

Learning Societies,



A Collection of Global Conversations
(August 2005-May 2006)

An Introduction of Sorts,

The summer of 2005, I had the chance to travel with my dad to Nova Scotia, Canada, to meet and interact with an amazing group of people all committed to ideas of social justice and change. These individuals were at once inspired and practical: they lived their ideals. One of these people, Manish Jain, a co-creator of *Shikshantar*, a learning center in Udaipur, India, introduced me to an email list-serve which he had started: learningsocietiesconference@yahoogroups.com. Though this list-serve is concentrated in India, it is composed of people throughout the world who share common ideas of social justice. The conversations conveyed through this Internet exchange stem from actions and events in participant's lives and evolve into complex dialogues on a diverse array of subjects.

Through the construction of this pamphlet, it is my desire to harvest the thoughts and dialogues instigated by this list-serve in a form more conducive to learning. By arranging the emails thematically so a coherent dialogue can be easily discerned, I hope to provide a reference which can share knowledge effectively. I have made slight editing changes to the emails, making them grammatically correct and ensuring they are able to be understood in their context. Apart from that, however, all material contained within this pamphlet comes from the knowledge and experience of the participants of the Learning Societies List-serve. They are, as I have included here: *Yasmeen Bano, Bill Ellis, Munir Fasheh, Anil K. Gupta, Manish Jain, Jinan Kodapully, Osama Manzar, Nitin Paranjape, Khalida Qattash, Subhash Rwat, Susanne Schnuttgen, Bob Stilger, and Jan Visser*. It is important to note that that included here is only a small sampling of the information exchanged through this list-serve: this pamphlet

contains selected messages from the time period of August 2005 through May 2006 due to availability and space constraints.

That being said, I tried to portray the spirit and thoughts of this exchange as fully as possible. I hope others are able to learn and enjoy this dynamic interplay between individuals across the globe, gaining knowledge from the exchange depicted here.

-- Annie Virnig, May 7, 2006

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY:

The following exchanges outline the potential benefits and negative effects of sustainable communities in rural India. In addition to these more basic topics, they also delve into questions of the meaning of traditional culture. These emails were instigated by a query about developing such a community, seen below, and outline the various discussions which followed.

“Seeking Support and Advice” – *Jinan Kodapully*,
<jhjskodapully@rediffmail.com>

Hi friends,
I am sending you few a thoughts on my future plans regarding setting up a community in south India.

For integrating natural learning processes with conscious learning processes.

Indigenous learning processes are indeed spiritually far superior but the power and glitter of the western process is destroying it. The center wills precisely address how to make the indigenous processes strong.

My last 20 years were spent trying to understand the colonizing and conditioning effect of western education on Indians. My exposure to the rural tribal people of this country has revealed to me a totally different picture of how these people are so altogether different and are culturally, spiritually and morally superior to the educated ones. It is very clear that the educated Indians are in fact victims of cultural destruction. They have no cultural self-respect, no authenticity, creativity and integrity. It

is time to re-look at the educational philosophies of Gandhi, Tagore, and Vinoba Bave etc who tried to learn from the villagers of this country.

Learning from the rural people does not mean going back etc but to learn their process of creating, sustaining and transferring life-sustaining knowledge.

How we live later might depend on the knowledge we acquire. Leave that to future.

Natural learning Process.

My experience in working with rural tribal people has shown me altogether a different process of learning. Here learning is part and parcel of your Life. What you learn has to do with how you live. There is neither alienation nor compartmentalization. Learning, playing growing up is all well integrated. To use a jargon it is learner centered, but all are learners till their death. They are always experimenting, observing and learning from the experience. But of course this open-endedness is possible only in a process oriented culture or what

It may also be called an intuitive culture. Children in all cultures learn using this process. It is only when they enter formal schools they become product oriented. This change happens even to the children in so called alternative schools because the alternatives are searched for within the ‘reasoning’ framework.

The fundamental difference is in the use of intuition and reason.

In indigenous cultures reason is used within the intuitive framework or they go hand in hand and in the other intuition is used within reason. I will not go on more about this at this time. I will give a rough picture of the plan I have in mind.

Re-integration of learning into living.

The proposed centre will have Farming and few important crafts like pottery, bamboo, weaving, brass work etc as the main activities, just as in normal village settings. But unlike in the villages there will be conscious effort in being aware of all the happenings. Even though the emphasis will be on hand few modern types of equipment like computer, camera etc will also be utilized.

The children of this community will learn some of the crafts and other skills. Language and science, maths etc will be again integrated in to practical learning as a part of living itself. Community will try to become self reliant and children will be part of this struggle right from the beginning.

Creativity

It is needless to say the primacy of creativity in the proposed learning center which is also the case with traditional communities even though the so called modern educated people often misunderstands this quality.

In the initial phase we do require funds to setup the minimum facilities, as we do not have money. More over the inmates of the centre will be mainly economically poor people.

Infrastructural Needs.

10 to 15 Acres of land with at least 5 acre cultivable. Craft workshops integrated with artisan's residence. Store, Display and Sales counter for crafts. Other living quarters. Solar lights, biogas, water harvesting etc.

Inmates.

At least 35 people are expected to join in the first phase. All these people being from economically poor background, the economic aspect will have to be worked out.

How does this sound? Do send in your comments.

Looking for support

I hope you know that this is being planned with no money in my pocket.

I am looking for support in terms of volunteers, materials, equipments and money.

Please get back to me in case you can support in any way.

“What is Traditional?” – *Susanne Schnuttgen*

<s.schnuttgen@unesco.org>

Dear friends,

Greetings to all of you from us in Paris! Let me start by saying that the simple fact of knowing such a diverse group of people, connecting in our common search for better and meaningful lives, makes me happy and reinforces my conviction and experiences that so many wonderful and creative forms of

intercultural dialogue and learning are taking place around the world. The Indian Anthropologist Appadurai (<http://www.indiana.edu/~wanthro/appadurai.htm>) whom I met recently and whose writing has inspired me and indeed UNESCO's work on cultural diversity, recently proposed the concept of "local cosmopolitanism" to refer to ways of how people in their day-to-day lives make a constructive effort to deal positively with incidents of intercultural contact. One could expand this by saying how each one of us "negotiates" different cultural reference points – which may seem at times conflicting - within ourselves, our friendships and families. This concept in some ways puts into perspective Huntington's simplistic hypothesis of a clash of civilizations. I would like to explore a number of questions, which I am sharing below, in case any others feel they can relate to them.

