

Oh Lord Almighty  
Look at me  
Listen to my prayer  
For once.

Where are you?  
At times I feel  
I see you  
And know you.

Are you on the net  
Or on the mobile  
And also listening  
To your walkman?  
Are you chewing gum!

My Lord,  
Wake up, wake up  
What?  
You say you are  
Anyway listening.

Lord, Take me back  
In Time.

Let me be in a cave  
With a bear  
Let me be under a tree  
With a wolf

Let my Gods be  
The spirits  
Of the trees, earth, skies  
Of rivers and the breeze  
Of the hills and wild flowers  
Of the spirits of things  
Not existing.

Who needs these temples  
Churches and mosques.  
I will worship  
All trees-animals-rocks

## A Prayer Let Me Go Back in Time

Who needs these celebrities  
And their malls  
I will refrain from  
All alcohols

Let me be  
With the earth innocent,  
The skies sacred, with the  
breeze flowing pure

Let me live with  
Animals and flowers  
And not tame or shape them.

Send the cows to the forest  
Send the hens to the jungle  
Send the horses into wilderness  
Let the sheep run away  
Let the goat go to the mountains  
May each find their abode  
But, not around tamed  
By this human being  
Not around with the  
Cannibals modern  
Lord let me go back  
In time.

Who needs these religions  
Anyway, dividing me  
And my brother  
Who needs these armies  
Defending me from my  
Father, defending  
Strips of land with  
Borders not existing.

Who needs these modern gadgets,  
TVs, computers, microwaves

And washing machines.  
These industries and mills  
Cause new diseases  
They chew human hearts  
And eat up human brains.  
They kill fingers and skills.  
They make every being  
A machine  
Every home a casino  
And every temple  
A brothel.  
Every brain has become  
a square computer  
And, every computer  
A new God.

Who needs these lifestyles  
Of speed – superhighways  
They kill trees ancient  
And, I have no where  
To go.

Now water is no more pure  
And you cannot breathe  
I sleep with an oxygen cylinder  
It is no more life, you know.  
There is no space open  
There is no sky clear  
There are no hearts with love  
There are no brains with goodness  
Anymore.  
Lord, take me back  
In Time.

To live by a river flowing  
Dancing and singing  
With children and fellow beings  
Lord, take me back  
In Time



Why the kings and colonies  
Why the imports and exports  
Why exploit any being  
Why these dictators or  
Democracies, they keep  
Declaring wars on matters  
Not existing – only imagined  
Why these armies  
They fight themselves  
Each becoming his  
Own enemy.

Let my life flow  
In the unknown quietly  
As the river pure  
Meets the ocean wide.  
Let me live in awe of the  
stars beyond  
And the dawn and dusk  
Of every day.

Let me be humble  
In my prayers for  
The unknown.

- Satish Inamdar\*  
<thevalleyschool@vsnl.com>

\*Copyleft: Use it, abuse it, modify  
it, copy it, keep adding to it.

walking out...

Today, those who choose to leave the dominant system of education are labeled by it as 'drop-outs'. This negative term connotes failing and incompetence, and is applied to those who don't fit in the competitive schooling or college system. In this gathering, we will explore how to turn this term (and the underlying worldview it is connected to) on its head.

We view the decision to walk out (or rise out) of institutionalized educational structures, as a thoughtful and positive choice. It exposes how schooling is a deep form of violence against peoples' minds, bodies and spirits, which cuts them off from nature, their family, communities, culture, work, expression, and themselves. Furthermore, walking out represents a strong form of dissent against the global political economy. It is a powerful step towards reclaiming control over one's own learning, and therefore, over one's own life.

In the session, we will explore questions like: *How have we taken charge of our own learning and created our own learning webs? How can we form mutually nurturing relationships amongst ourselves and support each other's continuous learning? How can we challenge the formal system and encourage others, who feel trapped, to take the next steps to leave it?*

We hope this gathering will enable walk-outs to share their stories, questions and dreams with one another, and will inspire others to see the strength and potential of rising out of stifling, dead institutions. We seek to lift the taboo from those who choose to walk-out. For those interested in learning societies, this session will also highlight the dynamic possibilities and choices that exist outside of institutionalized education. A dynamic and beautiful world of living and learning – which is much bigger than schooling – awaits each one of us, if we choose to recognize it.

