

## History : Remembering the Stalwarts

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Dr Maria Montessori was an Italian doctor who revolutionized the concept of child education. She was born in 1870 in Italy and entered the Medical school in Rome in 1893. At first she was strongly discouraged from joining the medical profession because of her gender. However, she was persistent and even after facing some hostility from colleagues and teachers, she managed to pass with flying colours in 1896. She was interested in Paediatrics and started her private practice in Rome.

Dr Montessori soon became interested in children with early dyslexia. She continued to develop her medical practice and at the same time, started speaking out for women's rights and children with learning difficulties. Very soon, this became her life's work. She wrote numerous articles on the topic of educating children and also became a trainer for teachers working with children having learning difficulties. In 1902, she enrolled for a course in Philosophy in Rome to better study the psychology of children. Also, she independently studied anthropology and educational philosophy. As her research progressed, she thought of applying the techniques of education used for specially abled children to the



**Maria Montessori**

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mainstream child education.

Dr Montessori was a pioneer in the field of child education. She was the first to observe children in the classroom and note their behaviour. She found which practical activities the children preferred and how self-discipline emerged in the child psyche. She found that forcing a rigid curriculum on children did not help in learning; rather, mixing of activities and intellectual exercises helped them in gaining proficiency at an early age. In other words, a child has a natural ability to learn and the duty of teachers is just to create an environment to stimulate learning. Her school, Casa-dei-Bambini, soon became very famous

and opened numerous branches. She wrote extensively about her method of child education and this was quickly accepted by scholars all over the world.

The Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore was influenced by her teaching methods and in his own school, tried to implement her method in an Indianized version. He met Dr Montessori many times in Europe. Dr Montessori came to Madras in 1939 for a training lecture.

***Famous quote :***

**“The greatest sign of success for a teacher.....  
is to be able to say, ‘The children are  
now working as if I did not exist.’”**