I would love to better understand for example what it is that you call "traditional" and to what dimensions of life, being, doing and knowing it refers to, i.e. knowledge systems, cultural practices, forms of expression, ways of resolving conflicts, ways of honoring the dead, religious and/or spiritual practices, world view, gender relations, child rearing, etc I would further be interested to hear what the most important cultural references are for such communities as sources of strength, creativity and hope in life and how they structure or orient peoples' choices and ways of living? Do you perceive your communities as referring to more or less clearly distinguishable cultural systems and entities? Is there a self-identification with those reference systems as well as a wish and will to transmit those to the next generation? How would you characterize the relationship between generations in the context of such a dynamic? What are the challenges to the "traditional" ways of living and how do young and old respond to them? Is there

evidence of local cosmopolitanism or in other words of why and how people make efforts to deal constructively with situations of intercultural/-faith contact?

With lots of happy spring greetings from Paris...

Response to "What is Traditional?" – *Jan Visser*
<jvisser@learndev.org>

Hi Suzanne and all,

I'm glad, Suzanne, you raised the question about the meaning of the term 'traditional.' Does one have to go to Quetta¹ to unearth that meaning? You and I, who will not be in Quetta, may want to delve into the traditions of the culture from which we emerged. There are deep-rooted traditions in any culture, not just the one of the area. The confrontation with another culture may help, though, uncover those roots in one's own culture. What matters to me most is the question if traditions may sometimes be used as an excuse for creating closed societal entities rather than as an opportunity to enhance one's awareness of where one comes from. I become less enthusiastic about traditions when they cordon off in an impenetrable fashion what happens in a society, culture or civilization.

The past two weeks I've been participating in an online dialogue about issues of culture in relation to education. I was appalled to learn how for many of my fellow participants culture easily gets identified with a bunch of shallow notions regarding how people can be grouped together according to a

¹ Quetta is a traditional community in India. It is similar to the type of community Jinan Kodapully expresses a desire to create.

number of simple criteria, allowing the establishment of simple rules of conduct about how to interact with the other person. Hofstede's work on cultural dimensions (<http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>) is characteristic of this tendency. Perhaps just living together for a while with the people of Baluchistan may be a more profound learning experience for those who go to Quetta than asking too many questions. Such questions never seem to capture in depth and width of a culture and they seem particularly unsuited to uncover the fantastic diversity that can be found within any specific culture

Response to "What is Traditional?" – *Nitin Paranjape*
<abhivyakti@sancharnet.in>

Hi friends,
greetings from Nashik!

What are the questions that I am preoccupied with now? Actually the usual ones connecting to learning and development, but Susanne's and Jan's response triggered something inside me as well. Till the moment Susanne raised this question I had not asked what tradition means to me. It was a word that I used freely without serious reflection about its meaning and connection to my life. Perhaps the residue of my education has not prepared me to look at such issues seriously. So my question is similar to that of Susanne - I want to understand the meaning of tradition and how do I learn from my own ones where I am located and how do I relate with those with whom I am working, specifically in rural communities. Somehow, I have come to realize that development models treat the cultures and traditions of other communities as secondary and impose their ways on them. Those with whom we work are always treated as 'lesser other'

and we draw big plans and budgets for so-called education and empowerment of them. I now a days question my own assumptions and the implicit arrogance when we work with communities in order to change them. Recently, I was in a village, chatting with a peasant family as we were preparing to sleep. I was trying to better understand their life. The young farmer kept on referring to the scientific ways of the modern and urban world and how their own tradition was based on superstitions. The discussion was a long but I kept on adding that his references to scientific ways of the modern world were assumptions which might not be true. I remember telling him that my morning practice of brushing with tooth brush and paste to clean my teeth is a habit I have developed blindly which to me seems to be as superstitious as the one he (the farmer) thinks his practice of cleaning his teeth with salt is. It was a tough dialogue.

Why do I want to understand the traditions practiced by others without understanding my tradition and its deep linkage to my own identity and its construction? I would therefore like to learn from IDSP people, who are my good friends, on how do they relate to such questions, individually and organizationally, when they work with communities and try to learn from their traditions. What are their strategies? How do they develop knowledge based on learning from their traditions? Being in a development organization and networks which is grappling with such issues of interventions learning from you all would be of immense value in my own search of finding meaning in my work with different communities.

With regards...

“For Dialogue: E-learning” – *Jan Visser*
<jvisser@learndev.org>

E-learning is simply a reality (has been so significantly for the last five to ten years or so and is still rapidly developing) in large parts of the world. Anyone who has affordable access to the Internet can benefit from it, enrolling at universities and other institutions across the globe that offer distance education programs. So far so good.

In addition, the e-learning environment includes modalities of human interaction that were unavailable before the advent of the Internet. This very LIST is a simple example. I’m writing from France, Manish assumedly sent his prompt for reflection from India and Sufia responded from Pakistan. We are all learning in the process, hopefully, thanks to a kind of human exchange that was simply not yet available to the general public, even in the more affluent parts of the world, some fifteen years ago.

However, the more important question is what we do with the new opportunities that emerge thanks to such technological developments. I discover nothing new. It’s still about the rat race, it’s still about the same time-honored hierarchy of well established universities and the precious degrees they offer for those who can pay for them, it’s still about knowledge as ‘content’ that can be ‘delivered’ and ‘packaged’ as well as about ‘lectures’ that now appear online rather than being presented in a traditional classroom. But the metaphor of the

E-LEARNING: CREATING A POSITIVE AND BENEFICIAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE INTERNET?

The following exchanges outline a dynamic debate over the underlying principles and potential of learning through an international Internet.

classroom – even though without walls – is still there. Nothing wrong, of course, with the classroom, at least as long as it is a place for people to live a meaningful life. But how often is that the case?

While the metaphor of the classroom is still the major paradigm for online education (all Web-based educational platforms use it) and as long as that metaphor is being adopted in a mostly uncritical manner, important opportunities are being missed to fundamentally change the classroom concept as such and, I guess more importantly, to explore new spaces and modalities – allowing them to self-organize in ways facilitated through digital and other means of networking – where learning can acquire entirely new meanings and be undertaken for purposes beyond socialization into the dominant culture.

“Response to For Dialogue: E-learning” – *Bob Stilger*
<bob@berkana.org>

Hi all,

For me distance learning is a big passion and a huge disappointment.

In the past, I had a convenient answer: I said it wasn't about the technology, but it was the pedagogic approaches that were important.

I still think that is largely true, but Skype² has changed my mind about issues connected to technology. More on that in a bit,

In terms of pedagogy, what concerns me is that too much distance learning is simply used as a way for teachers to push forward the same tired content using a new technology. Much of what I've seen fails to really see that the Internet opens up a wide array of new possibilities. It gives us a chance to rethink how to use our time where we are together face-to-face and how to extend our learning over time and space. Like many others on this list, my preference is for learner centered and learned directed approaches. I also believe that it is fine for people who have something they have to offer to step into a "teaching-moment," but all of us need to remember that first and foremost we are learners.