...no quitting

an invitation



“Walk out, we walk out, and walking on again... Walk out, we walk out, and walking on again...” Our session began with a spontaneous song, led by Japan, Hemant and Vinay. Hearing the energy and excitement, a fairly large crowd soon gathered to explore with us what “walking out and walking on” was about.

During our three-hour session together, we used various processes to engage participants. We began with a ‘mela’ (festival), in which each walkout created a stall to share their own story, experiences, and what ‘walking out, and walking on’ meant to them. So many conversations were happening at once, as small circles formed all around the room, and the electricity generated was contagious. After about an hour or so, we invited people to play a game, “Tangle” – in which a small group of ten form a knot amongst themselves and then work together to come out of it. This provoked a lot of discussion on the other ‘tangles’ in our lives, and what kinds of things we (can) do to free ourselves from them. In the latter part of the session, we had an open space, where walkouts shared unique talents, skills and

processes with participants, ranging from art, music and origami to community media-making, organic farming, knowledge consulting and voluntary simplicity. The session concluded with a play on walkouts and the screening of the first three films in the “Walkouts... Making Other Worlds Possible” series (produced by Abhivyakti, Shikshantar and Multiworld).

“Walking on” – that is, What do walk outs do after they leave formal educational structures? – was one of the main points of focus throughout session. Through sharing stories, skills, talents and resources, we tried in multiple ways to address this concern. Many youth who attended felt inspired, that walking out and walking on, was possible, and that there were many who could support them in this process.

We also explored the question, “How are you a walkout?” which invited participants to share how they had left dehumanizing jobs, restrictive environments, debilitating attitudes, etc., and walked on to work, live and be in ways that were closer to their convictions. This helped to expand the meaning of ‘walkouts’, so it didn’t become limited to just leaving school or college, or to only a movement of young people. It opened the door for people to co-author the meaning of this process (of questioning/challenging and then moving onward to create) – in their own words, with their own metaphors. Some of the terms that came up in our closing circle were: seeker, freedom, trust, faith, possibility, hope, *ahimsa*, *satya*, learning, self-reliance, self-expression, nurturing...

Many of us discussed how we might grow and expand the diversity and possibility of “walking out and walking on” as a lifelong process. We hope to continue this dialogue in our own home-places, to connect with other walkouts locally.

- shared by Shilpa Jain <shilpa@swaraj.org>

“If it [the law, the government, the system] is of such a nature that it requires you to be an agent of injustice to another, then I say, **break the law**. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.”

- Henry David Thoreau

### **From Tiana Lins**

It was two years ago when I started to feel that something was not that right. The work that I was doing was going well with many good results and opportunities of professional growth. However, I was extremely tired, unhappy and stressed. After realizing my feelings, I tried for one year to 'fix' what was going wrong, but it did not work. The only thing at that point that was clear to me was the fact that I could not be myself anymore while working. I could not share with my friends my unhappiness, my tiredness, and my worries. I knew that if I did so, I would have been labeled by them (as I was doing by myself) as an unsuccessful professional. Then came a time when all of this became unbearable and I decided to walk away and try to re-construct myself...

This decision brought me to incredible meetings and dialogues within me. The choice of doing this in different countries, different cultures helped me to feel different ways of living and new possibilities of being happy and whole. I volunteered in two organizations in India and had the opportunity of beautiful and natural learning processes with each and every person that I met.

### **From Shilpa Jain**

I feel like boundary-crossing is a vital and powerful part of my work and being in this world. Indeed, boundary-crossing is something I feel I am especially gifted to do in my lifetime — as I am such a misfit myself — being raised in the US, but not really being 'American'; living in India, but not really being 'Indian'; going to arguably the most elite university in the world, but walking out and constantly challenging the educational system; coming from a background of

middle-class wealth, but choosing a life of greater balance and simplicity, etc.

