

remember that I used a 3-legged stool in my talk to the parents - do you remember what was the meaning of that? Yes - parents, teachers and pupils - all working together. What happens to a 3-legged stool when one of the legs is not working? It falls over! Any one, or any two of the 3 can be working very well, but if ALL of them are not working properly, the stool does not work. Education depends on learning how to be a good team. This poster is all about 'ekshonge' - knowing how to be TOGETHER - a very good word.

But it is not easy to be with others. It is something we have to learn. We all begin as totally selfish babies. If any of you have had a baby in the house, you will know this. When it is hungry, or has a pain, or wants anything, it cries - no one can sleep! In a family where there are lots of children, each child has to learn quite quickly that it does not always get what it wants. But nowadays most families are smaller and so some children get a lot of what they want! And then you come to school and you have to learn to be one of 325 - it is not easy! There is an English saying, "You are not the only pebble on the beach." You know what a beach is - it is by the sea-side. Some beaches do not have sand, they have little pebbles, little round stones - thousands and thousands of them. 'You are not the only pebble on the beach.'

But we all tend to put ourselves in the centre of our world. Some of you express this in your English grammar. Right up to the top classes, many of you write 'Me and . . .'. "Me and my family - " "Me and my sister. . . ." "Me and my friend. . . ." "I am always having to correct "Me and . . ." and have to keep saying, "You put yourself last! My family and I . . . My friend and I . . ." Is this true of the other English teachers also? Aha - it is! 'Me first' is the cry of every child that comes into the world but slowly it learns that it is not the only pebble on the beach. Slowly it learns that, sometimes, what other people want and need has to come first, and that, actually, sometimes, when you do something that you said you did not want to do, you have a really good time.

In other words, you find that being part of a larger group than just ME can be very good! You enjoy yourself. You learn far more. You develop many skills. You become more independent. "Me and . . ." becomes part of your baby stage - part of your own history that is now in the past. You are free of "Me and . . ." because you are growing up and learning how to be together with other people in ways that make you strong and ways that show you that you can do much more *with* other people than separately.

Even when we are with others, we never stop being very special and unique individuals. But there may be times when we stand alone. We can learn not to be frightened of such times because we can feel that all the people who have ever loved us are always with us - and some of us feel the special presence of God also at such times. We are always 'together.' God bless you.



WHEN COMPETITION GETS OUT OF HAND *Assembly 71 May 18th 2003*

These days I am focussing your attention on this saying, "None of us is as smart as all of us." I am hoping that you are learning to know that point when competition is going too far. Competition is like spice in a meal - just a little is very nice but too much is horrible. It is good to have a little competition but if winning is the only reason for living, then you are getting life out of balance. One of the main pleasures and responsibilities and duties of living is to live and work and play with other people happily and well, at home, at school, at work. If we are always checking who is better than whom, then this usually means that competition is going too far. If each person is doing their best and if all of us are helping everyone else to do their best, then this is a better model for living.

I am sure that many of you enjoy sport. It is good to watch it on TV, to watch it in real life and it is even better to take part in it. But most of us know that point at which a game has stopped being a sport and become so desperate, so serious, that we ask ourselves what will some people do to win - and we feel a little frightened.

People in sport should work together for the good of the sport and its enjoyment for lots of people. But, when people become desperate to win, they can sometimes cheat in all sorts of ways, like taking drugs, attacking their opponents, on or off the field, and those who gamble on sport try to fix the matches - match-fixing. Fans are sometimes involved in throwing bottles and more serious weapons at the players and referees. People who really love sport, can feel sick at some of the things that go on and feel really depressed by it. Sport is spoilt by people who do not think about the good of sport or about others, they can only think of 'How can I win?' or 'How can I make as much money as possible?' They are thinking of me/me/me - and not the good of sport and all those in it.

I am not sure that I like this fashion of chanting and shouting at matches and the players jumping up and down. I hear you doing this sometimes in your form matches. Be careful! Don't go too far! It seems to encourage one side to say, "Ha! Ha! I am winning and you are losing!" But, if you have a match with two sides, one side has to lose - that is the point of a match! The important thing is, isn't it, that everyone should have a good time and do their best? But there are those who say, "No, the point is not to have a good time and do your best - the point is that, whoever wins is the greatest and whoever loses is rubbish!" But that is asking for trouble. When some football matches are played in the UK, thousands of pounds have to be spent on extra police and security to check that the fans of the visiting side who have to go from the stadium to their buses do not go along the road breaking shop windows if they have lost! You cannot make some people feel rubbish without risking violence from them.

But you and I can be very thankful for the best people in sport. They always encourage people to work together, whether they are winning or losing. They always have time for young players. Good fans always clap both sides whenever they play well. The right attitude is, "May the best side win - but, whether you win, or lose, may you both enjoy yourselves and end the match in a friendly way!"

God bless you.



SCHOOLS AND COACHING CENTRES – IT'S WAR!

Assembly 72 - May 19th 2003

Yesterday, I asked you to think about that point in a competition when it is going too far. A little competition is like spice in a dish. Too much and the balance of flavours is lost. But there are some organisations in Bangladesh that are so competitive that they are almost impossible to work with. All you can do is warn people about them. Most of them are not interested in cooperation. They want to put you out of business – or be a parasite, feeding off you, constantly draining your strength!

Today I want to discuss the serious matter of the relationship between a school and private coaching centre or individual private coaches. This has been very strange for me to understand because there is almost no private coaching in the UK. The teachers are far too tired, having very heavy time-tables and doing their ordinary teaching well and the pupils are far too tired doing the large amount of work expected of them. Quite honestly, I think education would be far better in Bangladesh if the same were true here! But I can understand private coaching for pupils who are in large classes of 70 or 80 pupils like those I had in Haluaghat and