

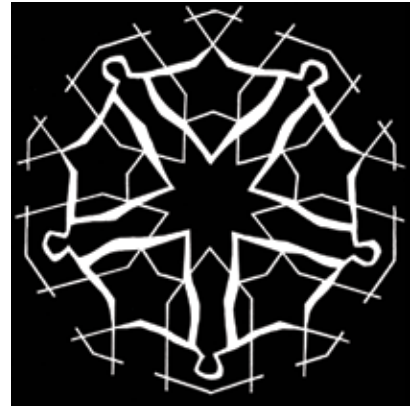
Multiworld

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2009 Vol.II No.6

Hind Swaraj on Education 100 Years Ago

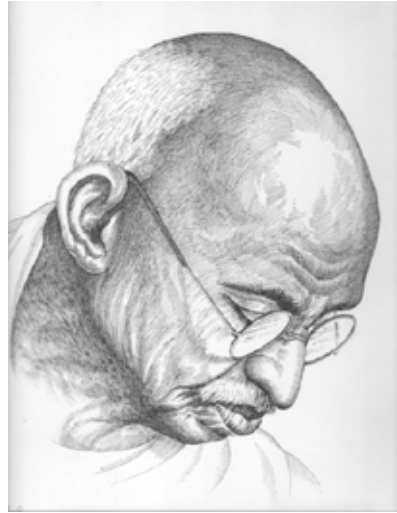
The issues that *Hind Swaraj* raised a hundred years ago about learning, education, the good life and about what is to be taught in schools have simply refused to go away or die. They continue to stare us in the face. In our continuing efforts to deal with them today we need to ask ourselves why we ignored what one of the world's most dedicated educators had to say about learning in our schools and why we continue instead mindlessly with the prescriptions of an English gentleman written in the year 1835!

Except for the climber class (which is rewarded largely for mugging text like parrots), education offered by the State has consistently been rejected by those with brains. Anyone who refuses to attend school because he or she recognises it is bound to do him or her brain damage is making a serious political statement which those in the bureaucracy are still unable to comprehend or unwilling to accept. The State looks at children who do not attend school as 'drop-outs,' meaning 'failures.' Instead we need to look on them as 'walk-outs.' The indicator of a creative society is the number of walk-outs it is able to generate or induce. The more people opting out, the better for society's survival. No person who walks out of a dumb and dumber system of education will be a slave of anybody or anything forever.

In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi questioned almost everything associated with the schools of his time (which are hardly different from the schools of our time). He wrote: 'I have learned Geography, Astronomy, Algebra, Geometry, etc. What of that? In what way have I benefitted myself or those around me? Why have I learned these things?'

No answer from the educational pundits.

To the question that he undoubtedly benefitted from the education he got, Gandhi replied: 'I do desire to serve and in endeavouring to fulfil that desire, I make use of the education I have received. And if I am making good use of it, even then



'I have given many things to India. But this system of education together with its technique is, I feel the best of them. I do not think I will have anything better to offer to the country.'

- M. K. Gandhi

it is not for the millions, but I can use it only for such as you, and this supports my contention. Both you and I have come under the bane of what is mainly false education. I claim to have become free from its ill effect, and I am trying to give you the benefit of my experience and in doing so, I am demonstrating the rottenness of this education.'

So how come we invest more and more every year on what is essentially a 'rotten educational system?'

There are no answers from the pundits.

These radical opinions laid the basis for Gandhi's experiments with Nai Talim about which there is much material in this issue of *Kamiriithu*.

To mark the occasion of the hundredth year of the publication of *Hind Swaraj*, we decided to concentrate on a few Nai Talim schools.

One of the most famous of them is the Majhihira National Basic Educational Institution at Purulia, but Dileep Kamath and his friend Shivaji of Belgaum also see their

'Community Learning Movement' as similarly inspired. The most dynamic of these 'nai talim' institutions is Syamantak: the School Without Walls. There is some sparkling activity going on here which is not there in the most expensive residential or public schools.

Gandhi was firmly convinced of the hollowness of most Western ideas. Towards the conclusion of *Hind Swaraj* he in fact proposes that 'deportation for life to the Andamans is not enough expiation for the sin of encouraging European civilization.' Despite this firm assertion, we have more colleges and universities teaching European civilization in the form of social sciences (including philosophy) today than ever before. We can ask the same questions Gandhi once asked of Geography, Algebra, etc. Why do we force millions of young people to spend their precious lives studying these so-called sciences all of which are based on untested Western assumptions of what constitutes knowledge in their spheres or are of use largely to societies from the West?

There are no answers from the pundits.

None of our pundits today can teach without the crutches of the Western academic system and its core ideas. As a result, none can offer anything of his or her own. All are copy cats. All look outside for new ideas to parrot and new authors to quote. No wonder most students take this academic exercise as they do a circus, a piece of entertainment, never to be taken seriously.

'Carried away by the flood of western thought we came to the conclusion, without weighing pros and cons, that we should give this kind of education to the people.' The system has remained a tool of enslavement. Good that the millions have remained aloof from it and will so remain for a hundred years more. This society of ours will only survive if it does what Gandhi recommended in *Hind Swaraj*: drive out Western civilization. All else, he said, would follow.

The Multiworld Network's Newsletter

Kamiriithu

UN MUNDO EN QUE QUEPAN MUCHOS MUNDOS

Events of interest

Announcement: Landscapes and Lifeskills Course -2009-2010

The Landscapes and Lifeskills course offered by the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary will run again this year starting Dec. 1 through May 15.

The course is intended for young persons interested in the natural world. Students will engage with study in three natural ecoregions – the Western Ghats, The forests of Pachmarhi in Central India and the great Himalayas.

Fully residential in nature; the course requires an adventurous nature, a thirst for the wilderness, an ability to live and work as a team in basic conditions and fluency in English.

The Gurukulum Botanical Sanctuary team is a wonder to behold. They are people of knowledge, wise, committed to the conservation of nature and very loving with kids and youngsters.

The team has considerable experience from past learning expeditions and from hosting hundreds of urban children from cities across India.

Their work in encouraging children of all ages to discover the beauty and amazing truths of the natural world is extremely priceless and without parallel.

Tuition, marked at Rs. 50,000 is all inclusive. Scholarships are available.

For details contact:

jungler@gmail.com / malika.virdi@gmail.com / chaiti_seth@hotmail.com

3rd November 2009 IIT- Delhi Multiversity India Meeting

A small group of individuals involved with Multiversity are meeting on the 23rd of November at IIT- Delhi. The meeting has been convened to essentially take stock of the project in India and other countries in the Global South and decide on how best to take it further collectively. Mr Mohamed Idris, Chairperson of the institution is travelling to Delhi to attend.

The agenda will discuss proposals for revamping curricula in Indian universities so that they do not remain Eurocentric forever. Also for presentation on the cards is the latest Multiversity project documenting “500 Years of Violence.”

4th -5th December 2009 Bangalore Be the Change – Conference on Food, Health and Climate Change

Bhoomi Network for Sustainable Living along with others is organizing a two day conference essentially for heads of institutions of schools and colleges and for students on the theme of food, health and climate change. It has luminary speakers of national and international repute addressing the gathering. This is an attempt to educate the educators on key issues of relevance in the backdrop of unhealthy eating habits among the youth of today and the challenges they will have to deal with in the backdrop of a fast changing scenario brought about by global warming.

22nd – 24th January, 2010 Sevagram, Wardha Network Meeting

Members of the “NETWORK” this year will meet over 3 days at Anand Niketan School, Sevagram, Wardha. The “Network Members”, a small group of pioneering educators from across India has been meeting annually for close to two decades now. This year’s meeting will see a few new faces participating on invitation. These are mostly young individuals who have shown serious intent to take up teaching as a vocation.

4th - 7th February 2010 Timbaktu Collective, Dharmavaram Learning Network Meeting

The seventh annual meeting of the Learning Network is being eagerly looked forward to by hundreds of teachers, educators and organisations from across the country, connected in one way or the other with exploring creative ways of learning.

Volunteers from Asha for Education have been devotedly organizing these annual conferences each year. Conducted in a semi formal milieu of panel discussion, lectures and workshops, amidst an atmosphere of celebration as in a family gathering, the events is looked forward to by all in the alternate education movement with great expectation.

Kamiriithu: What’s in the name?

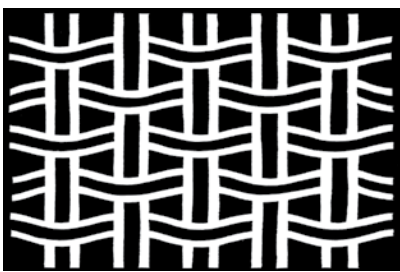
When a name was being discussed for the Multiversity Network Newsletter, we decided to opt for Africa and found our inspiration in Kamiriithu.