### **From David Wolsk**

I realised that the last 40 years of my life began with a mini-walkout: from the Danish Neurophysiology Institute to the group of radical educators at the Danish Pedagogical Institute. Then contracts with UNESCO and Education International, led to a move to Canada and a job with the Education Faculty at the University

of Victoria. That's when the big walkout occurred. I realised I didn't fit in with the other professors' notions of education, so I left for free-lancing. And I've been able to survive and pursue a wide variety of interesting endeavours, things that I felt needed to be done or were worth trying out.

### **From Bibek Kumar Anand**

Technology is my passion, and leading a highly ethical life is my ethos. After graduating, I chose to work as

System ordered 'Silence',  
I wanted to shout.  
I walked out.

System ordered me to believe the things,  
That I wanted to doubt.  
I walked out.

Rivers of creativity are now flowing,  
Forests of imaginations are growing inside me,  
Being in the system was like mental drought.

Nothing mastering me anymore: past or goal,  
I'm feeling like free soul,

I can shout now, I can doubt,  
Thank God, I walked out.

- Japan Pathak  
<japanpathak@yahoo.com>

the project engineer of a project dealing with the improvement of the Cycle Rickshaws, because, in my opinion, the real use of education, is to understand the plight of others, and the intellectual capacity developed by the education must explore the ways of mitigating the understood plight. As it is a materialistic era, I was badly discouraged by my peers, because I chucked away some so-called coveted corporate openings. Now today so many of those peers are approaching me, because the grit gave me a unique competency to tackle human problems.

### From Damyanti

In 1996 I got a government job teaching in Assam. I saw the obstructive face of education, so I left the job. In that same year I joined with Medha Patkar in the Narmada Bachao Andolan movement. I worked for affected people at Burgie village. After that, I worked as an independent social worker among women and girls for their health empowerment.

In 2000 I read Gandhiji's autobiography and *Hind Swaraj*, and I moved to the historic Sewagram ashram of Mahatma Gandhiji. I lived there more than three years, and I experienced a non-violent way of life in ashram life. There I learned traditional agriculture, compost-making, spinning, Gandhian thought, Gopalan, cooking and various crafts. In between, I met Sanjoy in Institute of Gandhian Studies, and we decided to live together. At present, we are in a process of regenerating a traditional learning system as well as practising non-violence in our daily life.

### From Munir Fasheh

That first intifada [in Palestine] brought out the tremendous energy that people have when institutions and professionals cease to interfere in people's daily lives. During those 4 years, Israel closed down all institutions, as a punishment. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The energy and creativity that immediately flourished was amazing and scary. It was amazing to us and scary to Israel. It was so scary to Israel that it issued a military order in August 1988 criminalizing any act of neighborhood learning or communal farming – up to 10 years of imprisonment and/or destroying one's home. Israel sought the help of the PLO, Jordan and the World Bank to come in for rescue. They did that and the spirit and energy were curtailed. The seeds however are there (in all peoples and not only Palestinians) waiting to be watered in order to flourish.

What people can do when they have the opportunity to get out of official "boxes" is amazing. Initiatives and stories are crucial in getting out of the conditioning we

are put into via institutionalization of life, and are also crucial in embodying different ways of living.

