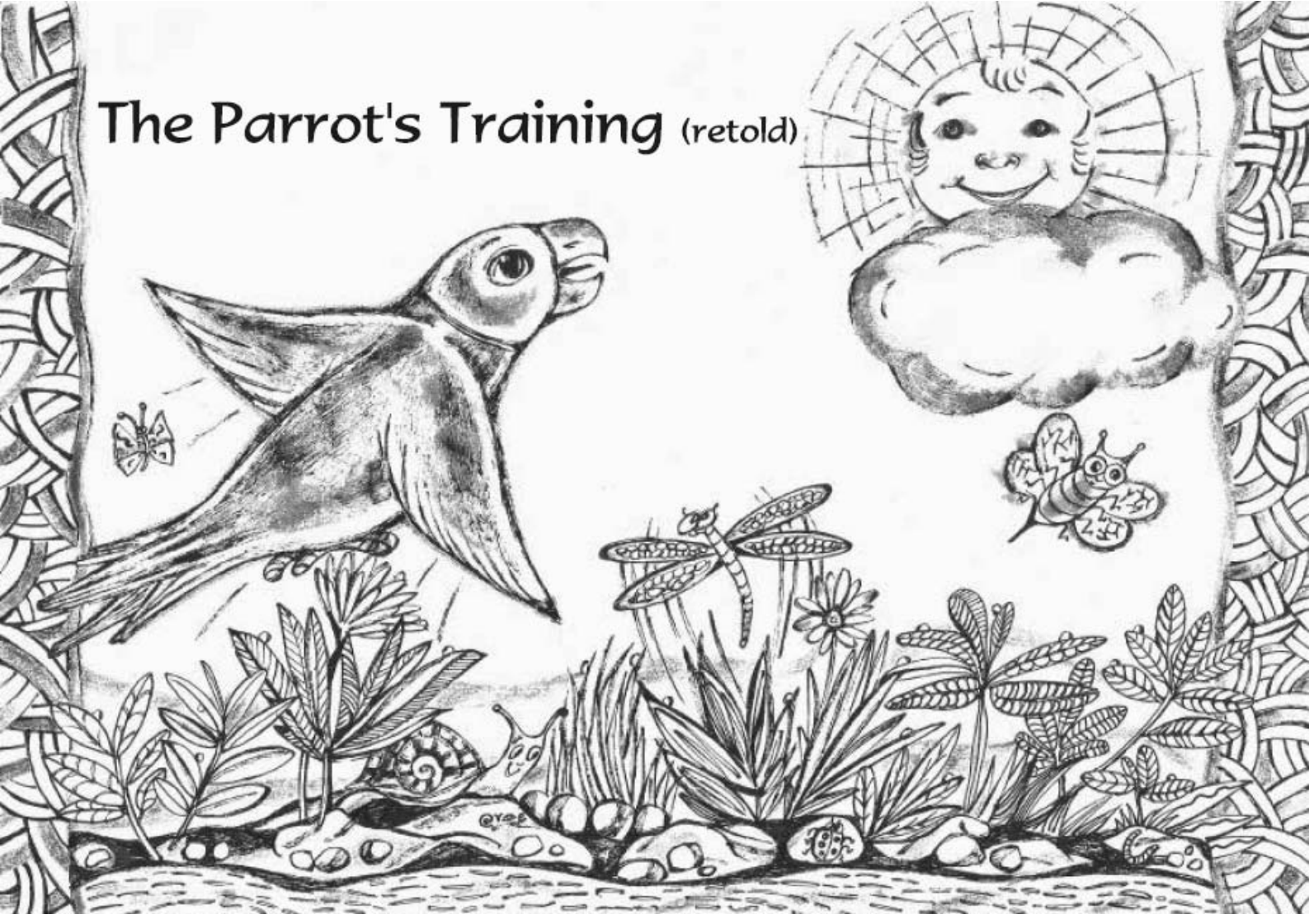


The Parrot's Training (retold)



Hacking the Education System Series

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The Parrot's Training (retold)

I would like to share a story that I adapted from the Nobel prize-winning poet and visionary freedom fighter, Rabindranath Tagore, in which he tried to warn us of the dangers of 'McEducation for All' almost 75 years ago.

In 'The Parrot's Training', we are told of a golden cage that is built to imprison the wild and uncivilized parrot so that she can be properly 'educated' by the king's pundits under the Ministry of Animal Resource Development (MARD).

