

2005

SHIKSHANTAR

annual
reflections

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Dear Friends-

2005 began with a terrible drought and ended with overflowing water. After seven years, the lakes in Udaipur are full again. It is truly magical. We were witness to the wonderous power of nature to heal and regenerate itself within a span of week. We draw deep inspiration and courage from this miracle. There is still a lot of hope for India and the world despite the stupidity of modern development.

Along with the rains, many exciting things took place in Shikshantar over the past year. We had a continuous stream of visitors. Some of the highlights of 2005 were:

* The Walkouts-Walkon Network continued to grow and involve more and more dynamic young leaders and innovators. We published English and Hindi issues of **Swapathgami Magazine** which are filled with inspiring stories of self-learning and lots of learning resources for those who wish to venture beyond the mainstream paths. Many youths and adults have been inspired by this magazine and we received many responses from people who took their own small steps to walk-out and walk-on. The network also hosted some exciting national-level exploration workshops related to rethinking business, kabaad se jugaad, music, cycle yatra and filmmaking. These triggered lots of unlearning and uplearning for all of us. Last but not least, we launched a new event to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Gandhi's Salt March -- Walk-out Challenge Day. This event encouraged each of us to reclaim control over our own learning, discipline and self-dignity.

* The Udaipur as a Learning City process reached new levels of interaction with the local community and with local producers. In the second half of 2005, we started hosting a monthly organic exchange called **Hamo Desi Mela**, which features locally grown organic food, herbal medicines and various handicraft products. It has become a great inter-generational space for local citizens of Udaipur to get together and share dreams and new ideas. The mela interactions also pushed the Shikshantar team members to hone their own skills and improve the quality of products that we are developing in-house: ranging from paper bowls and shades to khadi bags and belts to floppy-disk diaries to bottle cap jewellery to healthy food. We also continued stimulating the imagination and curiosity of local children and youth through many interactive workshops in schools and neighborhoods.

* We helped to launch the Families Learning Together Network to support organic lifestyles and natural learning within families and between families in South Asia. We have been attracting many parents who are interested in creating better learning opportunities for their children, particularly homeschooling. This network has been

set-up to support these families in thinking beyond cookie-cutter approaches of schooling and homeschooling -- to help regenerate diverse kinds of 'joint families' and the overall role of the families in community learning processes. This network is particularly exciting for me as we think of creative ways to grow with our daughter, Kanku. This year we hosted two gatherings in Maharashtra to kick off the network. We are planning on bringing out a resource magazine that highlights interesting experiences of South Asian families in 2006.



Our core strength remains our diverse partnerships which continually challenge us and nurture us with new energy. We have been working closely with co-creators in the following groups: Abhivyakti Media (Nashik), Jan Jagran Traditional Healers (Udaipur), The Health Awareness Center (Mumbai), Possibilities (Mumbai), Manzil (Delhi), Karm Marg (Faridabad), CEVA (Chandigarh), Bridging Gaps (Chennai), IDSP (Pakistan), Aga Khan Education Services (Pakistan), YES! Youth Jams (USA), Berkana Exchange (USA), World Cafe (USA), Communities of the Future (USA), Learning Development Institute (France), Al Jana Resource Center for the Popular Arts (Lebanon) and the Arab Education Forum (Jordan).

It is very difficult for me to explain the 'impact' that we are having with all this work. It is always hard to assess/even understand movements and social change processes while they are happening. Much of what we do is based on our intuition -- does it (the activity, the relationship, the direction) feel right? does it give us joy and energy? (I recently came across the term 'anand-olan' which I really found insightful). At present, I think that the best way to understand what Shikshantar is and how it is evolving is to look at the kind of conversations that we have been having - the ways in which people have been connecting to us, the kinds of questions that they have been raising, the kinds of insights that have been emerging from interacting with us, the kinds of experiments they have initiated in their own lives, etc. We have tried to share few drops of these in the following pages.

On behalf of all the learning activists in Shikshantar, I would like to thank all of our friends and family for their critical feedback, creative ideas, material resources and most importantly their unwavering friendship. You have given us the courage and flexibility to continuously venture into the unknown. May we continue to be blessed with lots of inspiring unlearning and uplearning interactions with you in 2006.