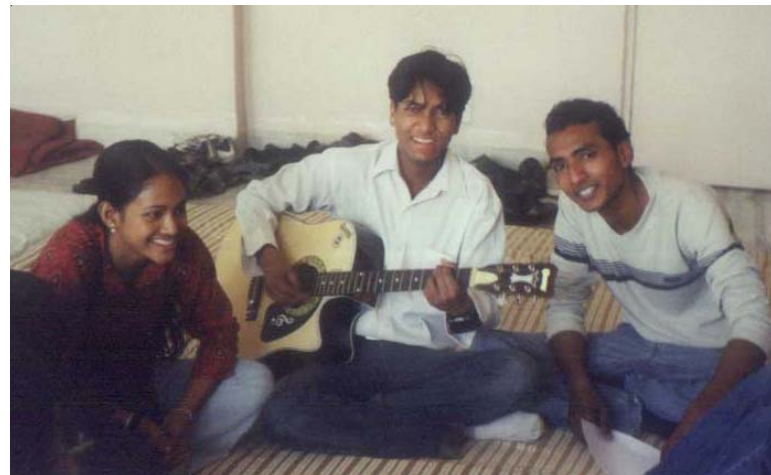
### From Claire Mollard

I got to know about Learning Societies through conversations with friends while I was working at UNESCO, here in Paris. It came at a very appropriate time for me, as I was going through a process of deep questioning of the meaning of my work in this institution and the "development" framework in which the UN, NGOs and other aid institutions are operating. I think that these conversations, as well as many of the ideas and personal experiences that are shared through this network helped me in taking the decision to leave UNESCO and explore ways of working and leaving that would make more sense to me...

Until now, I think the most powerful learning experiences that I had occurred when I was travelling, meeting with people from other cultures, people that have a different worldview than mine. It pushes me to question my preconceptions and helps me in challenging my own dominant way of thinking.

### From Sonia Nimr

Since I came back from India, the idea of unlearning-learning is occupying my mind. One of the things which most impressed me, and from which I've learned a lot, was meeting and talking with walkouts. In the past two weeks, there were meetings in Palestine between governmental and non-governmental organisations with long discussions about "developing education" with specific concentration on walkouts and



the illiterate. The main idea was how to give reading-writing lessons to the illiterate and make them “able bodies”, and which ways we need to “force” walkouts to go back to schools. The third and fourth topics were even worse: how to make people computer literates so they can “develop” themselves and be more technology aware. The last topic made smoke come out of my ears: how to teach the community things like democracy, gender issues, and human rights, etc....

I was in these meetings like an alien, asking totally “stupid” questions, like: Do people need to read and write to become useful in the society? Surely these people have something very creative and can go through life in their own way without us spoiling them with our “learning”. Why can’t we enhance their creativity instead of teaching them something totally useless? Then came the big question, which made everybody look at me as a mental case: Why force walkouts to go back to schools? They can be creative without the official education. Good and useful and creative doesn’t mean “officially educated with a government certificate”, does it?? I spoke about the walkouts I met in Mumbai, and how we should learn something from their experience.

There is a woman who lives next door. She is 15 years younger than me, with five children. Her official education only to the third grade; she can hardly read and write but she has a wisdom and insight which makes me, “with a Ph.D.”, seek her advice. Who is more learned? Why does the official education equate an official certificate with wisdom and usefulness? I think there is a lot to be learned from the “official non-learned”.

#### **From Keshav Prasad**

Should I call myself a drop-out or walk-out? There is no doubt about it. But same time I am not criticizing the regular system as useless. What I am telling is that some systems do not work with some learners. For them, it is time to find alternatives.

Non-cooperation is an attempt to awaken the masses, to a sense of their dignity and power. This can only be done by enabling them to realize that they need not fear brute force, if they would but know the soul within.

How can one be compelled to accept slavery? I simply refuse to do the master’s bidding. He may torture me, break my bones to atoms and even kill me. He will then have my dead body, not my obedience. Ultimately, therefore, it is I who am the victor and not he, for he has failed in getting me to do what he wanted done.

If co-operation is a duty, I hold that non-co-operation also under certain conditions is equally a duty. Non-cooperation is directed not against men but against measures. It is not directed against the Governors, but against the system they administer. The roots of non-cooperation lie not in hatred but in justice, if not in love.

Non-cooperation is beyond the reach of the bayonet. It has found an abiding place in the Indian heart. Workers like me will go when the hour has struck, but non-cooperation will remain.

This campaign of non-cooperation has no reference to diplomacy, secret or open. The only diplomacy it admits of is the statement and pursuance of truth at any cost.