The Kamiriithu Community Education Centre was an unusual institution set up by African writer, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, in a village of the same name in Kenya. You can find more details of it in Ngugi’s classic book, *Decolonising the Mind*.

At the Centre, which enacted theatre, village folk could walk in, comment, act, criticise. The theatre empowered them so effectively, it became a major agency for politically aware citizens. Naturally, the then government of the day went into over drive and simply shut it down.

If you cannot locate a copy of *Decolonising the Mind* — which actually pioneers many of the themes that have led to the installation of the Multiworld Network — you can download it from the Multiversity Library website.

Multiversity at Work



The Multiversity project has been continuing its work on a very low scale of intensity for some years. We have today a network of over 300 people who are subscribers to the multiworld website. Every day at least three books are downloaded from multiversitylibrary.com by people from all over the world.

The following activities have kept us busy over the years:

1) Several issues of “Kamiriithu” have been published. The sixth issue is the one you have in your hands. We are stopping subscriptions to the journal but we are not stopping the journal which remains today wholly committed to supporting learning processes outside the framework of formal institutions, certification and course work.

However, what we now invite you to do is to part sponsor the costs of an issue at the low rate of Rs.500 (more if you can). This will enable us to continue printing the journal and sending it to people we want. We are of course also ready to send the journal to people you want. Please be generous to support this good cause.

2) The multiworld.org website is a frequently visited site for several people all over the world concerned with the issues of decolonization of knowledge, free learning, unschooling, etc. We gradually intend to make it into one of the most significant sites for open learning on the planet. Help us when and where you can.

3) The project has brought out two series of pamphlets, one under Yousef Progler and the other under Vinay Lal. The most recent publication in the Vinay Lal series (by C.K. Raju) was released in Delhi on 11th September, 2009.

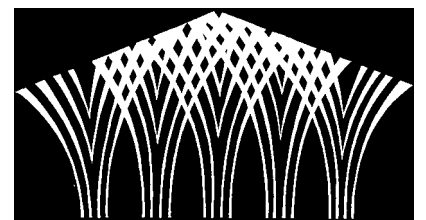
4) The Multiversity undergraduate course in philosophy is completed and ready to be circulated. We

intend to start work on other disciplines. We welcome people looking at these new curricula before we often them as informal courses on the Net.

5) The Multiversity book on “500 years of violence” is actively under preparation and should be ready for publication by the end of 2009. The book documents in graphic pictures the extent of violence perpetrated by Western societies in their encounter with those outside their borders. The scale of the violence has intensified in the past few decades, besides become increasingly senseless and extravagant. The work is being carried out with the sole purpose of questioning the need for violence.

6) Mohd. Idris and a couple of other Multiversity speakers like Ashis Nandy, the late Syed Alatas, Sultan Ismail, etc., are also found now on ‘YouTube’. Enjoy! We hope to expand this aspect of Multiversity activities with more interviews.

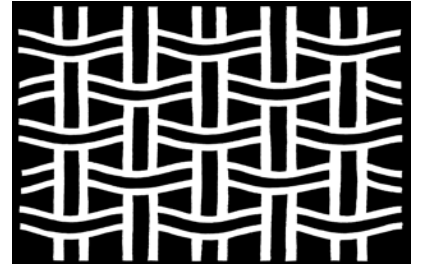
7) Under the Taleemnet label, Nyla Coelho has been networking with several groups dealing with alterna-



tive education. Two publications have emerged from those projects including one on vernacular educators. Some meetings have also taken place recently on preparing teachers for alternative schools. Taleemnet is busy these days with the compilation of the *Learning Sourcebook*, a compendium of ideas for those interested in learning in freedom.

In the coming weeks, all Multiversity related sites are being converted into WordPress blogs for easy uploading and for ensuring more up-to-date postings. www.multiworld.org will be replaced by www.multiworldindia.org for a few weeks. Thereafter, by January 2010, we should return to www.multiworld.org once again. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Taleemnet



Nai Talim at Purulia

A leaf straight out of India's education history

In his seminal work, *Hind Swaraj*, of 1909, M.K. Gandhi pointed out the defective nature of India's prevailing Educational Policy. In an attempt to draw out an appropriate education policy for the country, he convened a national meeting of educationists of the time.

They met at Wardha on 22nd and 23rd of October 1937. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Husain, there emerged a body of theory and practice of education known as Nai Talim or Basic Education – Buniyadi Shiksha.

In February 1938 at the Haripura Session of the Indian National Congress – presided over by Subhash Chandra Bose – a resolution in support of the new policy was adopted. The Provincial Congress Government then in office in several provinces accepted Gandhiji's scheme of Nai Talim for implementation.

In 1940, the Majhihira National Basic Educational Institution (MNBEI) was founded by Chitta Bhushan Dasgupta at Purulia, in today's West Bengal. Prior to its setting up, Chitta Bhushan Dasgupta spent time at Wardha in 1939 to receive his first lessons in basic education from Acharya Aryanayakan under the keen eye of Gandhi. Majhihira was deliberately selected for its remoteness, backwardness, poor economic conditions, social isolation, administrative apathy and inaccessibility as the site for setting up an ashram to impart education on the principles of Nai Talim.

Apart from the initial teething troubles in its first phase of initiation between 1940–1947, the institution faced many hurdles. During the 1942 Quit India Movement, it was declared 'unlawful' by the British government and closed down. The workers of the Institution were imprisoned. Even the school building, constructed with local help, was demolished.

In 1946 the interim Congress Government returned the confiscated property to the institution and compensated losses.

In its second phase of development (1947–1964) the institution expanded its activity of spreading and deepening the practice and value of Basic Education. Children from far-flung villages as well as urban areas were mentored here. The Institution had provision for spinning, weaving, carpentry, ironwork, gardening and agriculture, paper making, soap making, etc. Students were taught secular subjects with the aid and medium of these work-crafts. Aesthetic sensitivity was given as much importance as the development of craft skill. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, first President of the Republic of India, took interest in the working of the institution, offering valuable advice from time to time.



Chitta Bhushan and Malati Dasgupta (Jan 2007) Credit: Shyama Prasad Mandal

The 1970s saw ideological differences creeping in between the institution and the Education Department. The government withdrew grants. Vested interests wanted to see the institution turn dysfunctional. The struggle worked in the Ashram's favour and saw it rise again like a Phoenix. In 1991 under the auspices of the Human Resource Development Ministry, Govt. of India, MNBEI took up a comprehensive, innovative education programme. The 'Samagra Siksha Movement' was initiated in 100 centers in 100 villages. (All this, much prior to India's 'Sarva Siskha Abhiyan.') It endeavoured to promote the ideological perspective of Basic Education in the backdrop of contemporary needs: concern for the environment; village industries; crafts and sustainable agricultural supplementary options. The charkha became a tool for reestablishing the spirit of self-reliance amidst the younger generation.

Presently the Ashram school at Majhihira, upto secondary level, follows the syllabus of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. It retains many features of Basic Education, like spinning, safai, growing of vegetables, gardening, open air classes, instruction through play and work, etc. Even though the provision for weaving, carpentry and agriculture is still made available, these take a back seat under the obligation of completing the syllabus. The Ashram also runs a primary teacher's training institute. The work, library archives, and the ashram life itself attract many researchers, volunteers and visitors from within the country and abroad.

Malati Dasgupta, the daughter of a freedom fighter, a Maharashtrian from Nasik, came as a young bride to Chitta Bhushan in 1949. The place, language, culture as well as people in particular were all new

to her. Undaunted, within a year, she learnt Bengali and the local Manbhumi dialect. She started as a teacher at the Ashram School at Majhihira. Within a few years, Smt. Malati became the vanguard of the Ashram, retiring as its headmistress in 1982.

Both the Gandhian teachers today continue to be the guiding light of an institution that has stayed by its original vision, despite many odds. Their work has been acknowledged by prestigious lifetime achievement awards.

As Ailaan, the National Council of Rural Institute's newsletter aptly puts it, 'There is no dearth of people who can write volumes on Gandhiji. There are people who follow his teachings by the letter. But here is someone who actually implemented and practiced the spirit of Gandhian thoughts.'

Even today at 94, the charkha spins, as Chitta Bhushan dreams of the day a rural university will be set up at the ashram, making rural education come full circle, at least at Majhihira.

Dasguptaji takes recourse to quoting Khalil Gibran to express his emotional connect with Nai Talim, 'Work is love made visible.'

Address for Contact: Prasad 'Manik' Dasgupta, Majhihira National Basic Educational Institution (MNBEI), Purulia, West Bengal, E-mail: manik.dasgupta@yahoo.com; maptti@gmail.com

Web: www.majhihira-ashram.org Cell: 09732023093 Ph: 03252 – 2284499/03252 – 2284333

(Source: based on web research)

– Nyla Coelho.

