

Introduction: A New Pedagogy

SATISH KUMAR

Knowledge and practice (yoga) are one. When you see this, you truly see.

— BHAGAVAD GITA

With this book we celebrate the first thirty years of Schumacher College. At this moment I am overwhelmed with gratitude to those who embraced the idea in the first place and saw its potential. In particular I would like to pay my tribute to the late Maurice Ash and to John Lane, the two trustees of Dartington Hall Trust who, in 1990, shared the vision of the college and gave their practical support to realize the dream. I also feel deeply indebted to the Dartington Hall Trust itself which has kept the college afloat and enabled it to flourish all these years.

No project of this nature can be established and maintained without the engagement and commitment of many staff, teachers, volunteers, funders and above all students and participants. I am holding back from the temptation of naming all those who helped the college to manifest. Suffice to say that the college is a living example of co-creation.

This book is not about the history or the practical functioning of the college. The purpose of this book is to look back and see how a new educational philosophy has evolved at the college in the past thirty years. And how this new holistic pedagogy could be applied in mainstream educational institutions.

In this book I did not choose to take the method of academic research to present this pedagogy. Rather I wanted to follow the narratives and experiences of our teachers, participants and students. So, I invited a few of our past and present teachers and some of our students and participants to write about their personal experiences and feelings about their time at the college and how that has affected their thinking and their lives. I am delighted with the outcome.

Schumacher College was founded to provide a place for the study and practice of ecological and spiritual values. It was felt that the mainstream educational system was dominated by economic and materialist values. We needed an alternative.

The study of the economy without understanding ecology, and the pursuit of materialism without spiritual values, has led to a situation where however much money we have and whatever economic growth we achieve never seems to be enough in spite of the fact that forests, wildlife, biodiversity and oceans are all being sacrificed to serve the economy. Furthermore, material success is followed by growing levels of anxiety, loss of meaning and decline in the feeling of fulfillment.

Mainstream education has played a central role in these deteriorating human conditions. Schools, colleges and universities are the pillars of the industrial and consumerist society. They are the training grounds and the upholders of this economic and materialist pedagogy. In the current educational system Nature is considered to be a resource for the economy. But in the new pedagogy Nature is more than a resource, Nature is the source of life itself. In mainstream universities students learn *about* Nature, in the new pedagogy we learn *from* Nature. Nature is the ultimate teacher and mentor. We go even further; we realize that humans are an integral part of Nature.

Those of us who wish to see the transformation from the old pedagogy to the new pedagogy, where the economy is in harmony with ecology and material well-being is complemented by spiritual well-being, need to start transforming the current pedagogy and changing mainstream educational institutions. But before we can do that we have to experiment and see if the ideas of the new pedagogy work.

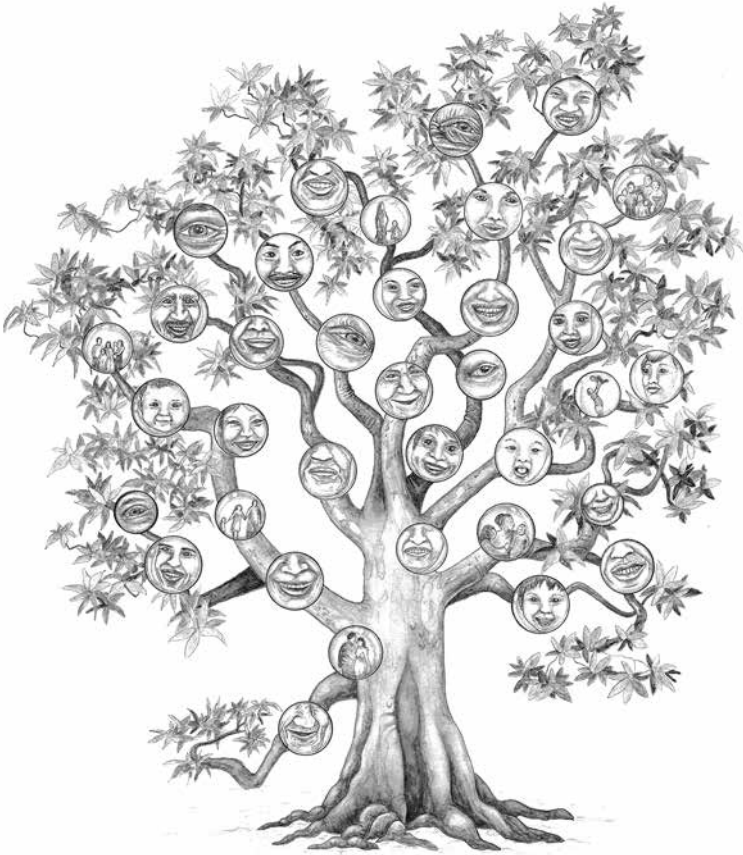
Reading this book, readers will see that the answer is positive. Yes, it works. Yes, it is possible to create and live a good life without damaging the ecosphere. And yes, we can embrace outer material comfort without losing inner spiritual harmony.

