

# Mentor

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A MATTER of Principal



## A Desire to Change the World

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City Montessori School, Lucknow

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## Institution Builder Par Excellence

**D**r. JAGDISH GANDHI, a passionate, thoughtful, dedicated, renowned Educationist and founder - Principal of the largest school in Lucknow - the City Montessori School is well known to all. Dr Gandhi has been honoured with numerous awards including honorary doctorate in Education by the Bashkir State Pedagogical University, Ufa, Russia in 2009; honorary doctorates in Law by the University of Concepcion del Uruguay and the University of Menzooa, Argentina in 2012. He has also been honoured with the Gusi International Peace Prize by the Gusi Peace Foundation, Philippines. In this article to MENTOR he explains how he defines education at a more spiritual level. With great missions and goals, the school has strived to be the epitome of quality and excellence.



In his 'Essays' Ralph Waldo Emerson says, "An Institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

Although like most aphorisms, this is also a generalization which is bound to have some exceptions; it is certainly true in the case of City Montessori School or CMS, the world's largest school by pupils as per the Guinness Book of Records and the first and only school ever to

receive the prestigious UNESCO Prize for Peace Education (in the year 2002), besides many other awards and honours.

Even more fascinating than the story of CMS is the life story of Dr. Jagdish Gandhi, the Founder-Manager of CMS who sees himself as a world citizen and firmly believes that, to a world citizen, no one is a foreigner.





CMS Lucknow

### **My inspiration to choose leadership in schools as a career**

I came across the magazine 'Sansar Sangh' published by the well-known freedom fighter Raja Mahendra Pratap who was a great votary of establishing a World Government at ChampaLal Agarwal College, Mathura. Raja Saheb argued that only a World Government could eliminate war and serve as an instrument of solving international disputes peacefully. I was so attracted by this idea that I became a votary of world unity. Then I came across a quote by Mahatma Gandhi who said, "If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children." So I decided to establish a school as an experiment in social transformation, a school where a new generation of world citizens are raised who are committed to working for world unity and world peace.

### **Some Challenges**

Our education system is too bound by bureaucratic rules and regulations. Of course we need these to ensure uniformity and quality but too much government control can stiffen creativity and stymie quality. There are also lots of good people in bureaucracy and the government. You need patience, persistence and

purity of intentions to get across to them and overcome hurdles.

### **Accomplishments**

My accomplishments, if any, are for others to judge. As for me, I would be more than satisfied if I light the fire of desire in one child's heart and inspire him or her to take up a decision-making global career and dedicate his life to changing the world and making it a better place for everyone.

### **School with a difference**

Our students come from all classes, castes and religions as we do not discriminate between them on these grounds. In fact more than 12,000 CMS students are from weaker sections of society and they get fee concessions ranging from 20% to 40% depending on their parents' income. Probably, it is only in CMS that you will find the children of IAS officers and rickshaw pullers sitting side by side and studying together.

We pay 6th Pay Commission salaries with DA, House Rent Allowance, City Compensatory Allowance, PF and Gratuity. We organize regular training programmes for our teachers and staff not only on subject-matter knowledge and pedagogic skills but also to familiarize and remind them about the school's aims, objectives and goals and to recharge their commitment for the same. Also, we regularly distribute pamphlets and brochures containing inspiring thoughts and ideas to our parents. There is a regular two-way communication between the school and the parents/students and teachers through our Home Visit programme, whereby each Class Teacher visits the home of all her students once a month.

We at CMS believe that every child has the potential to become the light of the world thus our emphasis is on imparting a holistic education

to children that addresses their all three realities i.e. material, human and divine through various school activities and programmes. Both schools and parents must realise that education has a greater role to play than merely enabling the children to learn job-obtaining skills. Education must develop children into responsible citizens of the world committed to working for the welfare of society. It must also inculcate in them the habit of conservation, reuse and recycling of natural resources and also avoid any kind of pollution. Only then we will be able to ensure a healthy and fulfilling life for our children and future generations.

CMS mission is to make every child a gift of God to mankind and a pride of the human race by imparting all three kinds of education (material, human and divine). This trickles down to our students and staff through the 31 international events and other regular school activities. Most of these events and activities are aimed at



students but others are for teachers, principals and parents. These also act as a reminder the school's mission and philosophy.

Our unusually strong emphasis on creating global mindsets in students is in tune with the NCERT's increasing focus on Peace Education in its National Curriculum Framework. Also, for decades we have been giving 20% to 40% fee concessions to about 30% of CMS students who are from economically weaker families. This is consistent with the spirit of the intention of the RTE Act that poorer children should also get access to quality education.

