

# The Water Game

- Set-up:** Prepare a large GLASS pitcher of water and a tray of glasses (or plastic water bottles, with the top part cut off, leaving a tumbler shaped container)
- Time:** Twenty minutes or more, depending on the unpacking and the emotion.
- Purpose:** This exercise is about experiential learning, illustrating well the methods we use. It is not one person with all of the content and answers and everyone else sitting silently, taking notes, with their beggars' bowl. It is meant to elicit a sense of all having something to contribute. It is also about inequities, how they came about, and how to challenge them.

Hand out a glass to everyone in a standing circle. Then go around the circle to pour water into the participants' glasses. BUT: some of them you will approach and then say out loud, 'No, I don't think I want to give you any water. Oh, maybe just a drop. DISCRIMINATE amongst the participants; CREATE inequities.

A person who benefits from white privilege might approach another person with white privilege, and give them more than anyone else. A dominant tribal person might give water just to those of his or her own tribe. Role play out a person of power who dispenses benefits to some and not to others.

Then, having almost emptied your pitcher, either: (1) wait silently, looking smugly around the circle as the person of power to see what happens, how people react or (2) ask them if they would like to share their water with others in the circle. People then see others who have less or no water and add some of their own. This movement across and around the circle may last for a couple of minutes or more.

Then ask: what happened? How did you feel? What was the difference between the two parts of this exercise? Of what does this remind you? *Open lots of space for emotional learning – space for anger and joy, sadness and encouragement.*

## Training of Trainers:

*This tool or exercise can be used in a number of ways but it is primarily about the difference between the BANKING model of education – in which one wise, smart person with knowledge 'deposits' in the other's empty vessel/cup; one knowledgeable person shares their knowledge or NOT – and EXPERIENTIAL learning in which everyone has something to share with others and together, in dialogue, they create new knowledge.*

*You might ask where did the banking model of education come from? It is inherently colonial and colonising. It is focussed on creating automatons devoted to maintaining and strengthening the status quo of oppressor/oppressed, dominating/subjugated. It creates OBJECTS who simply respond to what is happening around them, participating without question in a culture of silence. It is an instrument to facilitate the integration of the young into the logic of the present system and to bring about conformity to it.*

Experiential learning, on the other hand, becomes the PRACTICE of FREEDOM, by which people deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. It challenges the status quo, creating SUBJECTS who are actors, agents of change in the dialogical creation of a new world disentangled from the identity of the oppressor.

Design a ritual at the end in which everyone, from multiple sources bring their own contribution of knowledge and wisdom into the training.

~ Taught to me by Martin Smedjeback of the Gandhi Community, Malmo, Sweden ~