As learners, we need to learn how to use a variety of tools together ^ face-to-face gatherings, list-serves, asynchronous text-conferencing,

² A service through which audio conversations can be held over the Internet at low costs. Can be accessed by anyone with membership, a computer, and Internet access.
<www.skype.com>

synchronous conferencing with text, voice and video, websites, and more. From my experience, the trick is that we get real power when these are combined. What I have noticed is that the best learning at a distance happens when there is 1) mutual understood purpose, 2) a start and stop time, 3) relationship, 4) trust, 5) technology comfort, 5) wisdom, 6) knowledge and acceptance of difference.

Skype was an eye-opener for me. It is (and I hope will continue to be) a technology that is user-centered. Most distance learning technology is teacher/administrator centered. I'm not wise enough to know all the ways in which this orientation consequently limits what can be done and how the technology is used, but I know we will have continued to develop distance-learning technologies that are more oriented to "pushing" than to "pulling."

And, of course, it is a question of how far we can go. For example, people will learn individually from this conversation on this list serve. More people would learn more if some group actually took the time to harvest what's said in this conversation and bring it back to the group at a next higher level of organization.

Just a few thoughts, at this ending of one year and the beginning of another.

Blessings...

"E-learning..." -- *Jinan Kodapully*,
<jhjskodapully@rediffmail.com>

Hi

I think far more deeper question is what is knowledge, what is learning, how does knowledge gets created, How does learning takes place etc.

Can knowledge precede knowing?

Can product precede process?

Can known precede unknown?

All codified knowledge- memory, text, e-knowledge- breaks this cardinal law of knowing. Only where experience is the basis for knowing does the law exists.

Fundamental change that happens with this dependence on codified knowledge is means of knowing becomes source of knowledge.

Incidentally there are far more nouns in codified knowledge

paradigm and
more verbs in non-codified knowledge paradigm.

Every child is born into an unknown world where experiencing is the key to knowing. From spontaneously suckling its mother's milk to all that the child does is based on its bodily and natural needs irrespective of culture and throughout time. Then depending up on the hosts dependence (relationship) on codified knowledge, the child is either conditioned to believe that all knowledge needs to be learned from experts or the child is left free to make sense of the world itself.

In this context what role does the secondary means of stockpiling knowledge have?

“Response to E-learning...” -- *Jan Visser*
<jvisser@learndev.org>

Thank you for those various observations. They are relevant in my view not only in a discussion about e-learning, but in connection with most organized ways to facilitate people's learning, which often focus on codified knowledge to the extent that the link with experience remains totally absent. Being able to operate in the realm of codified knowledge is, of

course, one of the abilities in which humans distinguish themselves from the other species in the animal kingdom. Unfortunately however, while developing that capacity further and further we have somehow lost the connection with other faculties that are grounded more directly in experience. Restoring the equilibrium seems to me to be one of the more important challenges of our time. You may well be right that, without that wise equilibrium we are much more easily at risk of creating a world based on authoritarian domination of our fellow human beings.

The technologies applied in E-learning are sort of irrelevant to the above challenge. To meet the challenge they can be used, but they can equally be used to the contrary. And they do not fundamentally condition meeting the challenge. One has to start from the questions you raise – What is knowing?; What is learning? etc. – before deciding on the means. Unfortunately, advocacy about E-learning often is inspired by the opposite. In fact, the questions you raise are hardly ever asked seriously. So, thanks again for raising them.

DO INTERNET INTERACTIONS SIMPLY FURTHER WESTERN INTELLECTUAL HEGEMONY?

This discussion is an extension of the previously articulated e-learning debate. Delving into issues of social change, these emails document a complex set of questions relating to the potential for addressing social change through Internet and problems inherent to this medium.

“Global Transformation through E-learning?” -- *Bill Ellis*
<tranet@rangeley.org>

How do we use the Internet to promote the social/economic/cultural change needed? I find that the Internet is a great place to talk, discuss, gripe, and dream. But there seems to be little use to DO SOMETHING.

Somehow we should find ways to spread how-to-do-it knowledge of the social innovations that have the potential to transform society. LETS, CoHousing, Peer Lending, Cooperative schools, Learning Centers, and many other social innovations are providing empowerment at the grassroots and community self-reliance. Shifting from the 'dominator paradigm' based on self-interest, competition, and materialism to a 'Gaian paradigm' based on public interest, cooperation, and community also seems to be the way of the future.

Certainly e-learning could replace the authoritarian, hierarchal, brainwashing inherent in our school systems. Perhaps how-to encyclopedia and/or databases could broaden the development and use of social innovations. And as we have seen, nanosecond communications around the world has put us all in touch with others of like mind. But we are still along way from either DOING the alternatives or creating a solid network of them all.

I would like to see a way to make it all come together.
Any ideas?

“The Single Path of Progress” – *Munir Fasheh*
<mfasheh@fas.harvard.edu>

Dear all,

I don't see “progress” with the more or less “neutral” attitude that seems to be the way others see it. I can't see it outside my history of 60 years, and without asking what is the price we pay for the “benefits” and “gains”... not to forget to subtract the price we pay for whatever we advocate and get enthusiastic about... for the gains we get...

For me, I see the trend that the email advocates as a big push for the belief in a single undifferentiated path for progress. I have lived and witnessed (in Palestine) enough violence and destruction that came out of that belief. Starting with the missionaries and their schools, then the Quakers schools in Palestine (Ramallah), then the British occupation, then “national” schools, then Israeli occupation, then nationalism and socialism, then “national” universities, then development, then national authority, then CNN and Aljazeera, then globalization... there is hardly any aspect of life where this belief was not forced “gently” on us, with a “civilizing” claim that it is good for us... Some may say that this is a trend, that is gaining momentum, and from which many are benefiting, and we cannot stop it... I agree, but that doesn't mean I should not say how I feel and see things. I strongly believe that – sooner or later – we need to confront this belief, that comes as an invisible

"bulldozer". For me, dealing with it is a matter of survival of humanity on this Earth... humanity in its diversity, beauty, and wisdom. I am writing the following with this spirit...

Anything that gives momentum to the belief in a single undifferentiated path for progress, and helps in widening its spread and implementation, is threatening to life – in the sense of wiping in a subtle way diversity, plurality, and wisdom in life as well as violating the well being of people, of communities, of relationships among them, and of nature. It has been effective in shattering the inner world at the personal level and tearing the social fabric at the communities' level and adding to the pollution and leading to the overuse of natural resources of this Earth. The single path for progress has been a main seed of violence – not only against people but also against cultures, communities, nature... a kind of violence that is invisible and takes place mainly at the level of thinking, perceiving, behaving, even concerning what people wear, what children eat... and at the level of the source of the worth of a person etc. It was carried with zeal to civilize, educate, modernize, and democratize people and societies. The Amazon people –

literally – knew more species of plants, insects, animals, and birds... than modern encyclopedias... That way of living, learning, and knowing is being wiped out by the belief in a single path of development. Institutions and professionals of all types have been at its service. The belief in a single path for progress always comes with a civilizing mission. It is very hard to avoid this virus. It robs the majority of their “immune systems” – just like what AIDS does to the body – while it makes a small minority feel like “saviors”. Arab students who study in western countries adopt the spirit of saviors: they want to go back home and save their countries and societies! I got that virus and carried it with me for several years, and helped spread it. Living in Palestine and confronting what we had to confront was what helped me heal... Continuing to claim (and act) that there is no alternative to this single path is unwise – to say the least...