"The Student's Prayer"

Don't impose on me what you know,

I want to explore the unknown

and be the source of my own discoveries.

Let the known be my liberation, not my slavery.

The world of your truth can be my limitation;

your wisdom my negation.

Don't instruct me; let's walk together.

Let my riches begin where yours ends.

Show me so that I can stand on your shoulders.

Reveal yourself so that I can be something different.

You believe that every human being can love and create.

I understand, then, your fear

when I ask you to live according to your wisdom.

You will not know who I am

by listening to yourself.

Don't instruct me; let me be.

Your failure is that I be identical to you.

– Umberto Maturana

The Community Learning Movement

'Acentralisation' as envisaged by our old man Gandhi in his Gram Swaraj is beyond the imagination of our politicians and planners! CLM is a midterm correction tool for empowering rural communities in asserting Swaraj.

- Dileep Kamat



Dileep Kamat (left) with close associate from CLM, Shivaji

The decade of the nineteen seventies was an exciting period for young activists like me. Workers, farmers, dalits, women, why, even students were on a struggle path. The two decades of 'nation building' after independence had failed miserably in meeting the basic needs and expectations of these vast majority of toiling people and youth and students saw no hope of a meaningful future. Totally dissatisfied with the trickle-down theory of 'development' which was not reaching them any benefits they were on to the streets asking for their rights.

Even though just out-of-college and totally inexperienced, we – a small group of young women and men in Belgaum – started questioning not just the Indian state which neglected the rights of the working class but also questioned the traditional left which was entrenched in trade-unionism and parliamentarism. We critiqued the left for their economism in the labour union movement and their politics limited to contesting elections. We started organizing the workers in the city and the rural poor with a view to change the 'unjust social structure' by 'politicising the working class.'

We had no clue how to go about this, nor did we have anybody to guide us. We only had a vision (or may be just a dream?) and tremendous enthusiasm. This was the general trend among youth who turned to activism. Consciously or unconsciously all these activists were political in more or less degree.

Then in the 'eighties the 'development' model's increasing degeneration of natural resources – which furthered the misery of the poor – got activists like us into the 'environmental movement'. Much before environment & ecology became a fashion throughout the world we were fighting for preserving access to the common property resources of the rural poor and were up-in-arms against 'capitalists' who were becoming increasingly aggressive in grabbing the commons for personal profit and were polluting air, water and land in the bargain.

The voluntary organizations contributed considerably to the process of building community organizations and to take up issues like gender, caste, environment and panchayat raj. All this changed however, after GATT led to the WTO regime of "globalization": liberalization and privatization were firmly established in the world including India. The voluntary organizations even changed their nomenclature and started calling themselves Non-governmental Organizations – NGOs. They became agents of the government – State and Union – and became service delivering mechanisms losing totally whatever political elements they had.

It was in this context that some disturbed activists and the National Centre for Advocacy Studies, Pune (NCAS) decided to experiment with an idea of grass roots advocacy and participatory democracy to bring back politics onto the agenda of activists at the dawn of the new millennium. We called it the Community Learning Movement. The idea was to select four 'volunteers' from each village in a cluster of 5 to 7 Gram Panchayats, i.e., about 25 villages; interact with them on a regular basis for 18 months and build collective leadership which in turn would build pressure groups at village and Gram Panchayat level which would demand good governance from PRIs (Panchayat Raj Institutions) and the Taluka as well as District Administration.

A local voluntary organization which is interested to work with this perspective is supported to make a socio-economic-political survey of say 25 villages and also select 2 women and 2 men from local CBOs who are willing to spare two days once every 3 months to come to a central place for the CLM process for the next 18 months. They are expected to take back the learnings of CLM to their field area and put these to practice. The idea is to break away the existing culture of silence and bring about the culture of questioning the authorities among the toiling

people. The working model is "do while you learn; learn while you do."

The six sessions of CLM in the one and half years have been planned as follows:

1. Vision-building and goal-setting
2. Social analysis and understanding the system, the state. Real wealth, reasons of poverty. Natural resources and human labour.
3. Democracy – formal representative democracy and participatory democracy. The Panchayat Raj system. Gram Swarajya.
4. Human Rights
 - Rights to Food
 - Right to work
 - The Supreme Court initiated nine schemes for right to food.
 - The NREGA
 - The Right to Information Act.
5. Land, water, forest and the CPRs.
 - The Land Reforms Act
 - The Forest Rights Act
 - The Jt Forest Planning & Management Scheme and the VFCs.
 - The Concept of Pani Panchayats.
6. Gender, Caste, Religion & Communalism Art & Science of Satyagraha.

In each of the five sessions, after the initial vision building, the participants present a report of their activities and experience of working, difficulties encountered and successes, if any. Then there are four interactive input sessions on the prescribed themes interspersed with songs, games and exercises and group discussions. The last group activity on the second day is planning of work and activities at their respective areas for the next three months.

I have had the privilege of facilitating nine such complete processes in Karnataka and am overwhelmed by the creative energies unleashed by the process in the local communities.

Vested interests in the countryside have manipulated the Panchayat Raj Institutions and made them into replicas of legislatures at the central and state level, i.e., once elected, the representatives are the Rajas and Ranis and the Gram Sabhas are reduced to just a formality. Decentralisation of power – which in itself is totally an inadequate concept as it first pre-supposes 'centralisation' – has mostly turned out to be decentralization of corruption. This is simply because, like at the Centre and the State, the PRIs too are permitted to exercise their decisive power only once in five years, viz., on election day. The solution lies in people asserting their rights on a day to day basis and insisting that both elected representatives and the employed bureaucracy do their job well.

Dalit women questioning the Gram Panchayat President and Secretary today, to Gram Swarajya tomorrow, may be a long long (and arduous) road; but Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi would have been happy to witness this upheaval.

Dileep Kamat,

Belgaum, Karnataka
Email: parivartandk@yahoo.co.in
Cell: 09448157588

Early days at CLM first hand



A CLM session in progress

On the second Tuesday of every month, if you happen to be at Budramhatti (near the Karnatak University's Belgaum campus off the Bangalore-Pune Golden Quadrilateral NH-4), you will notice a lone figure in cap and sunglasses make his way on a motorcycle on dusty terrain and wobbly tracks through the open scrubland of the hills behind this campus. This is Dileep Kamat, facilitator of the Community Learning Movement, making his way to one of the cluster of hill top villages. Kadoli, Kattanbhavi, Bambarge, Godihal, Ningyanatti, Idelhond, are small villages that have had a long-standing association with this son of the soil.

The venue for a CLM session is usually the premises of the village temple or a community hall and on a day with pleasant weather, it may take place outdoors under the shade a tree.

The participants have also prepared themselves for the day. All routine chores would have been attended to early. Animals fed, grazed, milked; sheds washed; gardens watered; and farms attended to. Since a common meal is also cooked at the end of 'lessons' with provisions brought from their homes, a few would have reached early to set the fireplace and gather some dry fuel from around. About half a dozen youngsters, still in middle school, miss classes for the day to participate. Walking a distance of three to seven kms from the neighbouring villages, youngsters begin to converge at the temple by around 10-30 am - their temple of wisdom for the day. About 20 are enrolled; it is a mixed age group of young adults and teenagers. The youngest, Pintoo, is aged eleven.

Interactive sessions begin at 11am with a prayer. The atmosphere is alive and informal, with generally a circular seating arrangement on a mat. Midway however, the youngest ones may decide to take a walk to bring down a few mangoes from a nearby tree, move away to sit perched on a tree to watch a busy squirrel, a circling eagle or flitting butterfly.

Very often visiting city folk come to witness the dynamics of the CLM with their kids.

At these times the youngsters are always keen to teach the visiting city kids how to knock down mangoes, pick berries without being bruised by thorns, play marbles, spin tops, fly kites and play an indigenous checker game with tamarind seeds and pieces of coloured broken bangle.

The topic of the day usually evolves from the previous session and is previously decided. This helps, as everyone would have a month's time to discuss, contemplate and analyse the theme. The day's collective session would bring together each one's understanding of the issue. With Dileep as facilitator, the group progresses from presentation to discussion, role-play, jest and very often a heated debate to make a point. Since these youngsters have been actively involved in this learning process and have learnt the art of thinking for themselves it is not surprising to have sessions conclude in a stalemate. All, however, acknowledge and respect individuality and agree to disagree.

Chart paper with coloured pens are used to demonstrate and articulate opinions and ideas in words, diagrams and drawings. Topics covered could range from food security, water, forests, agriculture, environment, advocacy, panchayat and citizen rights, alternative energy, budgeting, cooperative and barter markets, health and nutrition, relationships to prevalent village issues.