With love and gratitude,
Manish Jain

We celebrated walkout challenge day in Manzil. We were about 10 students. I told them about walkout. And about walkout challenge day. I told them that I have left tea (because I think this habit is not good for me. I am like a slave to it). Deepti said that she will use organic pulses now onwards. Auntie said she is leaving anger, trying to reduce it. As Sonia didi listened, she also said that she is leaving anger. Sonia didi's anger is controlling herself now (in anger) better than before. Ashish has left rough driving and started following traffic lows. Vinod Bhatt (he was there in Kerala journey) says that I was doing so many things in a time and could not cope with them. So now I am controlling myself a bit and more focusing on Guitar. He is practicing Guitar himself and with Vinay. Vinay said that his one promise to walk on is always on his face, there should be .5 smile. I think this was a good starting and the participants were showing their interest. This walk in and walk out them is very good in term of Manzil. I am going to organize it in every two months in Manzil.

We (I and Mukesh (he is cook in Manzil)) have started compost in Manzil. Now I water my plants at home and planning to grow vegetables. You know I started learning journey in Delhi? Last time we went to India gate this time planning to go to zoo. I have an idea for a Music workshop. In the workshop we should create some song compose them and then perform them in the city wherever this workshop takes place. But the place of performance should be organized. 2-3 organised platforms and then some street playing also if possible.

- Anish, New Delhi, India



swapathgami 'kabaad se jugaad' workshop

Just to say a big thank you for the wonderful 9 days in the filmmaking workshop. All these years since the birth of my kids I have been pretty ensconced in the family and the bachhas. This time away from them, I really felt opened up something inside me. Made me aware of the possibilities of family outside one's home. The insights about filmmaking that came up through doing, through discussion, through watching other people's work, were also very rewarding. The most wonderful part of the workshop were the relationships that were forged which I hope we are able to sustain.

- Rashmi Palkhiwalla, Mumbai, India

This is such incredible stuff, I'm so elated to be reading it, it's causing wonderful conversations in my immediate family & with my husband. It has always occurred to me to have adult friends reference a lot of the unschooling materials for teenagers, but I haven't shared much about that as they aren't teenagers. I had no idea there were these incredible networks & support systems for ongoing unlearning. I'm just so crazy about it. I'd also like to contribute, & bring this to the Pilipino American community, if it's not already available. This is so needed in the Philippines.

- Maya Hackett, California, USA



swapathgami 'bin paise cycle yatra'

the swapathgami network

walking out and walking on in 2005

That heartfelt magazine is SUCH a beautiful invocation of the power of story and of poetry and the arts to bring alive at the human level that which touches our deepest possibilities as humans in community. I bow to the work you are doing and look forward, one day soon, to visiting and learning with and from you. I feel honored that we are walking this life path together -- each in our own parts of the world, knowing that we are connected and whole, even in the midst of the devastation we see rising around us.

- Juanita Brown, California, USA

swapathgami 'businesses we believe in' workshop



I am delighted to receive a copy of Swapathgami. It is an extremely sensitive title and the contents are equally inspiring. Sandhan faculty joins me in congratulating Shikshantar for this approach to learning - it is positive and triggers off creative thinking within our own context.

- Sharada Jain, Jaipur, India



Swapathgami magazine

4 English Issues

5 Hindi Issues

published in 2005

It is tiring to rethink everything that one has thought to be true and good and fair and honestly evaluate every assumption and every expectation and every relationship...but that's what ive been doing...and its primarily because I realised that I need to trust my own experiences and instincts and not treat everything I read/hear from 'experts' as the unflinching truth. I've had to argue endlessly with friends and family and constantly justify my actions or inactions. Ive been doing this before but even more so now. Ofcourse I am still a bit confused and daunted by where this might lead me...all the issues of financial security, loneliness, disapproval of family, realisation of certain ugly truths about myself and my attitudes are still things I need to confront. I see the job I am in as partially promoting the very mindset and system it purports to be fighting against...but I have to see what I can do about it.

I realize now that there are so many small and big things I can do to exercise more control over my life...from choosing not to use branded soap to raising serious questions at my workplace about the way we are and the way we think.

- Pooja Hirandani, Bangalore, India

As I expected, it was quite inspiring to meet you; this unlearning notion expanded my consciousness, seriously...I've been reading Swapathgami and Vimukt Shiksha, now I understand much better the whole picture...I think I have set foot on this journey myself, that is stepping, walking out of the mechanical/institutional/market oriented system. I realized I am a walk out too!!! only in the past few months, leaving my job and coming to the Shire, I have been learning so much about 'voluntary simplicity', living with less (materially) yet finding abundance in every other sense. this is a crucial moment in my life where I am liberating myself (unlearning) from the 'constructed reality' into a possibility mindset. I would need to figure out my way to be sustainable and to contribute concretely to this emerging paradigm.