- Mahatma Gandhi

## A Learning Journey to Kerala

Kerala – a small state at the southernmost western border of India, part mountains, part beaches, part inland waterways, part jungles, part cities. Home to many different religions, communism, matrilineal social structures, a long history of trade, most recently, Kerala has been touted as the most educated and literate state in India. Yet, all that glitters is not gold. Unemployed, frustrated youth, high suicide rates, growing urbanization and consumerism, a large ex-patriot population living in West Asia and other parts of the world, increasing destruction of nature and indigenous populations, all also mark Kerala's current experiences.

A group of 16 *swapathgamis* (self-path-makers) traveled together in Kerala in the first two weeks of April 2004. They came from different parts of India: Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Uttaranchal, Tamil Nadu, and ranged in age from 14 to 40. All of them were 'walk-outs', people who had taken decisions to free themselves from institutionalized education, or dehumanizing jobs, or violent lifestyles, or narrow attitudes, and 'walk on' to explore other ways of living and learning, that were more in tune with their values, convictions, and souls/hearts.

Although this growing network of walkouts had already met twice – first in Bhandardara, Maharashtra in September 2003, then during the World Social Forum

### SwaRAJ - Understanding and Initiating Social Action

If we have to look at the true meaning of independence, freedom or even democracy, we have to start understanding our own. The SwaRAJ course attempts to explore and understand the ideas of Gandhiji in the context of what is happening in society and where one can start working from. Its interactive sessions will span over eight weekends in August and September 2004, and will be based in Chennai. We will explore the ideas, values and belief systems governing life and society in India; what is development / progress for each one of us, for the society, nation and the world; the potential of the inner strength dormant in each one of us; and ideas of Freedom, and the precept of Self-rule. The course will finish on Gandhiji's birthday, October 2, during which the course participants will present their learning. Contact Priya <[priya@samanvaya.com](mailto:priya@samanvaya.com)> to learn more.

## Walkouts Network

in Mumbai in January 2004 – the journey to Kerala was the first attempt to extend the network's learning by visiting other groups who were 'walking on' in their own innovative ways. The 16 *swapathgamis* spent approximately three to four days with three different groups in northern Kerala: **Kanavu** (a unique living and learning community of about 45 people, ranging in age from two to over 60, who farm, cook, clean, play, laugh, gather wood from the forest, swim, make pottery, drum, sing, and dance in spontaneous and self-organizing ways), **Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary** (a regenerated rainforest home to over 2000 species of plants), **Kumbham Murals** (a collective of potters who have taken their traditional occupation into new territories, producing beautiful works of clay art for urban populations).

The journey concluded in Calicut, where Elements, an organic store, helped to organize a public interaction on walking out and walking on. The approximately 75 people who gathered consisted of youth, parents, academics, activists, journalists and business folks. Tremendous positive energy was generated during the session, as people were eager to listen, to speak candidly about the situation of youth and adults in Kerala, and to seek out new roles and possibilities for their lives.

All in all, the learning journey was an experience to remember. The chance to interact with so many people who had themselves 'walked out' of a certain life of (so-called) privilege, and had committed themselves to living differently, was tremendously inspiring to us all. "It makes me feel I am on the right track," laughed Jenny, the youngest *swapathgami* at age 14, from Tamil Nadu. And the other core connection among the sites – of individuals working hard to manifest dream into reality – reaffirmed for us the importance of pursuing our dreams, with passion, convictions, and whole hearts. As Bhupendra (age 27 from Indore, Madhya Pradesh) remarked on the train journey home, "To see the power in oneself, to recognize and stand in that power, that is the work of walking out and walking on."

- shared by Shilpa Jain <[shilpa@swaraj.org](mailto:shilpa@swaraj.org)>

## The Chiangrai Dialogue on Walkouts

*selected excerpts*

### Opening Invitation: Wisit Wangwinyoo (Thailand)

The other day when I talked with Joseph Harris, an American master degree student who decided to come and learn with the Chiangrai community here, he mentioned some disagreement toward the idea about walkouts. I just told him, why not write it down and create this living interactive writing dialogue!