Some may say that the belief in a single correct path is not new. True. However, having tools that are presented as scientific and neutral and that are used to impose it at a wide scale across the world is new... This is the great invention of Europe... Measurement, classification, etc have been crucial in this. To be

able to have dialogue among people from India, Pakistan, Mexico, Mali, Palestine, France, the US, etc is a most wonderful and nurturing thing. It has been a basis for creating “human globalization”. But to conduct the same test and apply the same measure on people from India, Pakistan, Mexico, Mali, Palestine, France, the US, etc is probably the most horrible thing one can imagine. Creating means to spread such measures is the “brainchild” of Europe. The belief in a single undifferentiated path for progress IS the Trojan horse of modern times – it was the means through which the gates to our societies were opened and our societies were shattered and defeated from within. Rajan’s email gives momentum to the advancement of this subtle Trojan horse – especially at the level of the mind and of perceptions. That’s why one of the questions that keep puzzling and challenging me is: why is it so easy to deceive the mind? And how can we deal with such easiness?

Of course I am not saying that we shut our societies to others or to Europeans or Americans. On the contrary, I believe we need to deepen our dialogue with Europeans and Americans, but enter such dialogues not as feeble copies or apologetics... We can act as mirrors for each other in our

attempt to understand what is happening to us and to the world around us. Initiating such a dialogue however seems to be basically the responsibility of peoples living in “undeveloped” countries and societies... In this sense, what I am saying is that we need to work on ourselves, to feel and think and do what needs to be done in protecting ourselves from the virus and the belief and the distractions that blind us to what is happening within and around us...

The difference between the Trojan horse in the legend and the Trojan horses in modern times is that it was made of wood (now of institutions); it used foreign soldiers to open the gates (now it uses professionals, many of whom are local); it used arrows and swords as weapons (now it uses professional words and modern technological means); and it was able to deceive people only once (now, the continuous creation of words, professionals, and institutions guarantee in keeping the deception alive).

About the benefits... Of course there are benefits, many of which are real. Many people improve their personal lives through them. We cannot underestimate this. When the British occupied Palestine, some people started having flush toilets,

some went to Oxford and Cambridge, and many merchants made a lot of money selling British goods. In every conquest there are benefits... When municipalities design ways to get rid of unwanted dogs in their towns, they give them poison in real meat, full of protein...

The question is not a question of whether we use modern technology or not, or whether we should welcome new ways of helping us learn and improve... The question is whether what we are advocating gives momentum to the single path or protects diverse ways of living, learning, knowing, relating, perceiving, and feeling worthiness in one's life. There is no doubt that technology in different forms and ways have been since 1994 helping the Zapatistas in two very important ways: in protecting them from being wiped out, and in bringing their inspiring vision as part of the dialogue that is taking place around the world...

Palestinian peasants felt the same and tried to protect themselves from the onslaught of the single path. In 1929, they held a meeting in Jaffa, Palestine and called for an end to the imposition of the British curriculum on their children. They did not only feel it was irrelevant but also that it

distracted them and robbed them of what they knew and what sustained their lives... It was Palestinians from towns who have ridiculed the peasants. It is an interesting case of how it seems to be much easier to distract urban people than those who have been working in the land for more than 4000 years (like the peasants of Palestine). It was not easy to sway, deceive and distract them.

Of course, it would be ridiculous (and unfair) for me to try to convince those who may benefit from E-learning, that they should not. What I tried to point out in this email is the importance of what we are trying to do in our various places: to heal from, and protect ourselves from the consequences of the belief in a single path of progress...

Best wishes for all in the coming year...

“Response to Perpetuating the Problem” – *Bob Stilger*
<bob@berkana.org>

So it seems to me a key question is what are the conditions that need to be present for distance learning technologies to be used in ways which liberate the human spirit and enhance our capacities to life whole lives?

Of course, the forces in the world who believe they have the truth will use the Internet as another media to push that Truth. But what about the rest of us?

And while staying open to the possibility that the current schooling systems around the may use the Internet to open up to diverse patterns of knowledge rather than pushing particular messages and truths, how will the rest of us use the Internet to enhance the potential for learning with the many people we work and learn with.

I am personally convinced that all change is local -- it happens in a place, with a community comprised of many people. I am also convinced that transformation is global, required the connection, learning and exchange between those local efforts. There is no doubt in my mind that we are in a period of major transformations. I want to use the Internet, and e-learning, as one means to help connect those of us who are engaged in change efforts consistent with the principles you articulate, Munir, principles frequently expressed on this list.

If we don't learn to learn together in deeper, broader, more inclusive

ways we are now, I believe most of our local efforts will end up being at the margins, as the dominant, all consuming culture marches forward.

Best...

“Perpetuating the Problem” -- *Jinan Kodapully*,
<jhskodapully@rediffmail.com>

Hi All,

I do not understand the terms local, global, etc. in these times of mass conversions to the 'development/progress slogans'. All of us think alike these days with minor changes in details. Bush wants to see democracy in all countries. We would like to convert others, or a dirtier word is to help others, or teach people how to transform etc. Our problem is we know the solutions. It is all well planed out. The paradigm we all are in is " WE KNOW, NOW OTHERS NEED TO BE TAUGHT OR CHANGED". With this attitude we can not 'replace the authoritarian, hierarchal, brainwashing inherent in our school systems'. With all our so-called good heart we are the problem.

All codified knowledge leads to hierarchy and authoritarianism including the memory based stocking of the so-called oral cultures. The brahminical system in India is a good example. Please make a difference between unintentional, organic memory and intentional, stockpiling memory. In the context of natural farming they say in order to recover and regenerate the land leave the land fallow. Leave it alone. I think even in our case may be we should learn from children.

They will show us the natural way of BEING and not only KNOWING.

“Response to Perpetuating the Problem” – *Bob Stilger*
<bob@berkana.org>

Hi Jinan, Jan and all.

Jinan, so, how do you think we get out of the messes we are in around the world? What do we do with issues of food sustainability, resource recycling and upcycling, HIV/AIDS, getting beyond schooling, etc.?

Unless *we* are unable to use the Internet to connect and learn from each other, I'm pretty worried. By *we* I mean the large set of people who are attracted to the values and principles implicit and explicit amongst people on this list. The forces which are, I believe, pushing in very catastrophic directions are just too great.