As I told you, I was looking forward to meeting you because Shikshantar's philosophy and work resonate very deeply and would be an inspiration of any initiative I might start in Turkey one day. I wrote a vision document a few months ago, nothing strategic, more conceptual and dreaming sort of document which I am attaching now...thanks for the inspiration!

- filiz telek, turkey

I have received the copy of Swapathgami. It is certainly a commendable effort, truly making the people in this part of the globe think of freedom, listen to own heart and create their own paths for growth and creative development. I totally agree with all of you philosophically and in my personal practice.

- Binay Pattanayak, New Delhi, India

i've only had time to browse through the English edition of SWAPATHGAMI 2005...and i can only say, i love every word of it...there is so much i can really identify with...a whole community of people...when all along i thought i was going it alone (and then suddenly the window opens and a tsunami of contacts rushes in!!)....it feels really good...Amongst the many, many, many things i used to do and on occassion still do is write (wrote for 2 local dailies on art and people for 7 years)...and so i think i'll try and send you my story...perhaps for the next issue...as ever since i 'walked out'of NID in 1986...i've been walking out and walking on — out of what most people would call "juicy opportunities for a stable lifestyle."

Another thing...is it ok for me to get in touch with some of the Chennai based contributors to Swapathgami..i thought it'll be interesting to meet up with them and find out what they are doing with their lives...expand the network..work together...always trying to find more and more people to work with in this field of altruistic learning and interdependency and responsible freedoms!!

- Ranjan De, Chennai, India



udaipur as a learning city:
hamo desi mela
organic exchange



THOUGHTS FROM THE TEAM...

Out of all the work that Shikshantar did last year, which are you most proud of?
The Hamo Desi Mela. Everything in this mela we did with our own hands. We respect our traditional creations and ways of living and are putting this vision out there. And we support only natural products, in which there are no chemicals or mixing. Through the mela, we have been able to make a lot of new relationships and connections with people.

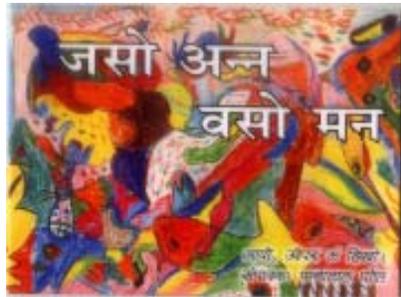
- Nirmal Prajapat

The information you shared at the shambala institute regarding learning cities will provide me with valuable info to share with those involved with Envision Halifax. In October, I will be hosting one the Learning Labs called Issues of Place. Participants will be invited to use very visual arts processes to address the question, How does place impact and affect you as a leader in the community? On the flip side of this question is how do you impact and affect the places you occupy as a community leader? I will send you some images from the learning lab.

- Gerard McNeil, Halifax, Canada

We are thinking of running a shortish study tour for graduate students at George Washington University next summer of Bangladesh and India, with two weeks in Bangladesh, 1 week at BRAC and one sightseeing, and two weeks in India, one week sightseeing, and 1 week with you in Udaipur as a Learning City, we hope. Is such a thing possible for us? When works for you?

- Jim Williams, Washington, DC, USA



Jaiso Aan Vaiso Mann
We Are What We Eat
 (in Mewari)
 published april 2005

The person who takes care of his food, water and body, who earns money through honest labor, who keeps purity in his thoughts and words, who considers deeply what he sees, this kind of person never dies or ages. I received your latest book in Mewari and I went through it very carefully. I found it full of insights and learned a lot. I read it many times and shared it with many people. Thank you for caring for Mewar's language and culture. I have put it in the Maru Sanskriti Kendra (cultural center) so that others may also enjoy it.