It is with pleasure that we present this book to all those who are interested in a successful and radical educational experiment, an experiment where the education of head, heart and hands is integrated and fundamental.

In this book we have used head, heart and hands as separate headings for the sake of convenience. But as head, heart and hands are parts of one body, so the education of head, heart and hands is also part of one system. There is neither division nor separation.

PART 1

Education of Head: Science





IN THE BEGINNING

Greening of Education

SATISH KUMAR

In the modern times people do not experience themselves to be part of nature, but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer nature. People even talk of a battle with nature, forgetting that if they won the battle, they would find themselves on the losing side.

— E. F. SCHUMACHER

Meeting with E. F. Schumacher

My story of Schumacher College begins with my meeting E. F. Schumacher himself. It was in 1968 when Fritz invited me to have lunch with him in an Italian restaurant in London, following an introduction by a common friend. In that very first meeting we clicked.

On a subsequent visit to London in 1972 I met him again. At that time, Fritz was an associate editor of *Resurgence* magazine. The founding editor, John Papworth, had gone to Africa, and the editorial team was looking for a new editor. Fritz said to me, “You have had plenty of editorial experience in India, how about taking on the editorship of *Resurgence*?”

I replied, “That is a very kind thought, but I am in England only for a short time. I am returning to India.”

Fritz said, “But you don’t have to go back to India! Why do you want to go back? Is the job of the editor of *Resurgence* not good enough?”

I said, “I am a Gandhian, I want to work with the Gandhian movement in India.”

Fritz countered me energetically by saying, “But Satish, there are many Gandhians in India. We need one in England, so I urge you to take up the editorship of *Resurgence*.”

That was a very persuasive argument. Spontaneously I said, “Ok! If I become the editor, will you contribute to each issue of the magazine?”

Fritz replied, “Yes, that’s a deal. If you become the editor, I will certainly contribute in every issue.”

Then it became an impossible deal to get out of. Thus, I stayed in England and became the editor of *Resurgence* and worked with Fritz until he died in 1977.

After his death, to honor his memory and build on his legacy, *Resurgence* launched the Schumacher Society and a series of annual Schumacher lectures, held in Bristol. These lectures were delivered by prominent ecologists and new paradigm thinkers and activists. They were attended by five hundred to a thousand people and were a great success.

The Dartington Connection

In 1988, I was having lunch with John Lane, an artist, a regular attendee of Schumacher lectures and an avid reader of *Resurgence*. Moreover, he was also a trustee of Dartington Hall Trust, an estate of more than a thousand acres and a center for rural reconstruction, education, arts and culture. Dartington Hall was established through the inspiration of the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Over lunch John informed me that due to financial pressures and lack of numbers, Dartington Hall School had to be closed and one of the buildings, the Old Postern, with forty bedrooms was empty and they were looking for a suitable tenant. I knew the Old Postern, a beautiful fourteenth-century building which had been used to accommodate students of Dartington Hall School, and where Rabindranath Tagore had stayed. So, I said to John, “Who is going to want this building! Too big for a family, too small for a hotel, and after all it was a school. So, it should be used for a good educational purpose.”