All topics begin by relating to self and then to the outer circle of family, community, village, and town, national and global implications. Every participant has the freedom to express himself fully. Dileep facilitates, coordinates and guides the participants through the various streams of ideas and opinions. He has the uncanny ability to simplify the most complex issues making it comprehensible to all. It is no wonder then that the group is pressing for fortnightly sittings rather than the present arrangement of once a month.

The resulting output 'charts' are taken back by the participants to their villages and go up as posters in the village community hall, temple or a community space.

On the day of my (Nyla) visit the interactive session on 'Food Security' encompassed and laid bare a vast range of topics: growing of food, its relation to soil types, local environment, effects of growing crops unsuitable to local conditions, unemployment, market distribution, farm economics, water, weather... It is interesting to see that in the short span of a three-hour session so much learning, understanding and an action plan evolved. The participants are convinced that desired change could be brought about only through understanding of an issue followed by individual and collective action.

As testimony to this, the youngsters volunteered to show me around their community watershed projects, their village tank, the solar run motors for pumping water, the village forest regeneration programmes, contour bunds, check dams, community well, marking along contours with an 'A' frame for plantation in the watershed, the rainwater harvesting experiments, the compost pits and biogas plants.

The teenagers of CLM would give any mainstream educated peer a distinct feeling of discomfort and inferiority with their knowledge of applied geography, geometry, agricultural practices, waste recycling, reforestation, ecology, implementing collaborative and cooperative endeavors, management of common assets and alternate energy systems.

Goramatti a hamlet of dam oustees with about 20 households and a population of 110 is like a 'model village'. Each house has its own composting unit, biogas, coconut trees and a front yard. Even the forest department now capitalises on its successful community managed forests by placing it on the itinerary of international funders and visitors.

The session winds up with simple report writing and personal note jottings. The group then break up to cook a simple common meal. This is supplemented with generous contributions of pickle, buttermilk, roties and chutney from the host village. Lunch is a time to catch up with friends, discuss local issues and relax.

ABL Baseline Report just Released

There was much excitement and discussion among people connected with education when the Activity Based Learning (ABL) programme was first introduced into the Government schools of Chennai.

Incubated initially in approximately 260 schools of the Corporation of Chennai from 2003 to 2006, it was then extended from June 2007 onwards to 37,500 government and government aided schools across the state under the direction of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Department of Education, Tamil Nadu.

ABL adapted methods from Rishi Valley's RIVER programme and select practices of Montessori pedagogy for multi-grade and multi-level classrooms for classes I-IV.

The present study is the officially commissioned Baseline and year-end survey done by SchoolScape in collaboration with SSA, Tamil Nadu. It takes a detailed look into the classroom processes and some aspects of the learning environment available to children in Classes II and IV and looks at the progress made in Tamil, Mathematics and English after the intervention of the Activity Based Learning methodology.

The ABL models in Tamil Nadu are very comprehensive and exciting as case studies for other States. The strong political and managerial support to the programme has made a vital difference to its implementation. There is a strong demand form private schools for sharing of the ABL methodology. In Dharmapuri district, 505 students moved from private schools to panchayat schools where ABL was implemented.

This report which runs into 123 pages and the previous ones can be downloaded from: <http://www.ssa.tn.nic.in/downloads.htm>

By late afternoon everyone begins to head home with a sense of self worth, pride and belonging.

CLM is proof that pockets in India still care for their young and are ready to make the effort of contributing towards making learning a meaningful exercise.

Goramatti, 2001

Nyla Coelbo

Syamantak - School Without Walls

When their daughter turned three, Sachin and Minal, both city folks from Bhopal, decided to quit city life so as to avoid its corrupting influences on their daughter and took to the country roads. Dhamapur, a small village nestled amongst the green mountains of Sindhudurg dist.in Konkan Maharashtra seemed the ideal place to head to. Sachin's grandfather generously offered them the use of his family home. And so was born, Syamantak - the school without walls!

Syamantak is inspired by M K Gandhi and mentored by Dr. Srinath Kalbag, a scientist turned educator. All learning is concerned with an individual's right to be able to sustain herself/himself in her/his place of birth. It is driven by the conviction that every individual should be able to live and learn in ones own natural surroundings and that nobody should ever have to leave their place of birth for the lack of a proper livelihood or an educational opportunity.

All learning is self directed; based on interest; observation; exploration; and experimentation. Students live as a family, all housekeeping chores are shared amidst a cordial non intrusive ambience. Students learn to grow their own organic vegetables, conduct experiments in horticulture practices, recycle and compost all waste, build their own toilet and sewage disposal system, construct a gobar gas plant linked to kitchen waste and the toilet, design their own buildings, make complicated architectural drawings, carry out constructions, identify flora and fauna and even handle snakes- fellow habitants to anyone who lives close to nature, analyze blood, soil and water samples, sew and knit and do much more.



The School Without Walls is about learning about everything, including care of village animals

The nuances of figuring out how things work, is done very simply by pulling things apart and then reassembling. Be it a cycle, generator set or a motor bike, there is no hesitation amongst any to have a go at dismantling it into its individual components of nuts, bolts, plastic, glass, wires and metal.

The day also packs in time for yoga, a morning jog, dung collection for the bio digester and composting pits, organizing games for the children of the neighbourhoods, maintaining accounts and nutritional diet charts.

A chart on the wall with stars against names tells its own story of innovations such as: a ferro-cement basin, coal from biomass, green-house geodisc dome free of vertical support structures etc.

At one time, water supply for the garden was a major problem. In order to transfer water from the nearby well, Mohammad Shaikh developed a simple mechanism using rubber visors (made from cycle tube) and a polyvinyl pipe.

Students are awarded carbon credits for sustainable practices and are mandated to earn Rs. 1000/- during the year through various work undertaken on the premises or in the village. Cooking in the common kitchen and meal times are occasions for bonding, exchange of ideas and discussion.

Community work around the village is of many kinds:

During the Ganesha festival, students collected the Nirmalya – degradable flowers and other adornments of the idols to be converted to compost. Dhamapur with a population of 1200 had 164 Ganesha idols. The festival generated 169 kgs. of Nirmalya and 60 kgs of plastic. All of it was collected and recycled by the students.

Toilet construction in the village earned them a grand sum of Rs. 4,200/-

Students use festivals as an opportunity to spread a value related message and to connect with the local community. Diwali is seen as an opportunity to spread the message of a safe, pollution free and smokeless Diwali.

Steps towards sustainability

Production of superior quality vermicompost: 12 tons per month. Soil and compost quality testing is also undertaken.

Production of bio-mass coal and steam cooking- experiments are presently on for refining output quality and quantity.

Production of bamboo solar dryer: cost as per size - Rs 550 onwards. Cashew apples are wasted in the Konkan except in the State of Goa where it is processed locally into Fenny. Syamantak has devised a technique to dry cashew apples. These taste

somewhat like dried figs/dates and can be used as a dry fruit after drying in the solar dryer. This throw away fruit contains 80% calcium, vitamin B and proteins. It is also useful in the treatment of illness like cough, heart weakness, flatulence, memory weakness, tummy aches, fever, worm trouble etc. The solar drier has shown successful results with onion, coriander, potatoes, & kokum.

Syamantak is a rare but very much alive example of what Gandhiji had envisaged for rural India. Although Sachin and Minal may be a rare species, they are very much there - making a point. Given the turmoil and uncertainty the planet is facing today, sooner than later we may need to take a cue from them.

Syamantak offers a one year residential programme to pupils in the age group of 14 to 21. It is recognised by the National Open School. The programme is officially certified as a Diploma in Rural Technology.

Address for contact: Sachin and Minal Desai, 163, At post Dhamapur, Taluka Malvan, District Sindhudurg, Pin.416 605, Maharashtra, India. Ph: 02365-255 620 Cell: 9404164945

Email: admin@syamantak.org Web: <http://syamantak.cfsites.org/>

Watch Syamantak videos and movie on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtuPEfPoigk>; <http://www.cultureunplugged.com/play/1604/A-Day-In-The-Life-of-Syamantak>

– Nyla Coelho



Students prepare metal frames for casting. Why can't all schools be run this way?



Insights from Education Initiatives

Beginning of SIDH Work

Our work in education over the last 20 years has been a journey in recognizing, acknowledging and then responding to the assumptions (on education) within us.

Our initiative took shape at the request of the village community of Jaunpur, a tribal block in the Himalayan region of Tehri Garhwal in Uttarakhand. The villages here were very small (about 10-15 families in a village) and remote, with no proper access. Walking time between two villages could be as much as a few hours which made it difficult for young children to go to a school located in a different village.

So SIDH schools were started to cater to children from villages which did not have any other school. But within a very short time we realized that the kind of education given in schools in general is doing more harm than good. The emphasis on textbook-based learning had the sole objective of getting the students to pass the exams instead of acquiring knowledge, or gaining any useful skills and confidence in themselves. With the result, the students ended up with a deep-seated inferiority about their culture and traditional life-style. This they camouflage through a false attitude and arrogance.