- Nand Kishore Sharma, Jaisalmer

Udaipur as a Learning City Special Events

- Holi Kala Mela (March)
- Walkout Challenge Day (April)
- TV Turnoff Week (April)
- Hamo Desi Mela (April-Dec)
- Tapovan Youth Camps (June)
- Harialli Amasya Mela Theatre (July)
- Rakshabandhan Neighborhood Workshops (Aug)
- Swapathgami Filmmaking Workshop (Aug)
- Swapathgami Cycle Yatra (Oct)
- Rajiv Dixit - Swadeshi Gurukula Discussion (Nov)
- Vinod Rawal Kala Mela (Dec)



We hosted over 40 workshops this year, in local schools and neighborhoods, and at 21 Fatehpura. From flash animation to yoga games, from jewelry making with waste materials (above) to theater (below), from juggling to musical instrument making with waste -- with a variety of children and youth, ranging in age from 3 to 75!

udaipur as a learning city: co-creating diverse expressions



I was really thrilled to have met you in Canada at the Shambala Global Village. Even though it was for a short time, it was very intense and meaningful. I have read through all the books and leaflets you generously gave me while I travelled in the States and Brazil, and immediately felt like writing contributions on almost all topics presented, having had so many experiences around finding a way to live a creative life, bringing up children without drugs, using natural remedies and in tune with nature in an urban environment, making a living through crafts and arts, and creating new kinds of organisations that rest on consensus and appreciation and support for each person round the table...

I am delighted there are such powerful voices and so many networks that carry the same kind of impulse. I have sent all the websites on to my team at the CICI (Creative Inner City Initiative) and I look forward to what this might inspire in others.

- Carol Liknaitzky, Johannesburg, South Africa

THOUGHTS FROM THE TEAM...

What is something you learned about yourself this year?

I recognized my potentials: that I can speak with different kinds of people, that I can learn new kinds of work and be curious about new things, that I can take responsibility. I used to speak without thinking; now I try to think before I speak, to see if what I want to say will be meaningful and clear. I have been able to make a lot of new friendships this way.

- Manoj Prajapat



Three wall murals were co-created by families and friends in the Dewali neighborhood this year. Through the murals, we have the opportunity to dialogue with local people about art in public spaces, to invite families to consider and depict their strengths, and to transform the urban environment we live in. Nirmal (center) is committed to engaging at least ten more families with mural-making in Dewali in 2006....

**udaipur as a learning city:
appreciative mural mania**

Well, the reason I'm writing is because I was wondering if I could go down to Udaipur and spend some time with you. Shammi is always saying how you are the DO kind of people and I guess that's what I need right now! It would be nice to try out doing the things with waste, and jewelery making, and stitching, and I don't know what else. I was also thinking that maybe we could get a group and try out some clowning. Clowning is almost a way of living and it would be nice to share it with you.

- Luisa, Brazil

I learnt about Shikshantar from my dear friend Sanjay Bhangar. I'm writing to you on behalf of the newspaper DNA. We are currently working on a feature story about alternative modes of learning across the world. From what I read on your website, Shikshantar seems very interesting and completely fits into the premise of the article. We would really like a small profile about Shikshantar in the story and I was wondering if it is possible to have some sort of interaction with you regarding the same, either through an email interview or via the telephone.

- Riddhi Parekh, Mumbai, India

I wanted to thank you all for the lovely experience you all provided to Abner and me. It was one of the best times. We gathered a lot from all of you and spending each day with thoughts and steps towards the direction that we think Shikshantar has been successfully demonstrated as the most natural way to lead a daily life. Abner is thoroughly inspired by kabaad-se-jugaad concept and just completed a flyover using shoe boxes, etc. He has created space to collect all the kabaad now, besides what we have already been doing.

I would be delighted if you can include me in the mailing list of Shikshantar and other similar groups. I am also keen to have list of all those you know who have not been sending their children to schools. Please note without doubt that any and all of you have a home in Delhi and we would only be obliged to have you people stay with us, spend time with us, and continue inspiring us...

- Osama Manzar, New Delhi, India

THOUGHTS FROM THE TEAM...

Of all the work you did this year, which were you the most satisfied with?

Natural healing work, which includes herbal medicine-making, meeting *gunis* (traditional healers), preparing an herbal nursery, setting up herbal gardens with local families, making a film on *gunis*, using herbal treatments myself and sharing them with others.

- Ramawtar Singh

I got to know about Shikshantar from my friend artist Seema Chaturvedi who recently visited you at Udaipur in connection to her research. I do agree with the idea you are working on and appreciate it in many terms. We too are in the process to understand this system of informal learning mainly in context of tribal rural arts. We ourselves believe in this system that preserves the tradition and cultural heritage of any society. At present I am working with Rupayan Sansthan. I hope to share much with you in the process of our objectives.

- Madan Meena, Kota, Rajasthan, India

Greetings from Comet Media Foundation. Your team has organised an interactive corner featuring various non-competitive games and creative activities at our earlier bal vividha in 2001. This had been very popular with the children who visited. We would like your team to hold a similar corner at these festivals and provide children with opportunities for hands on experiences, making their learning lively and fun.

