

## The 'Rite' Answer

Srikanth R.\*

The world is such a nice place not because everything is perfect but mostly because of its imperfections. These imperfections tacitly encourage to achieve the eluding perfection state. This is one strategy we can learn from the greatest pedagogue, Mother Nature. Our classrooms are one of the most happening places on earth where meaningful learning is expected to occur.

Let us visualise one such classroom which is about to start. The face of Shanjal is lit as soon as she sees the teacher coming into the class and greets her eagerly with all excitement. Another child, Rani, in the same class is also excited but is controlled not to betray her excitement. The excitement in both of them and some others is because there is going to be an oral test and they are all prepared to answer.

The teacher pops out an egg from her pocket and asks the class whether it is spherical in shape. This causes a greater wave than the Tsunami and we can see the hands waving all the way from east to west. Shanjal is at her best; she has stood up and is trying her best

to capture the teacher's attention. Somehow, she manages it and says—"It is not spherical because if we measure the distance of the surface from the centre of the egg it will not be the same at all points on the surfaces". Suddenly all the hands go down as if an electrical fuse had blown and only teacher seemed to be happily smiling.

The teacher was patting herself in the back as the answer had authenticated her teaching. But in the corner, the look on Rani's face was glum. A superficial cause could be that she was jealous of Shanjal, but on looking carefully, it could be seen that she was positioning the invisible egg by holding it horizontally and vertically. She wanted to say that the distance between the top and bottom of the egg is not the same when kept in a horizontal and vertical position.

I leave the mathematical accuracy of the answers to the reader. But the larger question which I have in mind is how did the perfect answer disturb the class. Even if the situation is hypothetical, the situational reality which exists here can be extrapolated

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\* M.Ed. Scholar and Lecturer Mathematics at Father Agnel School, New Delhi.

to any other classroom. The teachers look for THE perfect answer and somehow when this is reached, it seems to unplug the teacher from the question.

A careful look into the answers of others would lead to different perspectives and also different perceptions of the concept which the learners have. These perceptions could be wrong but at least an expression of these would validate the perception. The dynamics of a right answer are quite strange. A perfect answer in its perfection subsumes all the near about

answers and thereby discourages the holder of an imperfect answer (could be a near perfect answer) from expression. On the other hand, the imperfect answers seem to carry a wave of acceptance of other's ideas so one can see that these still encourage more answers.

The teacher has to be very careful in her/his approach while taking oral answers as there could be a very different answer which could be suppressed by the so called right answer. It seems that the perfect answer exerts a hegemony over the class in its own way.