Do you share this concern for our collective connection, reflection and learning? If so, how do you see us accomplishing it?

Thanks all!

Best...

“Don't Panic” -- *Jinan Kodapully*,
<jhjskodapully@rediffmail.com>

Hi

Don't Panic.

We have crossed the point of no return.

Talk of sustainability is a fad, a meaning less exercise. Good for sales talk and conferences.

At this point what best we can do is to decelerate and be a witness.

For that the solution is there but very difficult for people who are not used to simplicity.

Each time a child is born we are given an opportunity to redeem ourselves.

What we need to do is positive inaction. If children can grow with out the adults "help" they could once again teach us what to eat, how to take care of health etc. But this can happen only where people still cultivate their own food 'UN scientifically' and who still respect the fact that seasonal vegetables, fruits are in fact what we should be eating.

In this sense the more developed would be the least fit for recovery.

One day four of us were having food- My self the most 'educated', my wife, Lakshmi who has never been to any school, Sahlini, 20 year old who went to school but ignored the 'teachings' and 5 year old Chinnu who is meant to be my guru. But I was trying to 'teach' Chinnu that bitter gourd which was one of the dishes that day has lot of iron, vitamin etc.

The 20-year-old Shalini simply ignored my knowledge and did not touch the bitter gourd. I found 50-year-old Laksmi really enjoyed eating it even prior to my 'teachings'. Later I learned from Lakshmi that as a child she never liked the vegetable but at some stage she felt like eating it.

I think the real teacher is the FEELING that made her reject it at one stage and eat it at another.

Would the food industry, the supplements industry or the scientists connected with all this respect the FEELING.

There was an article after the tsunami about how the animals and few so called primitive tribal people escaped by moving away from the beach. This point to a way of knowing, feeling the pulse of nature completely lost to us, the civilized.

“What Can We Harvest from this Discussion?” -- *Munir Fasheh* <mfasheh@fas.harvard.edu>

Hello everyone,

The discussion has been fascinating...

I feel two sets of convictions/ perceptions are surfacing: one represented by the questions that Jinan is raising, and the other by the questions that Bob and Bill are raising. Jan suggests a balance between the two. I find myself in tune with what Jinan is saying. I say this in light of my experience in Palestine, especially between 1971 and 1997. I will try in this short email to express my reaction as it is being shaped by the discussion so far. I have three points that I would like to make.

First point: A main problem that I see in modern times is giving value to something that people are doing which is totally meaningless to them. This is true about most jobs in institutions, including teaching. Most employees do their jobs, and most teachers teach something to students, neither of whom knows why – except that some authority says they must do that, it is good for them! Example: I used to ask math teachers (students) in the

1970s, “why are you teaching (studying) quadratic equations?” and the answers included: “because they are important for those who go to college”, “it is required in general exams”, “because it is in the curriculum”... Most students don’t go to college and those who do, most don’t need it in their studies etc. Yet, quadratic equations are almost in every curriculum! In other words, quadratic equations are meaningless to the vast majority of teachers and students, they don’t have a personal reason as to why they teach or study them. Still, both teachers and students believe there is value in them – mainly because some authority says so. Whether math is taught in a classroom or via e learning is totally immaterial...

Second point: any thing that is taught as a job takes away the spirit of what is being taught. That is, the problem in modern times is not in how we teach or in what we teach but in the act of teaching itself. The word “teacher” which was true about so many people, and the process had to make sense to both the teacher and the student, is now conferred only to licensed professionals who have to satisfy measures that are outside both the teacher and the student.

Teaching stopped being an art, a passion, and a lifestyle and became a profession, where credentials and measurable outcomes rule supreme. A storyteller, for example, who inspires children and lets their imagination wander, their understanding deepen, and their attitude wiser etc but has no degree (or is non-literate) is not allowed to teach children at schools -- by law! They may be allowed to come as extra curricular activities, but not as teachers – regardless of the spirit and aliveness they could create. It is – as if – dullness is appreciated and rewarded much more than aliveness. Arabic is such a beautiful language – until it is taught, where in most cases becomes a chore and a burden. Math, which is basically seeing patterns, similarities, relations, and order/ logic in the world (which almost every child naturally is able to do), becomes a hated subject thought of as difficult and only for smart people. Having a degree is easy; embodying a spirit is a total involvement in living. Having a degree in Arabic is easy, storytelling is something that the person has to develop continuously; learning how to use a computer is easy, playing a drum requires a total involvement; getting a degree in education is easy, raising children is again a total involvement with life...

Third point: in my experience, what seems to be the biggest crime in modern times is for people to run their life affairs and to live according to their own ways. During the first intifada (1987-1991) when Israel closed all schools, they did not mind people having conferences and condemning Israel for closing schools, but they were very harsh against neighborhood committees that were formed and were involved in things like communal farming and teaching/ learning within neighborhoods. (That was so revealing to me that I wrote an article about how the challenge we face is not free expression and free thought but freeing expression and thought from dominant ways...). Recently, I visited a school in Charlestown near Boston and spoke in a class about what it means to be a Palestinian. I mentioned that part of my experience was discovering how dangerous one becomes if s/he acts without reference to dominant powers. I mentioned that in the US, it is similar, where Huntington – who in an earlier book considered Islam as the biggest threat – wrote a new book in which he considers Hispanics to be the biggest threat to America today. Hispanic students in the class raised their eyebrows and said, “why? we are not

threatening any one! We are not doing anything?” I said, “that’s exactly why you are dangerous. You are not playing the game according to the rules. If you were planning and organizing and having political parties to get seats in government, that is not a problem; but if you live in a way as if dominant culture is just one way, rather than the way to imitate, then you become a threat... You will be allowed to fight it but definitely not to ignore it.” The more modern a society is, the less people run their daily affairs: like parenting, cooking, farming, conversing, playing, raising children, shitting, understanding, learning, knowing, enjoying... Like Jinan says about soil: it needs to be left alone for it to regenerate itself... Cultures and communities need to be left alone in order for them to regenerate themselves. I lived two periods where this happened: the 1970s and the first intifada... During the two periods, no one spoke about change, about moving forward, about empowerment... Every one just did what they could, driven from within. At the same time, we were in constant interaction with one another. I can’t remember a period where the world was inspired by the Palestinian experience as much as that period. It seems that by making sense to ourselves, we made sense to

others. I agree with Jinan again by saying that words such as local and universal lose their meanings in such contexts. Similarly with expressions such as being at the margin or at the center... Moreover, by being alive, change naturally happened... We all seem to get intoxicated by the idea of wanting to change the world, with planned change, with having the power to change... through organizing etc... Here is where I feel we need to have humility and respect, to heal from such arrogant attitudes as changing the world... Gandhi had a beautiful statement regarding this: be the change you want to see. Since 1994, the Zapatistas have been huge inspiration to millions of people around the world not through world organizations or super plans but by living the way they want to live...