### What Happens to Walkouts? : Joe Harris (U.S.)

The way the idea of the walkout was explained to me, or at least the vision that it conjured in my head from my secondhand explanation, was the mobilization of a massive number of school-age people (and perhaps their dissatisfied parents as well) basically walking out of the traditional educational system in India. From what was related to me, I envisioned something along the lines of a second Gandhian movement, at least in scale, where people from all across the country are joining one another in “walking out” of the school system in protest of the way education is being offered currently.

This image was immediately inspiring to me. I got excited — a second movement on the scale of Gandhi’s old peace movement — wow! Then, the pragmatist in me, began to ask some questions. First, where would people involved in the walkout go after they walked out? What jobs would they get to feed themselves? How would they cope? After being in one system so long and then suddenly jolting into another, albeit structureless, system, how would they manage the space? Hopefully they would begin to navigate on their own, but my heart harkened back to the first

question — where would they go? How would they make enough money in order to eat?

The second thought that entered my mind was: in such a structureless environment, who would guide these people’s educations? ... It seems that the new educational system that arises out of the aftermath of the walkout movement would need some very good guides for all these millions of children to teach themselves effectively...

### The Walking Out and Walking On Movement: Shilpa Jain (India)

First, I should clarify... Our interest is neither in school/college reform, nor some kind of mass mobilization campaign. Rather, it is to connect and support those people who have taken the decision to leave school or college, and take their learning back into their own hands. We also include in our definition of walkouts, those people who decided to leave other mainstream institutions, attitudes, goals, etc., which are tied to a dominant (and dehumanizing, violent, and exploitative) model of Progress and Development.

This brings me to your question, Joe, about what people will eat and how will they manage to avoid living on the streets? ... Today, it is a fact in India that there are hundreds of thousands of schooled youth who are desperately searching for jobs. Their schooling has equipped them with this sole desire: a desk job, where they will have to work minimally, pushing papers and the like, and earning at least Rs.5000 a month. Of



course, such jobs are hard to come by these days — what with down-sizing in government, greater technology in industry, more competition, and other related aspects of the global market economy... The walkouts we are with are trying to find other paths for making their living, which build upon and grow their talents and skills, and which connect to different kinds of local economies.

The last thing I will respond to is your comment about structuring and guiding. I agree that we all benefit from having various partners, mentors, friends, peers, and colleagues in our lives. But who will decide who these will be — or rather, can’t any one or every one be such a person? Is it not up to each of us to decide who our guides should be, depending on what we want to learn and how and where and when? And many times, we — our questions, our talents, our intuition and inner voice — may be our own guide.

### A Collective Blessing: Melanie Kilmarx (Zimbabwe)

I LOVE what I perceive as the spirit of walkouts. The

intent I read in them is to encourage us to finally STOP and OBSERVE what we do and how we do it — and then to CHOOSE something else, something fresh. This is the essence to me, its core practice. I love it. As consciousness elevates on the planet, this is inevitable and so delicious to have happen in so many places!

As humans in our historical, and mostly current, state of consciousness, we are inherently wired to make life mean certain things according to our teachings and culture (conditioning). We then take our particular and unique “filter” (ego) and see it as “TRUTH”, how the world “actually is”. And so we proceed out of that filter, set of beliefs, with automatic behaviors and reactions, thinking we are making choices but actually following a very proscribed set of pathways we think we must adhere to, OUR PATTERNS of thought and action.

...all this stress and breakdown is our collective blessing really... Without it we would potentially stay stuck. With it, we are moved to try something totally different, new paradigms... I can imagine the fruit of many walkouts in action: the potential for people to begin to think differently, freshly and to act in totally new ways, separating consciously, peacefully (power NOT force) from the un-thinking hoards and even from their own internal limits and filters. And out of this practice, something else can arise. A raised consciousness and a life observed and acted from a new direction.

