The Oxford Dictionary defines education as:

1. The process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or university: a new system of public education
   a. the theory and practice of teaching: colleges of education
   b. a body of knowledge acquired while being educated: his education is encyclopedic and eclectic
   c. information about or training in a particular field or subject: health education

2. (an education) an enlightening experience: a day with those kids was an education in patience and forbearance.

The concept that education is an enlightening experience resonates deeply with me. It is, from my perspective, in the interaction between people where asynchronous thought generates insight, and insight is at the core of education. The knowledge in books does not, for the most part, generate a context in which to hold that information, or a means to extrapolate real world applications from that information.

The Socratic Method used directed questions to elicit student insight. It was not really the answer itself that was important, it was the experience of discovering one’s own answer that was crucial to educational enlightenment. For those of us who have spent much time in classrooms, it is indeed the “AHA” moments that make the experience worthwhile, is it not? It is when a student realizes that this “answer” is actually a key to a door that may expand our horizons; “...I get it, now what happens if...?” Isn’t that what education is all about?
Howard gardener’s theory of multiple intelligences has had a profound impact on the perception and practice of education as we know it, however controversial the implementations of that theory may be. He formulated seven intelligences which collaborate in some manner to promote education: Linguistic intelligence (sensitivity to spoken and written language constructs), Logical-mathematical intelligence (capacity to analyze problems logically and carry out mathematical operations), Musical intelligence (skill in the performance, appreciation and composition of musical patterns), Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (the potential of using all or part of the corporal sense memory to coordinate bodily movements), Spatial intelligence (the potential of recognizing the use and patterns of open and confined areas), Interpersonal intelligence (the capacity to understand the intentions, desires and motivations of other people), and Intrapersonal intelligence (the capacity to understand oneself as a sensing, self-motivated actor in the scheme of one’s own life), Garner observed that the seven intelligences seldom operate independently. They represent a coaxial synergy that informs a true educational paradigm.

My father used to have an expression: “You may not like the teacher, but you sure do appreciate the lessons.” One such example happened to me. I was sought after and hired by a large company. Once hired, my Manager went to great lengths to make my life miserable; berating me in front of my colleagues, belittling me to her superiors, deliberately sabotaging my work. A colleague, a senior member of the team who was about six months from retirement, a person who had nothing to gain by standing up for me, confronted the Manager behind closed doors, and then proceeded to go directly to Senior Management, to insure that the Manager was fired. I can truthfully say, that the lessons I learned from that experience have completely shaped my insights into the nature of good management and the power of a team in ways that would not have been possible otherwise. It was an epiphany, enhanced by the pain of the experience itself. Clearly, multiple intelligences contributed to that education, and it certainly was not part of a systematic instruction.
A mentor of mine, a Cherokee shaman, once said to me, “Well traveled, my son, now whisper to me your lessons.” To me, this is at the core of education. While we all walk a different path, we must honor the path of those around us. We must then whisper our lessons. The intimacy of the exchange makes it a shared experience that resonates throughout our very being.

What is education to me? It is the opportunity to experience another’s walk of life, and to then be insightful about my own path. It is possible that my path, my insights can help another in his or her walk of life? That would make me a teacher and a student at the same time. That would make everyone’s entire walk of life one extended educational experience, would it not? From birth to birth, it would be a continuum of educational enlightenment, Namaste.