- Patricia Mascarenhas, Mumbai, India

Meeting up in Panchgani was eventful in its own right, and now receiving all this invaluable literature, makes the ongoing journey "hard copied" and connected. Looking forward to many more interaction/mela/discussions with all of you. Thank you for bringing all of us on the same grid. Just finished reading the first in my study books (Paths of Unlearning) and it reinforces my own convictions that the personal is political! What an incredible opportunity to share such physically real stories of truth and power. They are the most effective tools for change. Hope such stories are made available widely and freely, especially in schools and universities.

I must also add that one of the biggest areas of Learning/Unlearning: Disaffection/Activation is that of Health. Like 'education', health has become a commodity institutionalised through the Medical Fraternity. So impinging is this System, that most people irrespective of class willingly live in fear/ignorance of their own body and its processes. The work at THAC is really a commitment towards the process of re-educating people to take charge/control of their own body/health to experience and awareness. I see no ideological conflict between the issues of health and education and believe that health can become the simplest tool to bridge the gap between the micro and macro. Health Awareness can bring about a transformation in the way we see ourselves, our community and our earth. We welcome all comments and suggestions.

- Navina Venkat, Goa, India

I work with an organisation called The Centre for Environmental Research and Education. We are 'documenting successful models of environmental education with a special focus on school sustainability' across India. I am truly amazed how liked-minded our views are. We will be definitely visiting you in Udaipur and we are extremely keen on documenting the work you are doing.

- Kitayun Rustom (Katy), Mumbai, India

udaipur as a learning city: herbal healing



Panna Lal, Vishal and Ramawtar, with other friends, prepare the herbal plant nursery, one of the additions to 21 Fatehpura in 2005 (above); while Susheela Sen, rekhi practitioner, admires the herbal garden planted at her home in Dewali this year (below). These efforts link to our urge to invite families to regain control over their own health and well-being.



Saw your mail on Docuwallahs and was very impressed with the work you are doing. I totally support your school of thought that insists on deschooling.:) would like to read and study more about it.

We are a group of filmmakers based in Hyderabad who are trying to create an alternative network for screening documentaries in South India. Schools are a very important target groups for us and we have been collecting documentaries related with alternative education that can be shown to kids in schools.

It is in this regard that I wanted to seek your help in finding some of the best documentaries related with education. Can you please take out the time to send me a list of good documentaries on education along with the filmmaker details?
- Vipul Kulkarni, Metaphor Media, Hyderabad, India



swapathgami filmmaking workshop

I had a great time too in Shikshantar and would love to be there again. Do keep me posted on what you guys are doing. About Delhi Film Archives: we are in the process of making an exhaustive list of films. As soon as it is ready I will mail it to you. Do send your list if it is ready.
- Sanjay Maharishi,
New Delhi, India

Just a quick note to say that i loved the film "Other Worlds of Power". this new youth group that has formed in chennai 'we feel responsible', is putting together a week-long film festival in chennai called 'In the Name of Development! - A Film festival dedicated to the victims of development' in August. They are screening it on the last day!
- Sangeetha Sriram, Chennai, India

udaipur as a learning city: community video cooperative

Films Produced in 2005

Gifts of the Soil
Hamo Desi Mela
Rajaram Sharma
Guni Ashram
Dayal Chand Soni

Films Screened in 2005

Fahrenheit 911
Super Size Me
West Beyrouth
Life and Debt
Swades
The Real Dirt on Farmer John
What the Bleep Do We Know?
Baran
Tokyo Story
Pay It Forward
The Insider
Mangal Pandey
Bawarchi
Final Cut
It's a Wonderful Life

I want to know about any home-schooling networks available in India? We are in the stage of collecting information, before we make a decision for our four-year-old daughter. Would you like to share the programme you have made for your own daughter?

My wife is from Udaipur, and her parents stay at Fatehpura - Navratan Complex. I would surely like to revisit you - this time with my daughter and wife. My wife, Priyanka, read the book you gave me - "shram ke bina shiksha kaisi" very recently - and she connected with the ideas there very much.

I am now coming to realize that parents and guardians will need to take direct responsibilities for education of the children - and it's not something that could be trusted to schools. So the establishment of ad-hoc networks of cooperation for education is required.

