mechanic. Thus instead of assisting students in realising their capabilities the school further makes them conscious of their incapabilities.

Teaching is generally believed to be a job where knowledge is transacted through textbooks, divided into various disciplines and detached from practical and contextual experiences. However in the movie, Naina through her teaching methods integrates the various aspects of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics showing how learning is holistic and doesn't only depend upon the teacher, textbook or the classroom. Naina brings out the best in each of her students and channelizes the same into her teaching-learning activities as she brings out the potential of one of her students (a part-time gambler) who calculates algorithms faster than the calculator. She addresses children's interest carefully without forcing them into meaningless and purposeless retention of texts.

Her teaching methods were disliked by her colleague teachers who believed in the notion that “excellence doesn’t come from fun” thus sticking to the same old boring ways of teaching. Hichki thus reflects on a very important issue about teaching and knowledge - what knowledge is to be considered ‘worthy’ and whose knowledge is to be considered ‘worthy’? Is the textbook knowledge more worthy than
what the children have learnt through their experiences or is the knowledge of the school gardener more worthy than that of the teacher who has acquired degrees through recognised institutions or is there any need at all to draw comparisons or can they exist in balance and harmony and contribute equally to the child’s learning?

The character of Naina Mathur amazingly carried out by Rani Mukherjee portrays Naina as a teacher confident about her identity and choices and not at once afraid of the challenges of the Tourette syndrome. First she accepts herself, for only then can she persuade and expect her students to accept themselves as they are without any comparisons and then work towards the areas of improvements, their strengths and weaknesses.

Hichki reminds me about another famous Hollywood movie Freedom Writers in which “a young teacher inspires her class of at-risk students to learn tolerance, apply themselves, and pursue education beyond high school”. It further strengthens my belief that “There are no bad students, just bad teachers”. In order to be good and effective, I think a teacher needs to be a reflective practitioner.

Thus it all comes down to the teacher to bridge this gap between the child’s school and her community, between the conceptual knowledge to the outside world, between what she ‘can be’ to what she ‘wants to be’, between what she ‘must know’ to what she excels in. Sounds impractical and utopian? Well, then as Naina Mathur said “Tourette hai kya? Aapki aur meri soch”.

Notes:
• EWS - Economically Weaker Section
• NCF, 2005 - National Curriculum Framework
• Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gints (1976) - school reproduces the structure of the society
• Robert Dreeben (1967) – school ensures that students accept the legitimacy of the categorical treatment
• Krishna kumar (1992); what is worth teaching

Category: Teacher Development
Subject: Views and Reflections
Board: All boards
Grade/Standard: Early Childhood Education
Class 1-2
Class 3-5
Class 6-8
Class 9-10
Class 11-12
License: CC BY-NC-SA

Source URL: http://www.teachersofindia.org/en/article/hichki-yes-if-teacher-wants-they-can-beat-it