John said, “But we could not continue to run the school. What kind of educational activities can we organize there?”

I said to him, “We know these great thinkers and activists who have given Schumacher lectures, but these lectures are one-day events, there is no in-depth exploration possible in such a short time. Wouldn’t it be good if we had a place where these green thinkers

could spend a reasonable amount of time and go deeper into the exploration of new kinds of science, new kinds of economics and a new way of life? Most universities are wedded to the old paradigm thinking. They are committed to reductionist science, continuous economic growth, unlimited industrialization and rampant materialism leading to waste, pollution and the destruction of biodiversity and loss of natural habitats. In terms of ecological worldview, the planet is in peril. I would love to invite these thinkers and activists to teach in such a new learning center.”

John said, “That sounds very interesting! Write a proposal, which I can present to the trustees of Dartington Hall!”

That was the seed of Schumacher College. After many meetings and prolonged discussions among trustees, my proposal was accepted by them, but with a certain reluctance by some. One of the trustees, Michael Young, was particularly skeptical. He said to me, “Satish, you are a dreamer! Who is going to come and learn about ecology and green perspectives and pay for it? The college may not last more than five years! But since my fellow trustees want to do something and the building is standing empty, we will give you five years to prove yourself, but I don’t think you will last that long!”

I said, “Michael, it is better to try something and fail, than not try at all!”

Michael said, “I like your enthusiasm and your passion. The trustees will give you five years rent free, and we will underwrite any deficit during that time. I wish you good luck.”

Launching the College

James Lovelock, who had given a Schumacher lecture, lived near me in North Devon. I often walked with him on Dartmoor, talking about his Gaia theory. So, as I was planning to invite teachers of an earth-centered worldview to teach at Schumacher College, I said to James, “I would like to start our courses on a scientific subject. Science is good, but the old science of mechanistic thinking, which only looks at nature as an inanimate object and exploits her for the benefit of humans, is becoming a dangerous science. We need a new and holistic science. Your Gaia theory is the science of the future; will you be our first teacher at Schumacher College?”

James said, “Your invitation is tempting. Most universities at the moment reject my science of Gaia. They think that my science is not

scientific enough. But Gaia, the earth, is a living organism. How can life be sustained by a dead rock! But that is how most of the scientists think of the earth—a dead rock. Therefore, I would love to explore and explain to a group of people how scientifically we can prove that earth is a living organism and not a dead rock.”

I was delighted that James accepted to be our first teacher. Then I contacted Fritjof Capra, Vandana Shiva, David Orr, Jonathon Porritt, Joanna Macy, Janine Benyus, Wendell Berry and many others who had given Schumacher lectures and asked them to teach at the college. To my utter delight every single one of them accepted my invitation, and we published our year-long program in *Resurgence*.

The very first course, in January 1991, on Gaia, was a sellout with a waiting list.

The Vision

The vision of Schumacher College was not simply to create an intellectual learning center based on an ecological and spiritual worldview. Our vision was to create a center where learning and living came together, where knowledge and experience integrated and where learning was not simply a personal pursuit but a collective journey within the context of a community. We envisioned that Schumacher College should not be solely an institution, it would be a community, a home.

Most education in universities is an intellectual pursuit. Students are perceived as if they have no body. They have no hands, no legs, no hearts, no feelings, only a head, and education is simply education of the head and only the left hemisphere of the head at that. How could education be defined and then promoted in such a staggeringly narrow way? So, we decided from the very beginning that at Schumacher College we would endeavor to practice education of head, education of hearts and education of hands. Thus cooking, crafts, cleaning and gardening became an integral part of learning. And, of course, singing, storytelling, poetry, meditation and spirituality were incorporated in the daily timetable to cultivate the heart qualities. The pursuit of beauty and elegant simplicity became an integral part of the Schumacher experience.