- Rakesh, Bangalore, India



families learning together gathering
at van vadi october 2005



families learning together gathering
at panchgani may 2005

I'm a recent reader of John Holt's works (an American who talks about un-schooling). I found your site while searching for similar thoughts in Indians. If you have a newsletter or e-letter.. I'd like to be put on the mailing list. My son is almost 3 and I'm very interested in the home-school concept.

- Hema Bharadwaj



unfolding new possibilities

Was wondering if you could make a trip to Pratham to chat with some of our people here. Despite the fact that we are working in a far more "conventional" framework, i believe exposure to new ideas is good.

- Aditya Natraj, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Hello from Jnana Prabodhini, an educational institute in Nigdi near Pune. We run various novel projects in education. 'PANCHAKOSH VIKAS based GURUKUL ' is one of them. Our workers had met you in the conference in the NAI TALEEM INSTITUTE last year. This year we propose to organise a state level conference of various volunteers who work for the betterment of education in Maharashtra. Most of us work individually or in pockets in different regions of the state. We all need to unite and raise a united voice for changing the present educational system. Depending solely on the government is proving disastrous. We, as a people, need to initiate change on our own.

The SHIKSHANTAR AANDOLAN is an inspiring experiment. Your literature has always been thought-provoking for us. We are releasing a souvenir during the MAHARASHTRA SHIKSHAN PARISHAD. Your thoughts and experiences as the pioneer of a novel educational movement will be motivating to all.

- Aditya Shinde and Madhura Lunkad, Pune, India

I would like to share with you that I have joined commonwealth education fund. I am working on providing assistance and support to the formation of a national coalition on education and planning to conduct a national research study on innovative practices in education. Your help and guidance would be highly supportive to launch a critical policy discourse and dialogue with research based information beyond conformist patterns of policy engagement.

- Shah Jahan Baloch, Islamabad, Pakistan

I am very much happy to write u. i read about ur works in ur website.

Me also working in education from last 5years. Running an alternate school in my village. It is a community based school.

Now I am trying to form a new educational system in kerala, outside the schools, with the community support.

i would like to visit ur institution & to hear u.
- renjith kuzhur, kerala

Dr. Gananath, who is running an NGO called Suvidya in Bangalore gave me your reference and briefed me about your organization. It is very interesting and is very impressive to learn your philosophy on education and learning. My little understanding about your organization and its philosophy from the website inspired me to write this letter.

Just to brief you about my background, I am a software engineer, have quit my profession after working in the IT industry for 7 years... Decided to get into children education... I am quite serious about my shift in the profession and I am quite open to learn what is the kind of education necessary for today's generation from various sources before I attach myself to something to achieve what I want to....

From going thru the contents of shikshantar website, I got the feeling from my understanding that you could be a great contributor to a conference on Integral Value Education that Art of Living is planning. Please have a look at the material that I send which can open a dialogue between us and lets see how we can work together to achieve our common objectives...

- Geetha Arvind, Bangalore, India

THOUGHTS FROM THE TEAM...

Who is one person you spent time with this year that inspired you?

Shankarba Lohar, a traditional ironsmith, who specializes in making tools for farming. He is wonderful storyteller and has a very deep understanding of learning, knowledge and spirituality. Shankarba is also very critical of the changes that come with modernity: consumer culture, the destruction of nature, TV, the so-called Green Revolution. His commitment to his work and to his children and grandchildren learning his work (with or without school) was inspiring to me.

- Panna Lal Patel

*i am working on a book subtitled **An Introduction to Good Education**. quite long ago i told Vimalaji Thakar about this project and she advised me to meet you. i was thrilled at her suggestion because i had already 'discovered' your organisation. your work and attitudes expressed on the net were the very first time i had read anything on the subject that i fully agreed with.*

i am a graphic designer and have never done a project of this scale, where i plan to both write and illustrate. during the past six months, circumstances have kept me away from this project. the long gap has disturbed the continuum of work and i hope meeting you now will help me get back into it. perhaps i could visit some of your projects. or just spend some time with you and get your help/advice on how to better go about my book.

- Bharati Mirchandani, New Delhi, India

i am a big fan of Ivan Illich and always used to read his books, through google i found your website, when i visited the Shikshantar page i was really amazed, i always used to think about how to go about attempting to De-School the society which so much in the hands of "Schooling" which is even ruling our imaginations and creativity.