The issues in Education

They start looking down upon whatever is their own (be it their language, lifestyle, culture, traditional knowledge or their parental/ ancestral professions, etc.); they become lazy and reluctant to do any work with their hands. On the other hand, since they do not acquire any useful skill, they are not even equipped to find any decent employment in the organized sector. This leads to frustration and loss of self esteem. So, actually, they are worse off than before when they didn't go through this schooling. Today we can say that by and large this is true even for our urban middle class school students. They may have a smattering of English which may give them a (false) sense of confidence in a country which still suffers from a colonial hangover, but originality and creativity in Indian schools is a rarity. If at all we were to find it, the reason would have to be traced to the environment of the student's home and not the school.

So we realized rather painfully that we were actually doing more harm by imparting this so-called education. Yet, we did not have the courage to say 'no'. We also did not understand, at the time, why education should bring about this alienation, leading to inferiority and false attitudes. Why should it turn us into mindless imitators of the West?

Understanding

It was via Shri Dharampal that we got re-introduced to Mahatma Gandhi and his writings. And it was through Gandhiji that we understood the genesis of this problem. The irony is that most educated people in India think (actually assume) that they know Mahatma Gandhi without actually having read anything spoken or written by him. Their opinions (both positive and negative) about Gandhiji are more often than not formed on hearsay. We too fell in the same category. Therefore reading the Mahatma was an eye opener. Not only the equation between the home and school leading to inferiority propelling the student to mindless



SIDH run Boodshala at Musoorie

imitation (of the West) became clear, it also became obvious that the mainstream education was infected by modernity and the singular definition of 'development' imposed the world over and imbibed unquestioningly...

It is worth noting that the Mahatma never used the word 'development' in the manner it is being used today – the meaning which the word has acquired post independence. It is worth researching if anyone else, both from our part of the world as well as from the West, have used this word 'development' in its present connotation before the late 40s. This is an imposition to control and herd people in a particular direction. And modern education has played the most significant role in perpetuating the myth of 'development'.

Instead of liberating people, education has become the most powerful (perhaps invisible) instrument of control. There is a direct co-relation between the modern civilisational values, perpetuated by modern education and loss of control over one's life, increased dependency for every aspect of life over outside factors (e.g. the market) and harbouring false expectations, which more often than not is confused with a desire to be free.

Modernity enslaves us while creating an illusion that we are becoming free by revealing only the superficial aspects of reality while keeping the essential levers of control invisible and remote. The modern system is faceless and while a lot of song and dance is made about accountability, actually there is no accountability because the system is remote. Who do you blame? The law? But not the lawmaker – they are faceless. So the judicial system ends up merely taking decisions by interpreting (questionable) laws while giving the impression that justice is being done. The exploiter is invisible and the exploited ironically becomes an accomplice in the game of exploitation.

Education in its true sense is only a means available to human beings for imparting understanding to be able to live a happy and healthy life in harmony with other fellow beings and in a mutually complementary manner with all other components of nature. To be free means to be able to live in harmony with oneself and with all other components of nature. Everything about the various streams and dimensions of education can be derived from this understanding. It can also be a yardstick to measure if one's efforts are on the right path.

Mahatma Gandhi felt strongly that Indians needed to learn how to say 'no'. Instead our insipid education makes us say 'Yes sir' when we don't mean it! This is what education was for him – making one fearless. Unlike today's education which is bent instead on turning people into mindless and obedient citizens of the state. Mechanical consumers playing an unknowing destructive part in a monolithic structure (each and every one of us is, willy-nilly, contributing to pollution, adulteration, corruption and tension, because the monolithic system is such) we have created all around (offices or factories or systems) by losing our identity and freedom, at best fighting for rights within pre-defined categories of law. Education turns us into helpless victims and exploiters at the same time. The victim has become an accomplice in the strategy to subjugate people.

Those who are trying to find meaningful alternatives to present day education know this only too well. The struggle is not just with the system but also with the parents, the teachers, the students and even internally within us. The pressures of a degree/ certificate compel us to adhere to one system or the other. This in itself is quite restrictive. The craze for English medium (and *angreziat* which is often camouflaged under the demand for leaning English) is another challenge.

SIDH Innovations in Education

So within these limitations what SIDH is attempting is to try and open the mind of the students by enhancing their understanding (knowledge as against information); use as much of the local (both physical and cultural) milieu (instead of only the textbook) to impart knowledge and understanding, introduce certain activities (farming, other manual work and vocational skills) as part of school curriculum and try to teach various subjects in an integrated manner.

We try to teach 'how to think' rather than 'what to think'.

We have developed handbooks for teachers (not students) to help them teach by making the local as the context. We have made a list of distinctions that we use for enhancing understanding of the students. The teachers (across all subjects) look out for an opportunity to discuss the distinctions. Some of the distinctions are as follows:

- literacy vs. education;
- words (specific to a language) vs. meaning (universal);
- assuming/ believing vs. knowing;
- information vs. knowledge;
- knowing the technique vs. understanding the concept;
- opposite vs. different;
- skill (doing) vs. knowing (understanding);
- reacting vs. responding;
- hearing (without understanding the other) vs. listening;
- hearing vs. understanding;
- seeing vs. understanding;
- seeing vs. observing;
- agreeing/ disagreeing (with the other) vs. understanding (the other);
- imposed value vs. real value etc. etc.

We take care to get it across that these distinctions are not opposites but different.

We also stress on reaching an understanding through observation rather than only through the process of (logical) explanation. We also emphasise on the existence and importance of (different) perspectives. The idea ultimately is to make both the child and the teacher responsible where each is enhancing their understanding in the process of learning/ teaching.

We make it a point to present the four states in nature:

- the material (earth, water, air, minerals etc.),
- the pranic (all greenery/ vegetation),
- the animals and birds and
- human beings.

Out of these four the only state which has no growth is the material state. We can only convert one form of material state into another but there is no growth here. Yet ironically the entire edifice of 'development' is based on material growth – where there is no growth!

Looking Forward...

Gandhiji understood this basic contradiction long back and dared to ask simple questions and thus challenge the premises of modernity. We are too scared of asking simple innocent questions for fear of being branded retrograde, regressive, backward looking, traditionalists and for fear of being politically incorrect.

But there is no option but to ask simple questions and continue doing experiments even if they are embarrassing because the crises are looming large. We cannot hide behind modern myths too long. For those of us working in the area of education it is important to examine the assumptions of our systems, in particular in the kind of education we are attempting to impart; we need to examine the assumptions of 'development' and see the alignment between the two sets.

– Pawan Gupta
October 15, 2009

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Interview with Shiv Dutt on Nai Talim

Shiv Dutt was former Secretary of the Nai Talim Samiti originally set up by Gandhiji himself. He is also the author of two recent volumes on Nai Talim, 'Samagraha Nai Talim' and 'Nai Talim'. Ram Subramaniam interviewed Shiv Dutt on behalf of Kamirithu

K: What according to you is the essence of Nai Talim?

Shiv Dutt: If we look at it simply, Nai Talim can be seen as learning through work. That people learn (through work) to qualify for a certain work is not the objective. The objective is to learn through working. This method of acquiring knowledge is the core to Nai Talim.

Gandhiji has maintained that upto standard VII – whatever is being provided through the conventional schooling system – students will gain much more knowledge through Nai Talim. It is also different from the 'project method' and Montessori systems of education that are popular. Here the children do real time work; they are not doing some 'project' kind of work. The medium of learning is handicraft, which is connected with ones surroundings; environment; social reality; and livelihood related capacity building. The school will reflect the way the society functions and the students will learn how to cooperate and work with one another. The true value of a democratic way of life will become the sanskara of the children in this form of education.

Nai Talim also gives emphasis to the scientific learning methods, because it proceeds from the question of why, what and how. When children start 'doing' something, such questions occur to their minds naturally. Here the children learn these sciences by actually 'doing', so they don't have to learn by rote. Hence they learn its use immediately. They 'know' the phenomena, though they may not know the 'subjects' and categories to which these belong.

K: What would be the medium of education?

Shiv Dutt: Medium of education is through a craft. The modern education system has reading and writing as its medium. This is not the only method through which we gain knowledge. Our levels of perceptions are much higher and we gain knowledge through all of them. Nai Talim gives due importance to all these different methods of gaining knowledge. That is why handicrafts are central to this method. Every subject can be taught through craft itself. Everything can be co-related, including language, science, mathematics, different art forms, social sciences and natural sciences.

This has been amply proved through the experiments in Sevagram and Vrindavan in Bihar (Champan district). These are the two best examples of Nai Talim. The one in Champan was government driven while the one in sevagram was non-government. Both proved that upto the level of higher education this system works.