The king was keen that she learn the 3Rs : reading, (w)riting, and (a)rithmetic. In addition, she should learn how to believe in and obey his authority, be proud of her newfound nationalism and borders, know enough English to identify with all the latest corporate brands (and work at a call centre) and be a good global netizen. She should be well-trained to be an engine of economic growth.



12 times TABLES learn by HEART

after
me

$12 \times 11 = 132$

$12 \times 12 = 144$

$12 \times 3 = 36$

$12 \times 2 = 24$

$12 \times 4 = 48$

once more

$12 \times 9 = 108$

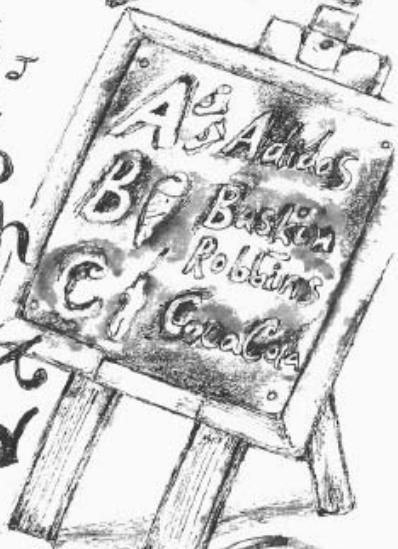
$12 \times 5 = 60$

$12 \times 8 = 96$

$12 \times 6 = 72$

$12 \times 7 = 84$

Repeat, dear!
Jack & Jill
went
up the
hill to
fetch
a pail
of
water



First, the teachers tried stuffing the bird with pages of knowledge from the official government textbooks. When she did not cooperate, she was prescribed Ritalin to improve her concentration and tame her ‘hyper-activity’. Extra private tuition classes were also given and time for free play was drastically reduced. That did not work.

Then, a UNICEF project came with all kinds of child-friendly and joyful teaching-learning materials and training programs for the teachers. A special Happy School leadership training was given to the principal. They also taught the girl-child parrot about her child rights. That did not work.