What is common among the three points is the role of institutions and professionals. What seems to be common is the conviction that people are helpless, they need “professionals” to help them run their lives. They need institutions and professionals even in marrying, in dying, in bringing up children, in learning, in comprehending, in giving meaning etc... When Gandhi was asked whether his goal is to drive the English out of India, he

responded by saying that his biggest worry is if the English left but their institutions stayed. The problem is not the snake but its poison ...

There is another expression that I would like to comment on. Whenever I hear “student-centered, or learner-centered or learner-directed...” it reminds me of the original copy: consumer-centered. Educators got it from the market. The consumer is a king or a queen; their satisfaction in concern number one. All people become equal... It is not the label (e.g. learner centered or curriculum-centered...) and not the tool (classroom or internet) and not the content (technical math, ethno math, or critical math...) that makes the difference. It is whether the source of one’s knowledge is life – nature, culture, community, people one interacts daily with – or the source is texts, institutions, professionals etc. The difference also is in perceptions, values, relations, and who gives meaning and value... If I teach math that I myself don’t use or embody, what is the meaning of my teaching? What is it that I would be really teaching? What are my students really learning? What does it mean to be learner centered in this situation?

The starting point is not what we do with a new technology but how we want to live... and what are the aspects we don’t want to violate in our actions and behaviors... When we live and are involved in living and are alive, then if a certain technology is helpful, we could talk about it – rather than start with it and ask how it can be useful... It is neither the starting point nor the reference nor the measure... Every place is different, and every person/ group decides according to one’s realities and convictions...

One more point: an alternative is not something in the future but something we embody in our lives today... it is not something one plans but one lives... For example, if one believes that we should live by certain values rather than shape our lives according to careers, that person does not need to wait, to have a big plan, and change society before s/he starts... s/he can start working with that spirit.

I want to end by saying that I feel that the world is healing. There are many signs/ manifestations of it, almost all of which come from people, communities, cultures, and ways of living that were considered in the age of “enlightenment” to be useless and valueless... and should be gotten rid of. Hope

is coming out of unexpected places and in unexpected ways... One role I see for the interaction in this group (as well as in many other similar ones) is to bring such manifestations out in the open... we will never see them on CNN or similar monsters...

the coming three months I will be traveling to Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and hopefully Pakistan and Iran... I will not always have easy access to Internet, but will try to keep up with the discussion...

warm regards to all...

CHILDREN AND SELF-LEARNING

This group of emails discusses the ability to learn and innovations of children in illiterate societies. They debate the value of growing outside a Western, literacy-based system and discuss the ability of children to ingeniously create based on need and desire.

“Don’t Get Caught Up in Skills” -- *Jinan Kodapully*,
<jhjskodapully@rediffmail.com>

Friends,

I would like to share my documentation of many things done out of waste in communities and by children. The danger when we intellectuals do such work is it becomes activism. for them it is very natural and wont confuse it with art etc. What is important is how do we regain this ability to be natural in our responses. Many crafts have come out of using so called waste. By the by



"waste' is a term invented by modernity. Kantha stitch of Begal, Appliqué work etc are all a result of this wisdom of people.

Don't get caught up in skills, become the process....

Look at how many different materials are put together in this lovely 'toy'...

“Name?” – *Anil K. Gupta <anilg@iimahd.ernet.in>*

Can you send us name of this boy/girl who designed it?

Very good example, send us more such examples.

“Nameless and Faceless” -- *Jinan Kodapully, <jhjskodapully@rediffmail.com>*

The name of the boy who designed the 'toy'?

It will be impossible to trace or I will have to send you the names of generations of children including my great-great-grand father and beyond that.

Allow me to clarify.

In 1990 I stayed in a village in Orissa for 6 months where I

came across few toys and I 'could' identify its makers. In fact I still remember them. But after I settled down in Aruvacode initially I did undertake the task of identifying who did it etc. But After years of staying in one place (last 12 years) observing children, I realized that almost all children are doing this or similar things.

In fact I have a good documentation of children

Children in natural learning cultures are similar to any newborn living being. All the games and other activities children do in the villages is a kind of a response to their biological needs. All the games children play in these communities has to do with sensitizing the senses, planning, balancing, guessing, developing the mathematical sense etc. This is the process of knowing the world. The children in my community knows all the trees, plants, birds in their vicinity, knows how to swim, cycle, cook, etc. all by themselves with out the interference of adults. Every year they invent new games/songs etc.

This is a result on keen observation, an interest in knowing the world, to relate and situate firmly in their immediate environment. This is a biological need, the principle of life itself.

In order to understand this we have to remove our egotistic fragmented blinkers. We will have to resituate ourselves to a neutral plane with out biases/needs and misconception about indigenous knowledge systems.

Now a small
gift: -----→

One area that
needs to be
discussed is
'indigenous
childhood'.

Children and
childhood
demands all
our attention

because that is where everything is going wrong. Even to
understand our own de-colonization, biases in understanding
etc demands a revisit to childhood.

If time permits I would like to initiate a dialogue on the
BIOLOGICAL NATURE OF KNOWLEGDE IN
INDIGENOUS CHILDHOOD.

Till modernity intervenes indigenous children respond using
their biological intelligence and knowledge.

Children in indigenous, natural learning cultures are similar to
any newborn living being. All the games and other activities
children do in the villages is a kind of a response to their
biological needs. It seems that the evolutionary process of life
itself evolves these activities. Awakening the intelligence of the
body seems to me the first step towards acquiring knowledge.
At the initial stages of learning (living) the tools for learning
also gets developed. This tools are the most important aspect as
it will determine not only the paradigm of our worldview but
also how we are going to perceive the world and what

knowledge we will create out of it.

Knowledge constructed in the environment of freedom and
love produces heart knowledge. Indigenous ways of knowing
points out a system of knowledge creation that is worth looking
at.

Senses therefore play a very important role in the process of
learning and are a sort of a reciprocal device that helps creation
establish communion with the inner and the outer world/ self.
All the games children play in these communities has to do
with sensitizing the senses, planning, balancing, guessing,
developing the mathematical sense etc. This is the process of
knowing the world.

One misunderstanding of modern people is regarding the 'toys'
and games of these children.

By exploring their surroundings children make sense of the
world. In this process they make things with various materials
they come in contact with. By this they understand various

properties/ qualities/ possibilities of all that is worth
knowing. They also make what can be called toy in a loose
sense, as the process of making is as important as the product

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

unlike in modern life. Toy need not be anything in particular but any thing that catches the interest of the child. The toy is most often incomplete without the toy maker. I admire several abilities present in non-literate communities. There is no teaching in these communities. There is learning though. They are born creative like all of us are. Our tragedy is that soon we are sucked in to modernity and is crippled, distorted and made powerful and arrogant. Psychological ones, which are nothing but egoistic constructs, replace the biological responses.