K: Why did Nai Talim fail to sustain interest?

Shiv Dutt: Nai Talim did not fail. It just did not find adequate understanding, particularly among those who were responsible for its implementation, the bureaucrats.



Shiv Dutt makes a point during a talk on Nai Talim

K: How did Gandhiji arrive at Nai Talim?

Shiv Dutt: Nai Talim emerged out of several decades of Gandhiji's experiments with the education system. In 1937, Gandhiji had written several articles on education, particularly between March and October that year. He wrote a comprehensive article on education which was discussed through a meeting at Sevagram that was convened on the 22nd of October. Several people were opposed to his proposal even then. Government officials always had problems with this system of education.

K: What was their objection?

Shiv Dutt: They thought it was a costly system to maintain. Gandhiji was interested to make the village self-sufficient and would be able to sustain a school. People in the government were of the view that Nai Talim was more expensive than ordinary school. Thanks to such people, the seriousness to take it forward was gone.

Since 1951, the economic policies that were adopted worked against the concept of Nai Talim. The society was not modelled on the lines that Gandhiji envisaged. People tried to restrict its context to rural and tribal living as against the more 'developed' urban living.

K: What was the spread of Nai Talim during its peak days?

Shiv Dutt: According to government data, Nai Talim was at its peak in 1955-56. 'Buniyadi siksha' as it was called then, had in all about 47,813 functioning schools spread across the country with a total enrolment of 50,60,207 students. There were 1,11,347 junior level and 39,672 senior level teachers.

The highest numbers of Teacher Training Schools were found in Bihar, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh etc. as these states were supportive of Nai Talim. A matter of significance is that, this was not a small scale experiment, but a functioning system of education widespread during those days.

K: And yet it was given up?

Shiv Dutt: The government was never for it. The political leaders supported it. Nehru was all for it, though he wanted it to be made less expensive. The bureaucracy resisted it right from the beginning. Every one of the post-Independent commis-

sions or committees on education starting from the Sargent report, Radhakrishnan commission on university education to the most recent NCERT report, have all cited and drawn from the Nai Talim framework.

The Kothari commission of 1966, supposedly on "complete learning" reduced this form of education to 'work experience' and allotted it a token one period per week. This token acknowledgement has since then had a bearing on the thinking of the government on work based learning. Even today, people refer to it, but not completely.

Nai Talim didn't fail because we never attempted to implement it fully. The idea of head-hand-heart based learning that Nai Talim prescribed was for the all round growth of physical, intellectual and spiritual faculties. It is not to be confused with an education linked to livelihood.

K: How do you see the current interest in Nai Talim?

Shiv Dutt: Whoever thinks or has thought of education with seriousness since Gandhiji's times; being unsatisfied with what is on offer, has arrived at Nai Talim eventually. This has surfaced in different ways from time to time. The past 4-5 years have seen a more concentrated interest in this form of education. Krishnakumar and several others seem to understand Nai Talim, unfortunately the tendency to reduce Nai Talim to another form or method of education still prevails.

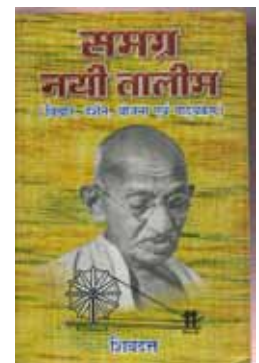
For Gandhiji, Nai Talim was a method of ushering in a society that he elaborated in Hind Swaraj. He realized that education was the tool through which society can be changed. The future of the country could be built through this system.

Books by Shiv Dutt

Samagraha Nai Talim (Hindi) (2007) Published by the Nai Talim Samiti and currently available through the Gandhi Seva Sangh.

How did Gandhi arrive at Nai Talim? His experiments for 40 years on education, followed from the time he had undergone 'a' form of education that gave him a digree but did not equip him with the skill to argue in court. He started to teach

his children and his brother's children at home. This continued through his stay in South Africa and manifested as several school initiatives.



In 1917, during the Indigo movement in Champaran, Gandhiji started several schools including one at the Sabarmathi ashram. He arrived at the idea of Nai Talim after going through several such experiments. This he felt to be the true Indian education. At sevagram the syllabus for pre-primary to the university level was developed.

All this and more are chronologically tracked and documented in the first book.

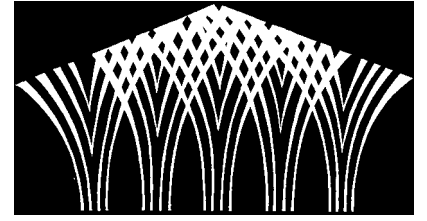
Nai Talim (Hindi) (2009) Published through the Gandhi Seva Sangh.

The book chronicles the status of Nai Talim from 1937 onwards - the actual work in different states - both government and non government; the various commissions of the government from 1937 to 2004 and, their impact on the education system. The various education conferences and how they did influence education in the country- there were several of these particularly in the 1950s. The book has a detailed account on some of the important experiments, particularly the Sevagram attempt, which has been elaborated in 60-80 pages.

The concluding part of the book deals with the Gandhian idea of society, the life and social philosophy and their relation with different types of educational methods. This is a comparative study on different 'alternative' systems that have come to hold sway since Nai Talim, and their strengths and weaknesses. It ends with suggestions on how Nai Talim could be revived.

BRINGING COLOUR BACK INTO ACADEMIC STUDIES

Multiversity



Swaraj University Launched

Swaraj University is a unique educational vision whose time has come. Anchored and conceptualized by Nitin Paranjpe, Reva Dandage, Manish Jain, Deborah Frieze; all well known for their consistent engagements for bring about a systemic change in perspective to paths of living and learning.

Building on the traditions of MK Gandhi's Nai Talim and Rabindranath Tagore's Shanti Niketan, the effort proposes to redefine the process of learning and its outcomes.

Designed on the concept of self designed - self directed learning and the rotating campus, the learner is assisted in his pursuits and learning journey through a strong support structure of stewards, mitras, peer cohorts, personal feedback (self appraisal) reflections and ustaads.

SU works on the premise that the world is its campus and the best practices in diverse communities its curriculum. Learners will converge every few months to spend a few weeks together to co-learn and interact with the Ustaads. The rotating campus will converge at hubs in Udaipur, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Nasik, Indore.

The three year learning programme creates opportunities for young learners to develop the knowledge, skills and perspectives they need to generate viable green collar enterprises and to support healthy resilient local communities.

The heart of the programme would lie in a one-to-one learning relationship with Ustaads like Claude Alvares, Anju Uppal, Deepak Suchde, all individuals that one connects with a deep commitment to nurturing the earth and its dwellers. These are torch bearers of an alternate vision; dedicated to working towards reversals for restoring the planet's colour from blue to green.

Swaraj University invites you on board to be a partner in their "Blue to Green" revolution.

Swaraj University, 39 Old Fatehpura (First Floor), Udaipur - 313 004, Rajasthan, India

Cell: 09414155919 Ph: 0294-2451303

Email: swarajuni@gmail.com

Web: www.swarajuniversity.org

The Story of Mpambo: the Afrikan

Multiversity centred around the wise and rooted in the community

In the late 1990s Paulo Wangoola relocated to Uganda to found the Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity. It was to serve as an "Intellectual Hothouse" and stimulus for Afrika's best and brightest minds from amongst the community-based, organic mother-tongue intellectuals, scholars, philosophers, their students and those who wished to learn with them.

At the time, he was convinced that the formal education system in Afrika, by opting to use European foreign languages as the medium of instruction, as well as for intellectual and academic discourse, could not engage with the masses nor benefit them.

The Central objective of Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity is the promotion, advancement, interpretation and presentation of the Afrikan knowledge base, epistemology and ways of knowing.

The university is presently engaged in creating 'The House of Indigenous Cultures and Spirituality', whose focus will be to look for ways of healing the earth and its people with the spiritual knowledge of the indigenous peoples in Africa and the indigenous cultures from the rest of the world, especially from South American nations and Canada.

Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity has several co-learning programmes with the



Paulo Wangoola

First Nations People through the Dept. of Indigenous Knowledges and Learning at Victoria University, B.C. Canada.

Mpambo is the outcome of the collective intellectual labours of several Afrikan scholars, social leaders and activists over a series of strategic consultations and discussions that took place over a period of eight years starting 1990.

For more information visit <http://mpambomultiversity.org/> Or write to Mpambo Afrikan Multiversity, P.O. Box 7314 Kampala, Uganda, East Africa / Email: mpambo@yahoo.com

Multiversity on YouTube

Several Visionaries of the Multiversity Project are now on youtube.

