

Shikshantar



Walkouts Filmmaking Workshop -
September 2004

Looking Back on 2004...

You can't remake the world
Without remaking yourself.
Each new era begins within.
It is an inward event,
With unsuspected possibilities
For inner liberation.
We could use it to turn on
Our inward lights.
We could use it to use even the dark
And negative things positively.
We could use the new era
To clean our eyes,
To see the world differently,
To see ourselves more clearly.
Only free people can make a free world.
Infect the world with your light.
Help fulfill the golden prophecies.
Press forward the human genius.
Our future is greater than our past.
-Ben Okri, Mental Fight

Dear Friends –

2004 began in an energetic frenzy – with the Unfolding Learning Societies Conference and World Social Forum in Mumbai – and ended with tremendous sadness, with the tragic death of one of our youngest team members, Vinod Rawal (age 20). This occurred just two weeks before the devastating earthquake/tsunami hit and took loved ones from so many families in south India and Asia. We therefore close this year with mixed emotions: sorrow for the lives lost, happy memories of the lives lived, soulful reflection on the year past, and renewed hope for the year to come...

As hoped for, we expanded the use of film/video to engage a wider range of learning styles and open more possibilities for generative dialogue. We produced a 30-minute film, In Search of Other Worlds of Power, with our friends from Beirut-DC (Lebanon), Miel Video (Paris) and Abhivyakti (Nashik, India), which will be shown at the World Social Forum in Brazil in 2005. With Abhivyakti, we also produced a 22-minute film on Walkouts. We also co-produced with Abhivyakti, a Hindi documentary film on the life of Shri Dayal Chandra Soni, who is a 85 year-old Gandhian thinker on education. We are planning to distribute this film to teachers and community education workers around India. In house, amongst our team, we set a small video editing studio and made a number of short films: about our lemongrass tea stall, the Rakshabandhan festival and the Swapathgami filmmaking workshop. Several local youth have learned how to shoot and edit films in the process.

We spent a lot of time this year focusing on increasing the distribution of all our publications into many new networks. We also published: Other Worlds of Power, *Dharti Re Sang* newsletter, *Apni Vaath* newsletter, a special booklet of poems for TV Turn-off Week, a Creativity Cartoon Book. We wanted to encourage others to also start new publications. Several young friends of Shikshantar (Sumit, Govind, Maya, Pankaj, and Manish – all under age 13) also published their own newsletters in Mewari for the first time. Our website hosts several different learning resources and has been appreciated by many people around the world.



TV Turn-off Week - April 2004



Holi Kala Mela (Art Festival) - March 2004



Diwali Festival - November 2004

We also continued to build trans-local partnerships through the Learning Societies Network. Some of the exciting events we were involved in during 2004 included:

- Co-hosting the '*Learning Societies Conference 2*' at the World Social Forum January.
- Co-hosting *Diversity in Learning Conference* in Amman, Jordan in collaboration with the Arab Education Forum and UNESCO - April.
- Co-hosting *Walkouts-Walkons* workshops with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, with Al-Jana Arab Resource Center for the Popular Arts – August and October.
- Co-hosting the *World Youth Leadership Jam* in Senegal, with Institute for Popular Education (Mali), Kwang Muang Institute (Thailand), Native Movement (North America), YES! (USA) – November.

We deepened our collaboration with Jan Jagran, Sarvodaya Mandal, and Tapovan Ashram here in Udaipur, and with Manzil (Delhi), Karm Marg (Faridabad), Pahal (Indore), Vistaar (Bangalore), Multiversity (Goa), Theatre in Education Trust (Delhi), Kanavu (Kerala), SchoolScape/IDEC-Orissa and Possibilities (Mumbai). We also continue to work closely with IDSP-Pakistan, Berkana Exchange-USA, Kufunda Learning Village-Zimbabwe, Communities of the Future-USA, Learning Development Institute-USA, Coalition for Self-Learning-USA, Provisions Library-USA, Unitierra-Mexico, EDucate-Pakistan, Ellerni-Brazil and UNESCO Collective Consultation of NGOs.



installing rainwater harvesting system

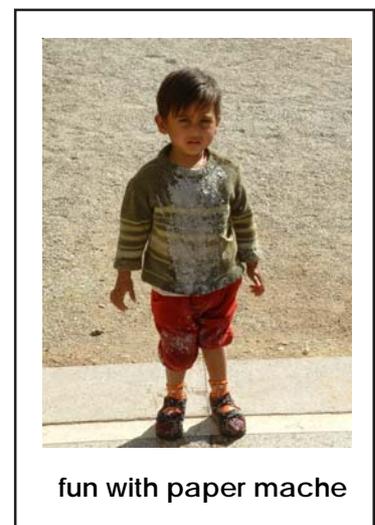


collecting gobar for vermicomposting

On a daily basis, what stands out are our relationships with children, youth and families in Udaipur as part of the Udaipur as a Learning City process. In addition to hosting over 25 critical media and creative expression workshops, this year we held several festivals cum public dialogues: during Holi (March), TV Turnoff Week (May), Rakshabandhan (August) and Diwali (November). More and more people are interested in finding ways to live more naturally, meaningfully and beautifully in urban communities. We also continued learning from local artists, artisans and farmers in Udaipur. In 2004, we expanded our existing efforts of organic farming, bicycling, spinning cloth on the *charkha* and solar cooking to also include rainwater harvesting, vermicomposting, producing more products from waste materials, and using medicinal plants. Friends in Udaipur and other cities are picking up these ideas and trying them out. We are hoping to grow this work further next year.

The Swapathgami (self-path-makers) Network continues to attract and excite people around India and around the world. This year, we supported walkouts-walkons through several means: a celebration/ dialogue during the World Social Forum, a learning journey to Kerala and a filmmaking workshop in Udaipur. We also launched a newsletter in Hindi called *Swapathgami* to share experiences, ideas, resources and opportunities throughout the Network. An English version is due to come out in January 2005. For all those who wish to make their own paths of learning, more learning workshops are slated for next year, on themes of organic living, swaraj entrepreneurship, families learning together and community media.

As we look to 2005, we want to take a moment to appreciate our friends who continue to stick with us through all the good and bad — all of you. Your love, good wishes, inner light and contributions have helped us learn and grow in many new ways. We hope to continue to keep paying this forward, and invite you to join us in the surprises, magic, and adventures of the coming year.



fun with paper mache

With love and friendship –
Manish Jain and the Shikshantar family