Michael Young had given us five years. But I am delighted that we have been here for much longer than that. Now we are celebrating the 30th anniversary. During this time students and participants

have come to Schumacher College from around the world. We have about 20,000 alumni in eighty different countries. They have gone through a transformative experience at the college and gone out into the world to serve people and the planet earth. When Schumacher students leave the college, I say to them, "Go out in the world, but don't look for a job. Create your own job, a job which is regenerative, fulfilling and enhances the life of Gaia, people and yourself. Your work is not just a job, it should be a livelihood."

Pedagogy of Freedom

The word "education" is derived from Latin *educare* which means "to bring up" or "to bring forth" or "to draw out." Thus, education doesn't mean teaching, or schooling or giving knowledge or even acquiring knowledge. Education simply means developing the qualities which are already in the student. Socrates compared a teacher to a midwife who just helps to bring forth the child.

I compare a teacher to a gardener. No one puts a tree in the seed, the tree is already in the seed. The seed knows what kind of tree it is. The gardener only helps the seed to become a tree. The gardener may find a place with some good soil to plant the seed, dig in good organic compost to nourish the seed, build a fence to protect the plant, give water to nurture it, but a gardener never tries to change an apple into a pear tree.

Teachers need to be like gardeners. They need to observe their students, understand them, help them to become who they are, support them on their way to self-realization. But never try to impose on them their idea of an "educated person."

In our modern Industrial Age, education has become confused with training, schooling or acquiring facts, information and knowledge in order to get a job. Rather than teachers helping a student become who he or she is and realize his or her true potential, teachers have become technicians or trainers or even agents to meet the needs of the market. The teacher is paid to mould the student so that he or she is fit to contribute to the economy. In this kind of educational system, the market and the economy become the masters and human beings become the servants.

This is corruption of education. At Schumacher College we want to recover the original actual meaning of the noble word "education."

We want schools and teachers to return to the true meaning of the word and dedicate themselves to the cause of helping young people discover their vocation.

The famous philosopher J. Krishnamurti once said to me, “There is nothing wrong with the market or with the economy. As long as they serve the needs of humans, they have a place in the world. But when humans are required to serve the needs of the market and the economy then we are in real trouble. Unfortunately, that is the problem at this moment in the world. This is why we need a total revolution in our idea of education. We need to liberate ourselves from the idea that education takes place only within the four walls of a school. It is not that you read a book, go to a classroom for your lessons or pass an examination and then you have finished with your education. Education is a lifelong process. From the moment you are born to the moment you die, you are on the journey of learning.

“We are learning to be free! Learning is all about liberation. We need to learn to be free from fear, free from anxiety, free from dogmas and doctrines. We need to discover and rediscover that we are born free and freedom is our birthright! Fear is a conditioning of the mind. From family, from religious belief, from the media and even from our educational systems, we are conditioned to fear. The purpose of true education is to free us from all kinds of fear.”

I was deeply touched by his words.

For me this was a new Pedagogy of Freedom!

But our educational system at present is totally unaware of the fact that it is based on the Pedagogy of Fear.

I have observed that schools, colleges and universities around the world are focused on the education of heads only. No wonder that many of our young people feel inadequate, incompetent and fearful. They have never developed their heart qualities. They don't know how to relate to other people and to the natural world. This lack of emotional and spiritual intelligence is a major cause of fear. The conventional educational curriculum includes almost nothing about compassion, about a sense of service, about courage or about love! At Schumacher College our vision continues to be that these qualities should be an integral part of learning.