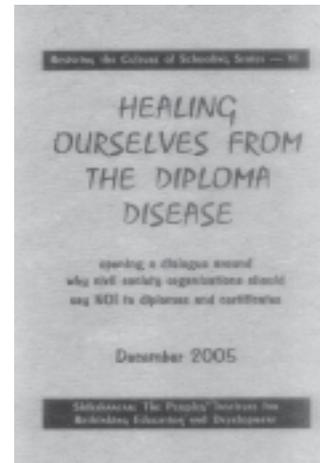
I use to always think for a revolution from schools and we are trying something here in my city "Hyderabad" but don't know how far we could able to go. When i found your website i was delighted that somebody is there who thinks like me. Great to know about your works, pls. let me know how i can i join.

- Gopal Garg, Andhra Pradesh, India

Last spring, I visited you in your beautiful place for a couple of days in Udaipur. For me that experience, the inspirations that I got through conversations with you and through your activities and material, gave me a lot in my studies/life. I did a work about intercultural learning/lifecentered learning, and my visit at your place was really helpful. I especially liked the book "Unfolding Learning Societies - Deepening the Dialogue". It is taking these thoughts to a level of actual action and it builds a bridge between areas in life that sometimes seem hard to get together. I'm always searching for ways to link spiritual life, the inner journey, the reflection, the seeing - with the world outside -politics, structures of society, etc. I see in Sweden that people that are into their inner journey often have no contact with the "producers" of the society. Instead these people isolate themselves in subcultures and don't spread their knowledge to other parts of society.

healing ourselves from the diploma disease

published
december 2005



The ideas of learning communities and ideas that I get in relation to that gives me hope in for example this - the possibility to build a platform for inner "development" as well as engaging in the world outside..... I, with friends are speaking a lot about building communities, and my vision has a lot to do with the ideas of learning communities. A place where persons learn through life, through themselves, through society and where they in the same process gives to others. Because of this I would love to have more contact with you. To exchange ideas, to know how you work and so on.

- Emilia Rekestad, Sweden

Gatherings of 2005

Taleemnet Conference – Goa (Feb)

Diversity in Learning – Pakistan (March)

Dandi Salt March – Gujarat (March)

Swapathgami Businesses We Believe In – Ahmedabad (April)

Families Learning Together – Panchgani (May)

Shambala Institute - Canada (June)

Berkana Learning Centers - Canada (June)

Leveraging Privilege for Social Change Jam – USA (July)

Al-Jana Summer Camp – Lebanon (Aug)

National Guni Munch Meet – Jaipur (Sept)

Van Utsav-Van Vadi – Maharashtra (Oct)

Narmada Bachao Andolan anniversary – MP (Nov)

School of the Future Conference – Pakistan (Dec)

Swapathgami Kabaad se Jugaad Meet – Faridabad (Dec)

Members of Shikshantar figured prominently in these gatherings.

I recently and serendipitously came across the excellent piece by Shilpa Jain called 'A Fate Worse than Communalism' and was extremely impressed and gratified to know such a critique exists in India. I am currently in Ladakh, where I have been working with the International Society for Ecology and Culture on its 'counter-development' projects here. The founder of that group, Helena Norberg Hodge, and I have been trying to formulate a plan for me to travel to and spend time with organizations and individuals around the world that are resisting the consumer monoculture and practicing viable, creative alternatives. The idea is to document what various people are doing, both in writing and for a possible film documentary about practical resistance to globalization, as a follow-up to ISEC's film 'Ancient Futures'. Having read your pamphlet and visited your website, I would be most interested in knowing of any possibilities of visiting your project in Rajasthan, interviewing people, and possibly helping with any projects you may seek help on.

- Alex Jensen, Ladakh, India

fun @ 21 fatehpura



Shikshantar hosts a local community learning center which supports unlearning and innovation. We had a great harvest this year - of spinach, okra, mustard greens, beans, and of worms! (in Sunny's hands above) The composting pits are alive and kickin'! Another part of our efforts to make Udaipur a zero waste zone, by upcycling waste in useful ways.

In the midst of my studying and crazy work schedule, I never had the chance to thank you for all that I learned from Shikshantar this summer. (it has only reminded me how easily we get wrapped up in our day to day lives, we forget what's important). I had such a wonderful experience in Udaipur, thanks to your warmth, kindness and openness. I have seriously been annoying my professors this semester with all the questions and ideas I came away with from Shikshantar, you would indeed be proud. I have been reading all your new material and keeping up with events; everything sounds great. I look forward to more updates.