Recently, on a spur of the moment decision, we decided to video record Haji Mohamed Idris at Penang, Malaysia, while he spoke on several Multiversity related themes. Here is the link to the recordings uploaded on youtube in five parts: www.youtube.com/user/multiworldindia

Others you will find on youtube are:

- Ashis Nandy: <http://j.mp/ashisnandy>
- Sayed Alatas: <http://j.mp/sayedatalatas>
- Sultan Ismail: <http://j.mp/sultanismail> and <http://j.mp/sultanismail2>
- Paulo Wangoola: <http://j.mp/paulowangoola>
- Vinay Lal: <http://j.mp/vinaylal>

National Council of Rural Institutes (NCRI)

#5-10-174, Shakar Bhavan, II Floor, Fateh Maidan Road, Hyderabad- 500 004
Ph: 040-23212120, 23212813
E-Mail : info@ncri.in Web: www.ncri.in

NCRI was established in 1995, by the Government of India, at Hyderabad with the objective of promoting comprehensive rural higher education. Its mandate states that, its plans, policies and programmes should be based on Gandhian ideas and places special importance to the promotion of Nai Talim or Gandhi's ideas of Basic Education.

NCRI has been functioning as a catalyst organisation, helping rural institutes, Gandhian organisations, NGOs, universi-

ties and state government agencies in various projects connected with the promotion of rural higher education.

The objectives of its Nai Talim Centre is to standardise the Nai Talim curriculum; support Nai Talim schools to develop as 'Models of Practice Based Learning'; conduct workshops/seminars to increase awareness among various academic circles regarding Nai Talim; promote research activities towards development and integration of Nai Talim curriculum with mainstream education; and to include a module on Nai Talim in the teacher training curriculum.



Pottery and film making attract people at Swaraj University



Multiversity Library

Learning the Heart Way

Pp. 118 (2008) Rs.150

Coming from an ordinary middle class environment in Andhra, Samyuktha decided to opt out of the "rat race of learning": the endless tests and scores; the straitjacket imposed by college disciplines which actually narrowed down the world of learning to mugging badly written texts of history, political science, economics, psychology or sociology; the endless chase for an MBA. Instead she created her own higher education curriculum, one that suited her heart and mind. The result is a marvellous book on learning as if the heart mattered. Samyuktha's live-wire book may dramatically alter the way young people think about college or university education in future.



Danger School

Pp. 106 (2008) Rs.120

Also printed by popular demand, as the disenchantment with schooling and discovery of its sinister purposes grows. *Danger School!* is largely in the form of cartoons. It attacks the industrial institution of schooling youngsters with a great deal of humour, but sharply establishes the point that children and factory schooling do not go together, that their interests are irrevocably opposed. After reading it, parents may be kinder to their children and harsher with the teachers and school administrators instead.

Work and Wisdom of Vernacular Educators from India

By Taleemnet / Multiversity
Pp. 147 (2006) Rs. 150

Taleemnet, a branch of Multiversity, introduces twelve educational pioneers in India, who have been working in education in their own mother tongue, using their own (often meagre) resources and endowments. Their insights into education have remained mostly unavailable to the world at large, simply because of the restrictions of language. Useful to all those interested in alternative education.

...for they have their own thoughts

By Taleemnet
Pp. 58 (2006) Rs.60

Taleemnet and Abhivyakti invited path-breaking educators working with learning communities to a four day gathering in Goa. Over sixty attended. This book reports on that meeting. It has brief biographies of the participants, their views on different aspects of education, interviews with some of them and of course snippets of wisdom. All in a very easy-to-read format.

Learning from Gandhi

Anu Bandyopadhyaya
Pp. 142 (2004) Rs. 150

Lawyer, tailor, cobbler, cook - and dozens of other jobs as well - Mahatma Gandhi did them all. No work was too low, no occupation too disdainful. Even the simplest of labours was carried out with humour, passion, care and zest. And to perfection. Learning involves not just the head, but the heart and the hand as well.

Summerhill

A.S. Neill
Pp. 326 (2007) Rs.175

The great champion of free learning writes a major exposition of his ideas and shows them operating in practice at summerhill.

The Under-Achieving School

John Holt
Pp. 166 (2005) Rs.100

Holt's well known indictment of schools as places that prevent learning (How children learn, how children fail - books now out of print) has long ago shattered the myth of our modern educational institutions. In this book Holt turns from a general analysis of education to an examination of specific problems of education today: the tyranny of testing, the rat race for college, compulsory attendance, school failures and teachers who demand obedience above all else.

Escape from Childhood

John Holt
Pp. 180 (2003) Rs.100

All about the needs and rights of children. Holt offers a compassionate re-evaluation of how we treat our children.

Teacher

Sylvia Ashton-Warner
Pp. 191 (2003) Rs.150

This seminal work is essential reading for educationists, parents and anyone concerned about children.

Democratic Schools

Michael W Apple and J.A. Beane
Pp. 148 (2006) Rs.110

First published a decade ago, this Indian reprint tells the story of four schools (in the USA) that have successfully put in place democratic and critical educational practices as guides to their curriculum.

Education For Living Creatively and Peacefully

By Devi Prasad
Pp. 157 (2005) Rs. 175

Devi Prasad is a freedom fighter, a Gandhian, an artist and a craftsman. He graduated from Rabindranath Tagore's school in Santiniketan. In this book he writes on the educational insights of Tagore and Gandhi and argues why Art Education should be the core of the curriculum process.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

By Paulo Freire
Pp. 51 (2005) Rs. 50

Citizens International has published as a pamphlet, the first chapter of one of the most famous tracts on how to reconstruct ways of learning that will liberate rather than oppress.

Redefining Education

Ivan Illich
Pp. 45 (2003) Rs.30

An essay on why we must disestablish School - extracted from the book *Deschooling Society* by the celebrated thinker and philosopher. Compulsory reading for anyone having anything to do with modern education.

How School Affects Your Kids

Consumers Association of Penang
Pp. 68 (2002) Rs.55

Read it so you take adequate steps to contain the damage.

The Story of Nai Talim

Marjorie Sykes
Pp. 103 (1998) Rs.20

The remarkable story of Gandhi's Nai Taleem (basic education) experiments, written extremely well and with passion. The account is personal and based on first-hand experience, hence its total freshness.

Art: The Basis of Education

Devi Prasad
Pp. 182 (1998) Rs.85

A pioneering study on the importance of art as a foundation for the education of the individual.

Back to the Sources

Henry Fagg
Pp. 84 (2002) Rs.45

A study of Gandhi's basic education system of ideas.

Divasvapna

Gijubhai Badheka
Pp. 104 (1995) Rs.35

Divasvapna, meaning daydreams, was first published in Gujarati in 1931. It has been reprinted several times. It beautifully reconstructs a school that brings children to life. Buy copies and give to teachers as presents.

Ideas for the Classroom

Pp. 191 (2007) Rs.200

For teachers who want to bring learning back into their dreary classrooms, here's a breath of fresh air: a series of bright new ideas of how you can teach the same subjects you are teaching right now, -- history, economics, ecology, art, media, even ornithology -- but with a thrust that will get the child involved. The practical essays, written by various Krishnamurti School teachers, were first published in the *Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools*.

Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window

Tetsuko Kuroyanagi
Pp. 208 Rs.80

The classic tale of an ideal school in Tokyo during World War II that combined learning with fun, freedom and love.

Education and Peace

Jane Sabi
Pp. 148 (2002) Rs.100

Innovative ideas on educational issues.

The Open Classroom

K.T. Margaret
Pp. 220 (2005) Rs.150

K.T. Margaret believes that life is an open classroom and education a process that takes place throughout a person's life. Through an account of her personal journey she shows that education goes beyond the mechanics of teaching and learning, to enrich the teacher and the taught.

The Secret of Childhood

Maria Montessori
Pp. 239 (2006) Rs.140

Dr Montessori is well known for the revolutionary method of education she introduced early this century. In this classic work she expounds her conviction that in the child there are laws of growth in character and disposition as marked as those in his/her physical life.

The Discovery of the Child

Maria Montessori
Pp. 378 (2004) Rs.250

Revised and enlarged edition of the Montessori method.

The Child's Language and the Teacher

Krishna Kumar
Pp. 73 (2000) Rs.30

While exploring the role of language in the lives of children, this book also suggests various games and activities to hone their cognitive skills.

White Studies

Ward Churchill
Pp. 40 (2002) Rs.30

The Western rationalist, materialist, modernist outlook is reflected in the academic regime of White Studies American education today. Why is the rest of the world adopting these narrow intellectual assumptions when they have their own locally relevant and humanely intellectual traditions?