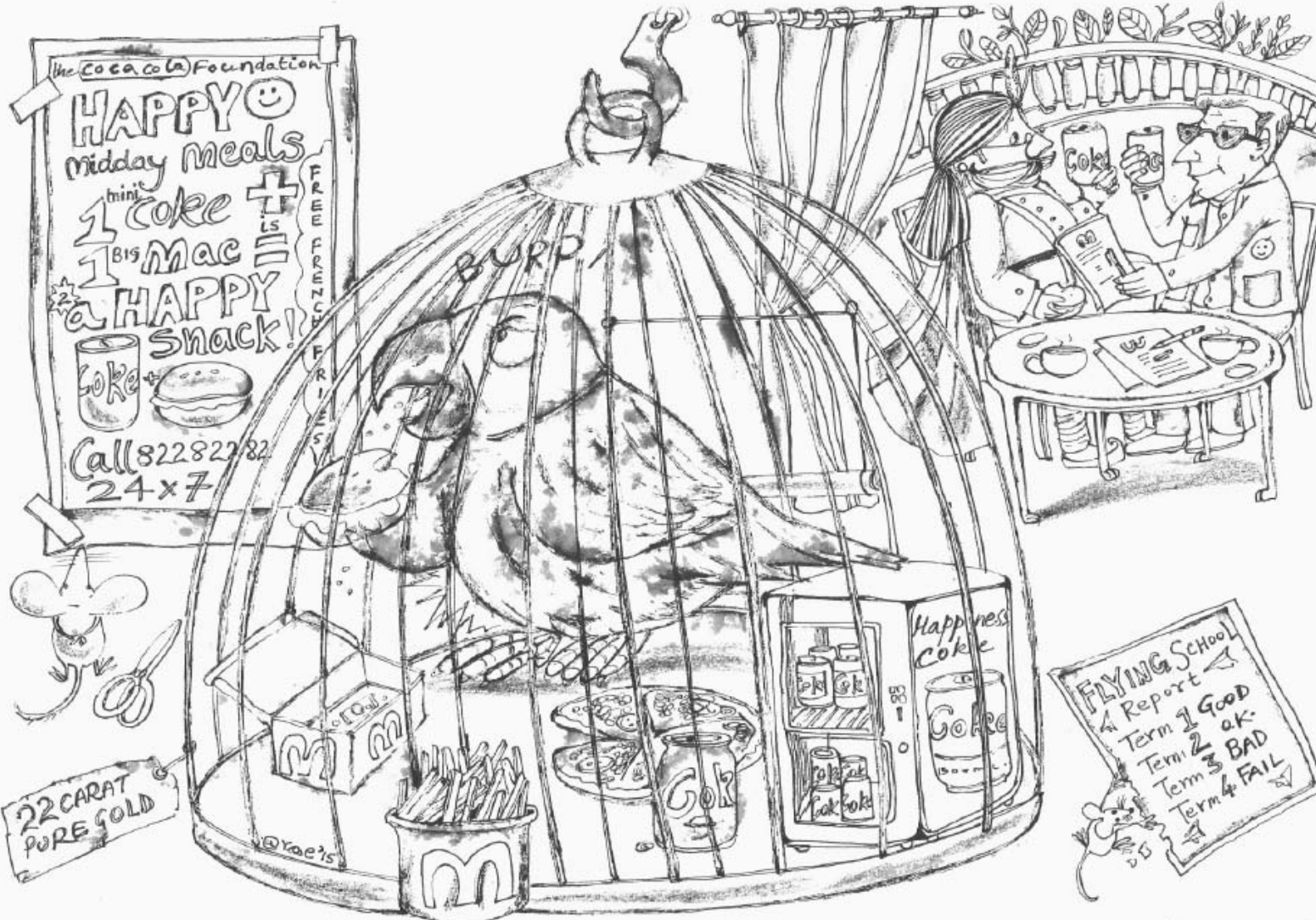




She wanted to leave the cage but was not allowed. The World Bank gave a loan to the king (with austerity conditionalities, of course) to build a bigger cage with a nice toilet. CCTV cameras were also installed to ensure discipline of the teachers and the parrot. 'Big Brother' was grinning incessantly. But even that did not work.

Harvard researchers were invited to conduct studies on the parrot's brain and multiple intelligences. Many research papers were written. The parrot was bombarded with every latest theory after theory. With time, she started losing confidence in her own gift of song.





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BURP

Happy
Coke

FLYING SCHOOL
Report

Term 1 Good

Term 2 ok

Term 3 BAD

Term 4 FAIL

In a great display of public-private partnership, Coca-Cola Foundation helped to set up a special Happiness Coke vending machine in the cage. McDonald's too decided to help out by offering a mid-day Happy Meal for the parrot. The parrot started to become obese from all the empty calories and could no longer fly.

Then, the OECD came with the PISA standardized tests and a new national policy white paper was written. The king and his ministers lined up to take lots of photographs celebrating their renewed commitment to educate poor, backward, illiterate parrots.

These photos were published with great fanfare in newspapers around the world. But even that did not work.

Government Takes A Big Leap in Educating the Poor

OECD
in collaboration

The New National Policy
on How to
Educate Poor Backward
PARROTS

with PISA

Kamchor Baba & Head Pundit (a) King (a) & Business Lobby (b)
File Photo: Ministers of Education & Culture (b)



Then, technology gurus from Apple gave her an iPad and a free high speed WIFI connection to access the cloud. She was made to watch videos from Khan Academy. Soon, they even set up a Facebook account for her and encouraged her to make thousands of 'friends'. That only left her feeling more alone and depressed.

The parrot was not allowed to leave the cage despite her obvious distress. In fact, she was scolded for being ungrateful and impertinent. Time and again, she was reprimanded and made to feel guilty. “We have spent a lot of money for your education and you do not even care. You are wasting your life. You are spoiling your future.”

1...2...3...4... Swallow the chapter on
idioms...HURRY UP!!