- Barri Shorey, Washington, DC, USA

I'm back in France and want to let you know how much I enjoyed my visit to Udaipur and the opportunity to finally make contact with the reality of Shikshantar as well as for the three of us to reconnect. I had a great time and want to thank you for your hospitality and friendship. Besides, it was a great learning experience. Your role as facilitators for it was significant.

I'm also interested in exploring even more vigorously than we have so far done opportunities for collaboration between Shikshantar and Learning Development Institute.

- Jan Visser, France

since my return back to the USA, the global action project offered me the job and i accepted. i will be co-facilitating a group called "urban voices" which works with high school youth throughout the city. i am really excited because i've wanted to do this for such a long time, and never really thought i was ready/skilled enough. the experience i got at shikshantar and the fact that you guys were open to letting people make videos and learn by DOING really helped me get the experience i needed, and most importantly, the confidence to put myself out there and to be open to continually learn while on the job. so thaaaaaaanks you guys! also i was thinking this would be a really nice opportunity to share some of the videos you guys are making. manish had mentioned trying to screen your videos in other venues in other countries — since we are all working with young people, this is a nice way to share the videos that youth are making and have them learn by reflecting on each others work!

- Shreya Janssens-Sannon, New York, USA

I was thinking about my time in Udaipur recently, and I'm fascinated by the little changes that came from the trip. I still don't eat meat, I still don't eat sweets/sugar, I still don't use toilet paper. I make more food now, more basic food. There's a lot more jugaad in my life, and I've become an even stronger conservationist. I'm a lot more skeptical about NGOs and places like the World Bank, and there's a tension now when I read the Economist (I'm still a devoted subscriber, but I discount more of their articles now). The swapathgami ethos lingers around the edges, and the swapathgami/Gandhian experiments in truth concept influences a lot of what I do now. "Be the change you want to see in the world" is on my lips and in my deeds more than ever. I'm a lot more comfortable with my Vedantism. I'm much more comfortable being dirty and unshowered. I haven't worn a suit since my return, just the fancy blue kurta I bought in Bangalore. Garam masala and roti are a parts of my diet. I'm itching to start a rooftop garden or the equivalent when we move to NYC. I still have the beard and mustache, although they're kept more tidy now. Those are just some of the little changes. I don't even really notice them until I stop to think... "Yeah, I didn't really do those things before the trip, did I?" I've been thinking about writing an article for one of the homeschooling magazines about the trip...

- Peter Kowalke, Connecticut, USA

THOUGHTS FROM THE TEAM...

What new experiments did you try this year for yourself and your family?

1. **Cooking:** We tried many new recipes, raw foods, organic foods, healthier eating!
2. **No More TV:** We cut the cable, and it's made more time for play, music, dance, etc., and an occasional film.
3. **Natural Healing:** We tried many different kinds of natural remedies this year, like neem, garlic, urine, etc. Getting close to eliminating allopathy for good!

- Shilpa Jain

**thanks, thanks, thanks
and more thanks...**

Shikshantar Core Team

Guddi
Kanku
Manish
Manoj
Mumta
Nirmal
Pannalal
Ramawtar
Shammi
Shilpa
Sunny
Vidhi
Vishal



I would like to congratulate any person/agency/NGO/group who is trying to bring back creativity, imagination, spirit and happiness in this evil called formal education. Keep on going. Many people will join you in this endeavour.

- Seema Shrinidhi

Interns

Peter Kowalke (USA)
Shreya Janssens-Sannon (USA)
Amanda Grubb (USA)
Sumi and Qudrat (Ahmedabad)
Luis and Emilie Prothiere (France)
Rachel Schattman (USA)
Koshal Kumawat (Udaipur)
Sudeep, Sumit, Ronak (Udaipur)
Akriti (Mumbai)
Sakhi (Nashik)
Ashley Albright (USA)

Special Volunteers

Hampshire College Students
Bastian and Farhan
Debbie Freize and Greg Searle
Sumit Arya
Ranjan De
Amina Althea Baird
Chandresh
Mukesh Jat
Shrayas Jatkar
Naveen
Jan Visser
Sanjay Maharishi
Veronica Linton
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Bharati Mirchandani
Diana, Emily, Jackie
Rishabh Mansata
Martin and Vicky
Yash Jain
Zuzanna, Lisa, Anil, Bulan, Rajesh
Ajay Vajpayee
Vartika Poddar
Amit and Gayatri
Osama and Abner Manzar
Ganesh and Gayatri Sharma
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Usha and Ashok Bhandari

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