We are meant to be like all other living beings, to use our biologically inherited intelligence, intuition, reason etc. At some point we became like the earlier Kalidasa³ who was chopping the tree branch on which he was sitting. That is our situation now. Our knowledge is our relationship to the world. There is something drastically wrong with it. I still hold the problem lies in codification of knowledge because then you are never in the present. I am attaching another toy. This was shot in 2000. This toy is made with an umbrella frame and a container. The boy called this Job. The act of scooping and tipping is his contribution to the toy. You see the character of most indigenous toys are that they are processes and there are more verbs in indigenous vocabulary than nouns unlike the modern knowledge/culture.

“Response to Nameless and Faceless” – *Yasmeen Bano*
<yasmeenbano@akesp.org>

³ A classical Indian poet.

Thanks Jinan for initiating a discussion on a very sensitive and useful aspect of a human life. I completely agree with what you have highlighted but the dilemma of toady's life is that we adults are snatching the joys of early childhood from children by forcing them to do the things which they do not want to do or get engaged in. Majority of us are too worried about the future of today's children and not about their present time. Based on my experiences of living in a city and a part of an urban school system, I could say that “Childhood” has lost its significance for us as parents and schools are more concerned about their life as adults. The horrible urban practices include admitting a two year old innocent child in a preparatory school which prepares these tiny tots to get admission in a “Famous Nursery School” which in turn ensures admission in a “High quality Secondary School” and which leads to good grades and admission in “standard colleges” and which takes a child to “professional colleges”. Parents have become crazy about maintaining this chain of “good Schools” and “high grades” and in doing so they force children to learn numbers and alphabets comprising their time to play, just wonder around and be with their friends and siblings. I have had discussions with many parents about it but it seems that nothing is important in life other than good school and good grade. How to restore the practices which allow a child to be a child in order to cherish the joy, excitement and fun of childhood is a question for me and I am trying to figure this out.

“Some Questions...” – *Subhash Rwat*
<rwatsubhash@rediffmail.com>

Children learn from their surroundings wherever they are - in a village or in a city.

For last six consecutive years I have been working with city children, the children of Delhi and what I have found is that the deprived children or the children coming from the slums seem to be more sensible or sensitive towards others even in a city like Delhi...what I am interested to know from anyone (you can refer to any such study)-

1. Does learning through senses have anything to do with growing as a less or more sensible or sensitive person?
2. Does sensibility grow best in deprivation or poverty?

“A Thought” -- *Khalida Qattash* <khqattash@yahoo.com>

The toy is most often incomplete
without the toy maker.

Yet children are beings who do compete
in love, life, and winning treat.
The child in my humble history
often wanders in wonderings,
asks questions of truth and happiness
while answers- to no avail-
do sail across mind's shores
they knock walls and doors
of curiosity, kill its cats
at other times! " The toy maker"
can merely be in our minds!

“A Reflection and Connection” -- *Jan Visser*
<jvisser@learndev.org>

Jinan,

Thank you for those various observations. They are relevant in my view not only in a discussion about e-learning, but in connection with most organized ways to facilitate people's learning, which often focus on codified knowledge to the extent that the link with experience remains totally absent. Being able to operate in the realm of codified knowledge is, of course, one of the abilities in which humans distinguish themselves from the other species in the animal kingdom. Unfortunately however, while developing that capacity further and further we have somehow lost the connection with other faculties that are grounded more directly in experience. Restoring the equilibrium seems to me to be one of the more important challenges of our time. You may well be right that, without that wise equilibrium we are much more easily at risk of creating a world based on authoritarian domination of our fellow human beings.

The technologies applied in E-learning are sort of irrelevant to the above challenge. To meet the challenge they can be used, but they can equally be used to the contrary. And they do not fundamentally condition meeting the challenge. One has to start from the questions you raise – What is knowing? ; What is learning? etc. – before deciding on the means. Unfortunately, advocacy about E-learning often is inspired by the opposite. In fact, the questions you raise are hardly ever asked seriously. So, thanks again for raising them.

“Response to A Reflection and Connection” – *Jinan Kodapully*, <jhjskodapully@rediffmail.com>

The non-literate communities actually use non-codified knowledge and many spiritual practices are actually an attempt to discard codified knowledge and seek original experiential meanings. We are caught in the maze of concepts and theories. I find many studies in the West regarding children disturbing because they are based on others concepts and based on children who are already damaged by the system. I happened to come across an essay in *The New York Times* about a study on children-
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/13/science/13essa.html>

**Children Learn by Monkey See, Monkey Do.
Chimps Don't.**

By CARL ZIMMER

Published: December 13, 2005

Humans may be hard-wired to learn by imitation, even when that is clearly not the best way to learn.

It looks like both groups of researchers claim that human children blindly imitate all of the steps of another person's goal-oriented actions (even the unnecessary ones), while chimps identify the goal of the other primate's actions and act more efficiently to achieve that goal. The suggestion is that this is an evolutionary adaptation, as Route imitation becomes more important when tools become increasingly complex.

The study was conducted on 16 children from a Scottish nursery school.

From my study of children I find this study totally false. Children in non-literate communities are far freer and they explore the world on their own with out the interference of adults in the guise of teaching.

I am working on what I call as 'paradigms of knowing' which is to do with how memory, text and computer including movie and television effects our way of being and knowing.

As far as I can see the problem with this study is that unlike in non-literate communities the experimenter is bent up on teaching/instructing the children what to do and is expecting the children to follow his instruction. This itself is a lack of understanding of how children behave. Another clue is that his daughter is not responding to the father's queries. Issue is the shift from learning paradigm to teaching or instruction paradigm. The crisis of modern man lies in this shift. He is fragmented, alienated, bored, and rootless. The problem lies inside him. Rather than confronting that he solves others problems. The fragmentation is clearly evident at all levels. Being and knowing, mind and body, thought and deed, intuition and reason, planning and spontaneity, male and female (This is what has led to monosexualisation and perhaps to the gay lesbian movements today), are all split. The child in us is banished, replaced by products and processes, perception and analysis. Not only there is fragmentation of the two, but also one of them is seen as inferior to the other and banished forever. The processes that can be imitated or completed secondhand come to be preferred above all else, a distinctly right brain approach.

I have always felt Modernity is masculine, including the feminist movement.

The paradox of writing/communicating all this is that it is in way knowledge preceding the knowing. I feel the biggest trap

of modernity is intellectualization and analysis without the necessary perception. So do not analyze or intellectualize. Just read.

I am pasting an argument by Socrates on the problems that written form would create.