Most colleges and universities ignore all practical or physical skills. Most undergraduates or postgraduates coming out of univer-

sities know nothing about growing food, nothing about building a house, nothing about mending or repairing and almost nothing about cooking. They have highly trained heads superbly capable of complaining, comparing and criticizing. They are taught to control and consume. They have little or no capacity for making, producing, building or creating. There is very little in our educational philosophy or practice which promotes self-reliance and self-confidence. That is why from the very beginning of Schumacher College we incorporated these practices.

On top of this deficit in emotional intelligence and body intelligence, the current educational system is more or less indifferent to the development of the imagination. Music, art, dance, plays, poetry and philosophy are relegated to some distant and specialist corners. Instead of the arts being an integral part of everyday life, they have been exiled to museums and art galleries to be pursued by a small minority of celebrity artists whose work is marketed as commercial commodities. On the other hand, there are a small number of genuine artists, who can hardly make a living.

The educational system produces millions upon millions of young people to serve the needs of machines, markets and money. And all these young people are struggling to compete and succeed and are often afraid of not succeeding.

This fear of failure is one of the most detrimental aspects of the current pedagogy of fear.

In order to compensate for this fear of failure, young people are encouraged to focus on success for themselves and to seek big salaries, big cars, big houses and high positions. Some succeed, but many fail. This egocentric rat race results in family breakdown, mental breakdown, discontent, depression and disappointment. Therefore, at Schumacher College students are encouraged to seek fulfillment in their work and in their community rather than individual success. Moreover, they are encouraged to glow like stars glow.



SATISH KUMAR is Editor Emeritus of *Resurgence* and *Ecologist* magazines and author of *Elegant Simplicity*, published by New Society Publishers.



AN OVERVIEW

A Unique Learning Experience

FRITJOF CAPRA

*Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature.
She will never fail you.*

— FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

Since the early 1990s, I have taught over a dozen courses at Schumacher College. In fact, Satish Kumar invited me to teach one of the very first courses there. I still remember meeting Satish for tea in a hotel near Paddington Station in London some time in 1990, one year before the college was founded. During that meeting Satish shared with me his vision of a new kind of place-based, community-oriented, transformative learning. I found this vision so compelling that I immediately accepted his kind invitation, and I have been a strong supporter of the college ever since.

During the last thirty years, Schumacher College has been, indeed, an absolutely unique institution, providing an unparalleled learning experience. It is not a traditional college with a well-defined faculty and student body, and unlike most colleges and universities, it was not founded by any government agency, nor any individual or foundation associated with business.

Schumacher College grew out of a global environmental movement that had its roots in the counterculture of the 1960s, flourished during the 1970s and 1980s and became a central part of the global civil society that emerged during the 1990s. Thus, from the beginning its faculty has been part of an international network of scholars and activists, a network of friends and colleagues that had already existed for several decades.

Satish Kumar, the founder of Schumacher College, is an Indian spiritual teacher and Gandhian activist, who lives in the UK where he served for forty years as editor of *Resurgence*, one of the most important and beautiful ecological magazines. Satish (as he is known to his friends and disciples around the world) was a close associate of E. F. Schumacher, the environmental pioneer and author of the classic book *Small Is Beautiful*, after whom the college was named.

Before its foundation in 1991, there was no center of learning where ecology could be studied in a rigorous, in-depth way and from many different perspectives. As far as the faculty was concerned, they were outstanding scholars, many of whom had written brilliant books, but they did not have a place where they could explore their ideas and have them critically examined in the relaxed environment of a community that shared their basic values.

During the subsequent years, the situation changed significantly when a global coalition of NGOs, now known as the global civil society, formed around the core values of human dignity and ecological sustainability. To place their political discourse within a systemic and ecological perspective, this global civil society developed a network of scholars, research institutes, think tanks and centers of learning that largely operate outside our leading academic institutions, business organizations and government agencies.