Multiversity Library

Learning Beyond Schooling

By Chong Wai Leng
Pp. 206 (2008) Rs.390

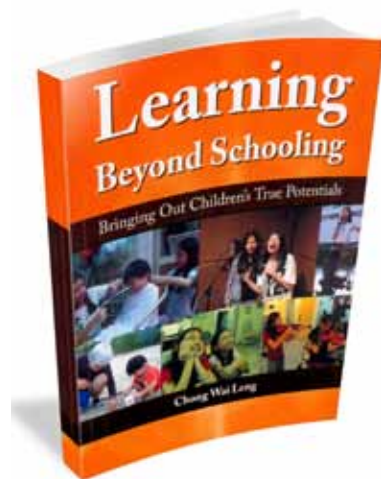
It takes a lot to not gripe about the education system and get on with doing something about it. Chong Wai Leng and her husband, KV Soon, did some deep thinking on what education meant to them as a family in the context of their own children. The conclusion was simple - education ought to be a liberating force! If that was the case, then, they would have to be in control.

This was over a decade ago. Since then, they have home educated their children; offered a dedicated website - www.familyplace.com to the world; have lectured and counseled on scores of occasions; initiated homeschooling discussions both in physical and virtual space; and authored a few books on education.

Set in the context of the Malaysian Education system, Learning Beyond Schooling is written by homeschooling parents for parents. It unfolds endless possibilities - for those game enough- to take education beyond its conventional meaning.

Set in two parts, the first takes the reader through the present education system in Malaysia, which at best caters to the average rule abiding student. It carries citations from testimonials and official reports where in, children are forced to cope with a design that has little scope for paying attention to individual learning needs. It quotes studies undertaken by National Bodies themselves; which show that school systematically reduces a child's interest in education and learning. Concluding, the only thing which may save children within a school system is - they discover a great topic of interest or meet with a great teacher.

The second part of the book makes a journey through the alternatives that some brave hearts are persistent on following. Containing transcripts of several



extracts from discussions and letters from homeschooling parents, it makes for a first hand visit into the alternatives and experimentations being explored. Packed within the pages of the book is expectation, adventure, small and big victories for parents and children on this less trodden path; and instances where parents have come to terms with the fact that the best thing to do with their highly intelligent, "unschoolable", "unregimentationable", children is - nothing. In these cases, once let loose, the world will just have to learn to look after itself!

The section also contains testimonials of families learning together. Alongside are ideas for the innumerable things that can be done, once learners and parents decide not to fall into the trap of standardized curriculums - the world then becomes the classroom and education a rewarding journey for the entire family.

A music teacher by profession, Chong Wai Leng has been writing extensively on issues about children and learning for over ten years. Many of her articles can be found on their website.

The book is published by Pelanduk Publications (M) Sdn. Bhd, Malaysia. www.pelanduk.com. Rs.390/-

Learning Through Art

Jane Sahi and Roshan Sahi
Pp. 250 (2009)

This book perceives art as an active way of learning and aims at helping teachers to integrate art activity into school life. The activities are designed to include all children and enrich regular lessons of language, math and environment studies.

Jane Sahi is the founder teacher of Sita School at Silvapura in the outskirts of Bangalore. A well known educator in India and the overseas; she heads Sita School and is on the faculty of the M.A. in Education programme offered by Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Roshan Sahi is a master potter. He works from his studio at Silvapura and is regularly invited by schools to conduct art and pottery workshops for children.

The book, Learning through Art would be a valuable resource and reference book for anyone, teachers especially, endeavouring to make learning a creative process for the child.

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The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education

The book, originally published in 1991 by Grace Llewellyn is an autodidactic book about unschooling. The book encourages teenagers to leave full-time school and let their curiosity guide their learning. It includes suggestions and resources regarding traditional academic areas, as well as chapters about talking to parents, social life, college, and exploring the world.

The book can be downloaded from: <http://vidyaonline.org/arvindgupta/teenlib.pdf>

Instead of Education

John Holt
Pp. 250 (2004) Rs. 250

This book has John Holt at his best, proposing a variety of methods by which we can bypass modern schooling and help children to learn by doing. Second edition.

Free from School!

Rahul Alvares
Pp. 122 (2005) Rs. 100

When Rahul finished school, he turned to new learning places for an alternative education: these included the Pune Snake Park and Rom Whitaker's Croc Bank. Parents who are fed up with school simply love it!

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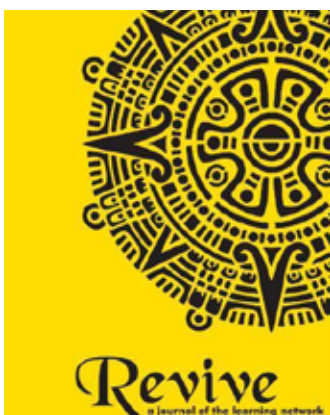
FREE BOOKS

The following websites have a good number of interesting books on education for free download.

www.soilandhealth.org
www.multiversitylibrary.com
www.gutenberg.com

Newsletters

REVIVE and Chguru



Revive is The Learning Network of India's annual journal on education released each year at their annual meeting. The publication has contributions from educators from India, case studies, new initiatives in education etc.. Chiguru is a newsletter published by them about twice a year. Both can be downloaded from their

website : <http://www.learningnet-india.org/lni/data/publications>. Alternatively, to receive any of the above you can send an email to info@learningnet-india.org with your email and postal address.

@ Edu-Care

Edu-Care is our quarterly bulletin published by Centre for Learning, Hyderabad. It is a forum for education concerns and features discussions and articles on education. Much thinking and effort goes into the contents of this little newsletter.

For subscription and copies write to: kaur.gurveen@gmail.com

@ Sarang

Sarang is Sarang Alternative School's newsletter prepared and published by the students themselves. Presently published in Malayalam, it be subscribed to by writing to sarangfamily@gmail.com

@ Puvudham Narumanam

Puvudham Narumanam is the newsletter published by Puvudham. Copies can

be downloaded from their website www.puvudham.net

@ Teacher Plus

Teacher Plus is a specialised journal for all those interested in school education - schoolteachers, educators and parents. This magazine endeavours to provide new and innovative ideas and methods for classroom teaching at all levels, as well as school management and teachers' issues. Published since 1989, this is the only magazine of its kind in India. For further details, log on to www.teacherplus.org

@ Ailaan

Ailaan is the newsletter published by NCRI (National Council of Rural Initiatives), the apex body coordinating the Nai Talim initiatives in the country. It can be downloaded from their website: www.ncri.in



The discussions that have taken place in the meetings of the Multiversity project have been transcribed and are now available on the website and also in print form. People interested can order copies of *Multiversity* from Other India Bookstore. A copy costs Rs.150.

'The Heart Has Its Reasons!'

Iranian couple – Hanif Reza Jaberipour and Leila – ditch cosy relationship with the system

In several parts of the world, many young people question their roles within the existing system and choose to opt out when they find they are unhappy with what they are doing. Hanif and Leila from Iran are good examples. The young couple had everything life had to offer, especially good jobs. Yet they threw it all up to pursue their own dreams.

I met them in Tehran during a meeting of the Learning Societies Conference when they narrated to me their twice over love story.

Hanif Reza Jaberipour was trained as an engineer and took up a job as an administrative manager after his graduation with a computer company called Fakour. The pay was good. His wife Leila also trained as a software engineer and was speedily employed with a research group at the University of Tehran. The pay here too was good.

But both were dissatisfied with their jobs, even though they had trained for them. They told me that like other Iranians their age, they had sat for the common entrance examinations (like the CET in India). Though both had succeeded in clearing the tests, they were not assigned the study they wanted. Hanif, for example, wanted to work with children, or even with people. He had no desire to work with machines. But since the courses were assigned, he had no choice but to do what the system said he should train for. Similarly with Leila.

Both decided to walk out of their jobs after an encounter with the



Hanif Reza Jaberipour and Leila, at peace at last

Learning Societies group that met in Iran in 2006. They walked out quickly so that they would not be able to revert for any reason. Everyone told them that what they were doing was suicidal, wrong.

Children, Hanif said, were not 'poisoned' individuals. I asked him what he meant by the use of the word 'poison'. He said he meant people contaminated with anti-human ideas like competition, being successful, educated, having a good income.

Hanif and Leila met in 2001 during a course and decided to get married. They took their decision to quit their present jobs together.

During the week they discussed walking out, they were subjected to immense pressure from family and relatives who were shocked to even think they were contemplating such a move.

And once they walked out, things got really very difficult. 'We had savings to last us around forty days,' recounts Hanif. But I had promised and vowed to Leila that I would find an alternate job that I wanted to do and that we would not starve.'

Nevertheless, those savings were exhausted and the couple was now left with a meagre sum of 5000 tomans.

As if God were looking after them, they got a delayed wedding present

from an Uncle whom they visited. The Uncle did not know they had quit their jobs, neither did they enlighten him. And then Hanif was able to find an informal job working with a group of people looking after children. The salary is not what they got earlier, but now they both are happy. And relaxed as well.

– *Claude Alvares*

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