“At the Egyptian city of Naucratis, there was a famous old god, whose name was Theuth; the bird which is called the Ibis is sacred to him, and he was the inventor of many arts, such as arithmetic and calculation and geometry and astronomy and draughts and dice, but his great discovery was the use of letters. Now in those days the god Thamus was the king of the whole country of Egypt; and he dwelt in that great city of Upper Egypt which the Hellenes call Egyptian Thebes, and the god himself is called by them Ammon. To him came Theuth and showed his inventions, desiring that the other Egyptians might be allowed to have the benefit of them; he enumerated them, and Thamus enquired about their several uses, and praised some of them and censured others, as he approved or disapproved of them. It would take a long time to repeat all that Thamus said to Theuth in praise or blame of the various arts. But when they came to letters. This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories; it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they

cannot have; for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.”

“Independence?” -- *Jan Visser* <jvisser@learndev.org>

Thanks again, Jinan. I can't unfortunately get access to the NYT article as it would require me to sign up with yet another source of daily emails, surely better than the regular junk I receive, but it becomes increasingly more difficult to process all one's daily email if at least 90 % is unsolicited. So, I must refrain from commenting on that study.

Independent of it, I think the crux is that one pays a price for literacy and the crucial question then becomes if the loss incurred by becoming literate is justified by what one gains. My use of terms here is, of course, totally inadequate if interpreted in an economic sense. This is not what I have in mind. Besides, I am putting the issue here as if there are only two opposite alternatives. However, one doesn't necessarily have to lose one's disposition to freely explore the world by becoming literate and not necessarily do adult illiterate people retain such disposition as they grow older. If literacy leads to loss of the disposition, and that certainly happens a lot, it is

because of the way in which people are being led (if you will forced) to become literate and because of all the false connotations and expectations that go with the idea of literacy.

Also, we should not forget that literacy (in the regular traditional sense of the term) is but one way of acquiring the ability to operate with symbol systems through which knowledge can be codified. Because so much value is attributed to literacy by its advocates it is often overlooked that illiterate people codify their knowledge using different symbol systems, perhaps more propitious for ensuring that knowledge does not remain knowledge but that eventually wisdom ensues, something that may less easily happen in a world exclusively codified through the symbol systems promoted by a monolithic dominant culture. I don't think codification as such goes against spirituality and experiential awareness. There is good reason, and it seems you are following it, for literates to take the world of illiterates seriously, probably as much as there is reason for illiterates to take literacy (less narrowly conceived than what is normally the case) seriously. The way forward, in my view, is not the choice of one or the other option, but genuine cohabitation of and cross-fertilization between different modes of awareness.

To the extent that current and future technologies can help reach the above goal, I'll be happy. To the extent that their particular uses result in the opposite effect, I'll be unhappy.

“Unesco’s New Literacy Portal” – *Osama Manzar*
<Osamam@gmail.com>

For Your Information: I found this posted on Unesco’s website.
<http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php->

[URL_ID=40338&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html](#)

Literacy today is a world preoccupation

Literacy empowers and nurtures inclusive societies and contributes to the fair implementation of human rights. In the case of mothers, literacy leads to an enhanced quality of life for their families and improved education outcomes for their children. Nevertheless literacy remains a low priority for national governments and the donor community. Worldwide, 771 million adults are illiterate and about 100 million children are out of school.

A large number of those who enroll drop out before attaining literacy skills and some of those who complete primary education remain illiterate.

Literacy is an indispensable means for effective social and economic participation, contributing to human development and poverty reduction.

The Literacy Portal aims to provide a platform for information sharing on literacy projects and activities undertaken around the world and enhance UNESCO's capacity in coordinating the United Nation Literacy

Decade (UNLD)
in building partnership at all level.

This portal will be developed progressively through the contribution of all literacy actors; including UNESCO Field Offices, UN Agencies, bilateral and multilateral Organizations, Member States, Institutions, Non-governmental Organizations and Literacy workers. It will be a working tool to provide them more visibility and networking possibilities.

INTERESTING LINKS

These links were put forth over the course of discussion as original and intriguing.

- The Udaipur as a Learning City process continues to grow and evolve in new directions. For the past 6 months we have been hosting an organic exchange called **Hamo Desi Mela**, which features locally grown organic food, herbal medicines and various handicraft products.
http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/udaipur_hamo0.htm
<http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/udaipur_hamo0.htm>
- The Walkout-Walkon Network has recently published the latest issue of **Swapathgami Magazine** which is filled with inspiring stories of self-learning and lots of learning resources for those who wish to venture beyond the mainstream. Hindi issues are also available on our website.

http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/swapathgami_english4.pdf
<http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/swapathgami_english4.pdf

- We recently helped to launch the Families Learning Together Network to support organic lifestyles and natural learning within families and between families in South Asia.
<http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/familieslearning.htm>
<<http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/familieslearning.htm>>
- A new issue of *Swapathgami* - the magazine of the walkout-walk on network maintained and developed by Shikshantar, a learning center in Udaipur, India.
http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/swapathgami_english4.pdf
- Here are some interesting websites on zero waste which were shared by our friend Shibu in Kerala.

<http://www.zerowaste.com/default.htm>
<<http://www.zerowaste.com/default.h>

[tm](http://www.zerowaste.com/default.htm)>
<http://no-burn.org/> <<http://no-burn.org/>>
<http://hcwh.org/> <<http://hcwh.org/>>
<http://www.zerowaste.co.nz/> <<http://www.zerowaste.co.nz/>>
<http://grn.org/> <<http://grn.org/>>
<http://ecologycenter.org/>
<<http://ecologycenter.org/>>

- Here's an interesting site for sharing resources. Basically, it is a place to offer for free stuff that you no longer use, but which might be useful to others. There are chapters in India, as well as many in the US and other countries. Check it out. <http://freecycle.org/>
- Another Issue of *Swapathgami*:
http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/swapathgami_english5.pdf
- Abhivyakti has published its annual 'Expressions' journal featuring several tools for deepening dialogues: including Open Space Technology, World Cafe, Mela, U Process, Circle and more...It is a very useful publication for transforming stagnant and stiff conferences and meetings.

We have permission to host the full journal on our website.

http://www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/expressions_toc.htm

For a hardcopy of it, please write to Nitin Paranjape:

abhivyakti@sancharnet.in

- On CNN IBN I saw amazing interview of Vilasrav Deshmukh, Maharashtra chief minister, He was struggling to answer about every day 4 death of children in Thane due to malnutrition and MORE THERE 400 FARMERS SUCIDE in Maharashtra in a single year. I recommend to read interview on net on this link... However if you can see repeat show you will enjoy more as you will see chief minister struggling to answer and many time so confuse that his face get wet. Perfect show to expose politician who is in power.

<http://www.ibnlive.com/news/devils-advocate-vilasrao-deshmukh/9140-4-single.html>

- Check this out. A great group of people doing amazing work across the world: www.berkana.org