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#### **Fitting with the education system**

We follow all the rules and regulations of the government so there is no question of not fitting in with the current system. Moreover, parents have endorsed our approach and objective in large numbers by preferring to educate their children in CMS thus raising our student strength from 5 students in 1959 to over 45,000 students today, a world record recognized by the Guinness Book. These have also been endorsed by UNESCO, arguably the world's foremost and most respected international organisation in the field of education that honoured CMS with the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in the year 2002, making CMS the world's first and only school ever to receive this recognition. Both schools and parents must realise that education has a greater role to play than merely enabling the children to learn job-obtaining skills. Education must develop children into responsible citizens



of the world committed to working for the welfare of society. It must also inculcate in them the habit of conservation, reuse and recycling of natural resources and also avoid any kind of pollution. Only then we will be able to ensure a healthy and fulfilling life for our children and future generations.

#### Technological changes

CMS has always been in the forefront in adopting new technologies. We were the first school in Lucknow to use computers in education, the first to join the internet and probably the only school in the city to have our own in-house audio-video division, a Film Making Division (that has produced 33 educational feature films to date) and two FM Radio Stations (that broadcast 16 hours of educational programmes every day). As new technologies emerge we are at the fore-front in adopting them e.g. we already intensively use interactive Whiteboards (Smart Boards) with Tata Class Edge Content. ERP system, GPS tracking system, and have about 4000 computers. Moreover, many CMS campuses have provision for rainwater harvesting and for recharging the underground water table, are actively participating in the clean River Gomti project and have an active environment

awareness programme for students, parents and staff. We have recently started a 'Junior Youth Empowerment Programme' whereby students are trained in service of others. This is the change in CMS. But our aims, objectives, approach and commitment have remained and will continue to remain unchanged. We shall continue to strive to make every child both good and smart, a gift of God to mankind and a pride of the human race. Of that, I have no doubt

#### Adding value

The desire to change the world and to make it a better place for everyone is only possible through the education of children. It is next to impossible to change adults, since habits, thought patterns and approach to life become inflexible with age. Through purity of intentions and honesty of approach, a pure and simple heart is helped by



the divine if its intentions are good and motives are pure. The success of CMS and the huge support we have received from the citizens of Lucknow is ample testimony to this.

As Nelson Mandela rightly said, "Education is the most powerful tool you can use to change the world." Our world today is in grave danger and the future of our children is threatened by global warming and climate change. We are sitting on a



nuclear bomb. The Fukushima Power Plant accident in Japan proved that even nuclear plants are a serious threat to life on earth and need to be dismantled urgently. All this is only possible if children are educated on such issues and are groomed to become proactive agents of social transformation. The survival of the children drives me forward. To make the world a safe haven is my mission.

### A School that Stands Out

Ours is the only school in the world that organizes an annual International Conference of Chief Justices of the World where our students appeal to the World's Judiciary to take measures to safeguard the future of world's children and generations unborn. Since 1999, when the first such conference was held, a total of 585 Chief justices and Judges from 109 countries have attended these conferences to date and endorsed the CMS demand to ensure a safe and secure future for the world's children. This is the only event of its kind in the world. Leave alone a school, no government or any other organization holds such an event that brings together members of the world judiciary to consider the cause of children.

### A Passion

My dream is to see a world united under one World Government with a democratically elected World Parliament, a World Law enacted by the World Parliament and a World Court to adjudicate that World Law, since I firmly believe that the future well-being of children depends upon having a safe world governance structure that will prevent wars, be just, and bring true social and economic development. A World Government will not take away the sovereignty of the nations. International disputes will then be solved peacefully by a World Court as per a duly enacted World Law by a democratically elected World Parliament. Only such a World government can adequately address global issues like that of global warming and climate change



and eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. All my life I have been working to realize this dream and I have tried to pass on the same to my students.

The most important thing to say in the context of the experience of CMS is that we have striven to be extremely accountable to our parents. Firstly, we have given parents unprecedented access to our Principals any time during school hours. Secondly, our teachers show students' exam scripts to parents so they have to be very vigilant when making scripts as they can get picked up for any uneven, negligent, inaccurate or unfair marking - this obliges teachers to be very accountable for their work.

We give children unparalleled opportunity to gain confidence by insisting that every child appears on stage at least twice each year (once at a so-called "Model Class Presentation" before their parents) and once at any one of the branch's annual International event, sports day or Open Day etc. We also provide our students outstanding opportunities for interacting with children from all over India and abroad by hosting 32 international events (most of them annual). The duty of care exercised towards the children is phenomenal. Perhaps the parents of Lucknow vote with their feet for CMS because they like this opportunity, duty of care and accountability.