Today, there are dozens of these institutions of research and learning in all parts of the world. Schumacher College was one of the first and continues to play a leading role. These research institutes are communities of scholars and activists who are engaged in a wide variety of projects and campaigns. As their scope grew and diversified over the years, so did the faculty and curriculum of Schumacher College.

From the very beginning, Satish had the vision that the college should not represent a Eurocentric view but should give voice to a broad range of opinions—that it should be international. When Americans and Europeans discuss science, technology and philosophy here, they are joined by voices from Africa, India, Japan and other parts of the world.

The same ethnic, cultural and intellectual diversity exists among the students. It has not been unusual for me to have twenty-four course participants (the limit that was established) from ten or more

different countries. Participants are usually highly educated. Some are professionals in various fields; some are young students, but there are also older people; and they contribute to the discussions from a multitude of perspectives.

The level of education and experience of the course participants, who come from all over the world and engage one another in intensive discussions, is truly amazing. I have often thought that the core faculty are merely catalysts for the participants to engage in these dialogues. In a way, these diverse perspectives mirror the richness of the field of ecology, which is the central focus of the college. There is ecology as science, as politics, as technology and as a philosophy grounded in spirituality. This great diversity of ecology is embodied in the very structure and in the curriculum of the college.

A Sense of Community

Another key characteristic of Schumacher College is the strong sense of community it engenders. Participants come here for several weeks to live together, learn together and also to work together to sustain the learning community. They are divided into working groups that cook, clean, garden—doing all the work that is needed to maintain the college, in a practice of Gandhian spirituality.

In these groups, conversations go on virtually round the clock. While they are cutting vegetables in the kitchen, they talk; while they are mopping the floor, or rearranging chairs for a special event, they talk. Everybody here is immersed in a continual experience of community and exciting intellectual dialogues and discussions.

The teaching in the morning stimulates those dialogues that go on throughout the day and evening, and the courses themselves are also largely structured around dialogues. These are not just dialogues involving two people, one student and one teacher. They are collective dialogues in which common ideas are explored and contradictory ideas are examined together. In this kind of dialogue, we collectively look at the subjects from various perspectives. We don't debate but examine and explore things from different points of view.

All this stimulates tremendous creativity. At Schumacher College, much is created collectively, from meals in the kitchen to ideas in the classroom. Creativity flourishes because there is total trust in

the community. By nurturing community, a climate of trust is created that becomes a fertile ground for creativity.

At Schumacher College, Satish has created a unique learning environment where discussions take place in an atmosphere that is intellectually intense and challenging but is emotionally very safe. To the faculty who teach at the college, it feels almost like being among family, and this strong feeling of community emerges after being together for not more than a week or two.

Systemic View of Life

To most scholars such a situation is extremely attractive, as it offers us a unique opportunity to examine our work in depth, and to try out new ideas in a safe environment. This has certainly been the case for me. During the 1990s I discussed and explored, in course after course, my synthesis of the systemic understanding of life that has emerged at the forefront of science. Over the years I presented successive versions of that synthesis as my thinking evolved, highlighting the integration of the biological and cognitive dimensions of life, the critical role of complexity theory, the extension of the systems view of life to the social dimension and the ethics and spirituality of deep ecology. My students in those courses, as well as the core faculty members Brian Goodwin and Stephan Harding, helped me enormously in clarifying my ideas with critical questions and countless helpful suggestions.

Schumacher College, then, is a unique place not only for course participants to learn but also for the teaching faculty to deeply engage over a relatively long period with a group of highly educated and highly motivated students, and to pursue a process of sustained self-exploration.



FRITJOF CAPRA, PhD, physicist and systems theorist, is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California. He is a Fellow of Schumacher College and serves on the Council of Earth Charter International. Capra is the author of several international bestsellers, including *The Tao of Physics*, *The Web of Life* and *The Science of Leonardo*. He is co-author, with Pier Luigi Luisi, of the multidisciplinary textbook *The Systems View of Life*. Capra's online course (capracourse.net) is based on his textbook.