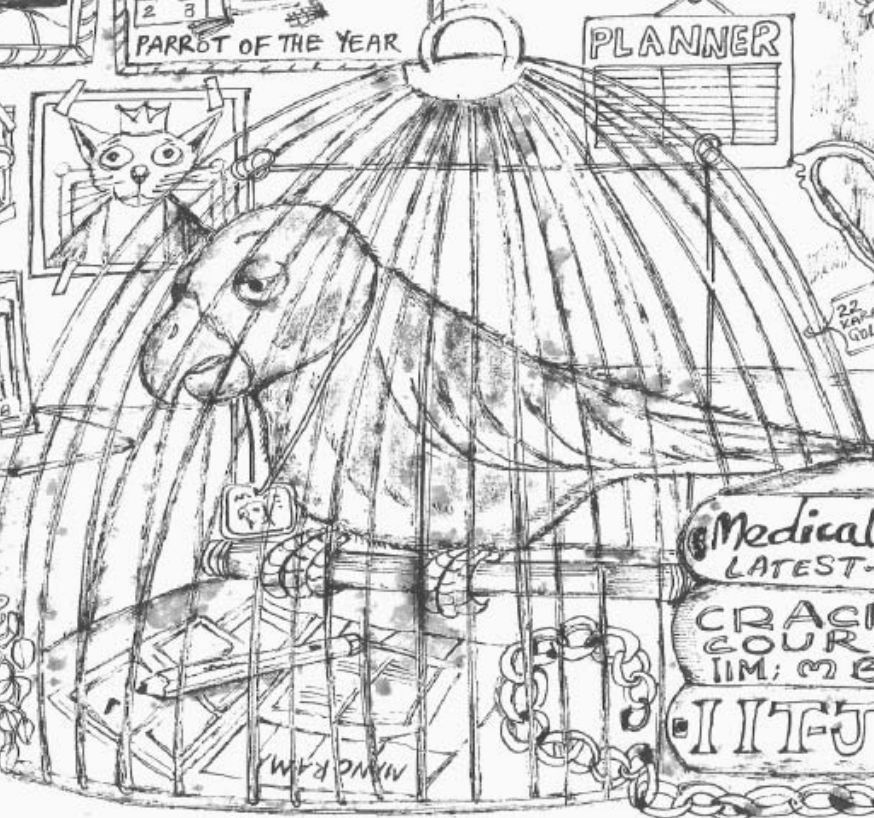
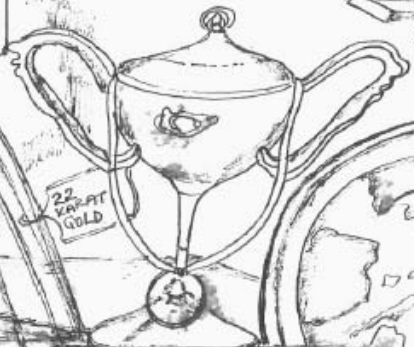
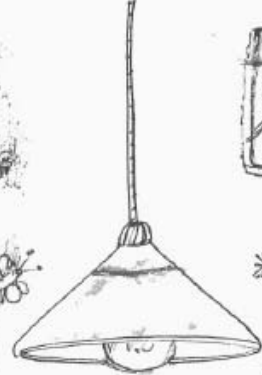
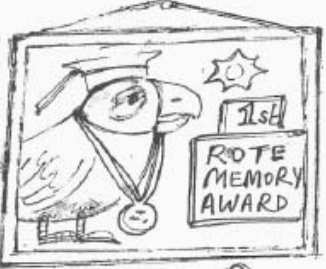
When that didn't work, an hour of mindfulness training was instituted to release all her built-up frustration and aggression.

After all these years of being locked up, the parrot was diagnosed with Nature Deficit Disorder. The king was told that the parrot (and the cage) should be taken to an expensive organic eco-resort during summer holidays to 'experience nature'.

Later, anti-depressant drugs had to be prescribed as the parrot was caught slitting her wings.

As the parrot was overstuffed with information and tormented by the pressure 'to achieve', she internalized her label as a 'slow learner' and 'failure', and lost confidence in her ability to communicate with the wild and profound intelligence of nature.





BY 2015

She slowly became totally dependent on the cage. One day, the cage was accidentally left open but she was afraid to venture out. She had lost confidence in her natural capacities to learn without institutions.

Her dreams were reduced to being a rat trapped in the rat-race. A deep loss of purpose ensued. Slowly, her spirit withered away.

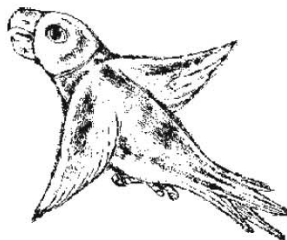
In the end, a lot of people made a lot of money on the parrot's education. Everyone benefited except the parrot...

So, the United Nations decided to launch the 'No Parrot Left Behind' Campaign. They lobbied kings from all over the world to commit to all parrots being caged and educated by 2030 (and all their lands being taken over and mined through public-private partnerships) as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Now everyone could enjoy the fruits of progress.



“The modern factory-schooling education system is one of the greatest crimes against humanity. One hundred years from now, we will look back at the violence of schools and ask how we could have done this to innocent children?”

- Manish Jain



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