

The Great Game

Arvind Gupta, 56
Visiting Scientist, Children's Centre,
Inter-University Centre for Astronomy & Astrophysics, Pune

Pix: Mandar Deodhar



Education

B.Tech from IIT Kanpur.

Usually to be found

Creating new educational toys as also digitising and translating books for his online library, which has 2,000 books on science.

Most recent work

Science Skills and Thrills, 2008, that takes science out of the classroom into life.

Call him a teacher and he shrugs. Say he's a toymaker and he's happy. The science enthusiast wants to eliminate the passive-observant methods of teaching science. To make students 'understand' rather than 'learn', he employs an unconventional method of teaching science through toy-making, using material that most people would treat as junk.

So, a straw is made into a multi-tone flute to teach the students about air pressure, a dried sketch-pen is transformed into a musical oboe, while an empty camera film can and a torn balloon are used to demonstrate the working of the diaphragm. His aim is to ensure that science no longer remains a feared, 'high-scorers' subject that can be only explained in a formal laboratory environment.

Having worked with over 2,000 schools in about 20 countries, Gupta has set up a unique children's centre at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics in Pune, where he holds workshops for students from 100 schools across the city.

by Pankti Mehta (*India Today*, Special Issue – *The Game Changers* July 27, 2009)