### **The Power of Walking Out: Lisa Steindorf (Germany)**

...walking out has tremendous power in it. Taking a stand, non-judgementally but with conviction, adds its own momentum. In the end we can only do what feels right to us individually. Yet stating that, clearly, where it may be helpful to be heard, could be a very important aspect of walk-outs. Or perhaps that is already a part of this movement?

## **Sailing Out, Sailing On...**

Looking for an adventure this summer? Come sail along Nova Scotia's unspoiled coast with other 14 to 18 year olds. Moor in uninhabited coves at night. Learn all aspects of handling a 30-foot traditional wooden sailboat. No experience is necessary. You'll learn everything you need to know from hands-on experience.

For generations Nova Scotians have traveled the coast in small boats, learning wisdom and courage from the sea. Today the Nova Scotia Sea School takes young people from around the world out to sea in traditional sailing craft, for fun and for personal challenge. It's a chance to discover Nova Scotia's heritage, and to discover themselves.

The Nova Scotia Sea School also teaches wooden boat building, helping teens make a small boat themselves and take to the water in it. Building a quality boat, well-crafted and seaworthy, and taking command of it in open water, challenges a young person to grow in self-confidence, in self-reliance and as a member of a team. The real world is the real teacher. *Learn more at [www.seaschool.org](http://www.seaschool.org)*

### **Let's Celebrate Breakdown! : Wisit Wangwingyoo (Thailand)**

...The other delicate part of this talking about walkouts is the security about one's life and work. And remember Joseph Chilton Pearce and his idea about de-evolution and how fear plays a very important role in playing down any new possible radical ideas. That ancient reptilian brain tries to nail you down to some institutionalized structures, which means repetition of old paradigm practice. Reptilian brain is still very useful but you have to use it wisely. And one of its powers lies in fear. It would bring fear to drag you down the old history circular pattern.

Let's all celebrate mess, stress, breakdown and all kinds of uncomfortable feelings when you try to move into any new areas that you are not familiar! In that way when you are pushed to the edge of the chaos, you will have a chance to discover new crystal order, that you can realign your work, life, community and world in the most meaningful way.

“Because revolution in our culture has always represented an attack on hierarchy, it has always meant upheaval — literally a heaving up from below. But upheaval has no role to play in moving beyond civilization. If the plane is in trouble, you don’t shoot the pilot, you grab a parachute and jump. To overthrow the hierarchy is pointless; we just want to leave it behind.

As everyone knows (especially revolutionaries), hierarchy maintains formidable defenses against attack from the lower orders. It has none, however, against abandonment. This is in part because it can imagine revolution, but it can’t imagine abandonment. But even if it could imagine abandonment, it couldn’t defend against it, because abandonment isn’t an attack, it’s just a discontinuance of support.

It’s almost impossible to prevent people from doing nothing (which is what discontinuing support amounts to).

But won’t the powers that be *try* to prevent people from doing nothing? I can imagine them *trying* (but I honestly need help imagining them *succeeding*).”

- Daniel Quinn

Beyond Civilization: Humanity’s Next Great Adventure, 1999

# Living and Learning Centers

This session brought together Learning Societies participants who are either directly involved with a learning center, developing one or specifically interested in learning centers. The session began with each participant sharing their work (or interest) as it relates to learning centers and what we envision a learning center can be. There was a lively discussion at this point because the ongoing debate of how *knowledge systems* and *different ways of knowing* factor widely in any alternative viewpoint of what a learning center can be, beyond a traditional school and public library. Some participants felt that relying on and encouraging the conventional knowledge system of writing and reading text is contradictory, if the goal is to challenge the tools that drive capitalism. Additionally, *traditional* knowledge systems were slowly being erased, disregarded and even exploited. Others believed that in spite of the negative effects of globalization and capitalism, reading and writing skills are essential, especially for women and girls in the Global South.

Finally, we discussed ways of sharing our work and staying connected. We decided to individually create a drawing (or simple text) of what our needs are in terms of growing and strengthening a learning center and what our learning center has to offer. The idea is to develop a needs and skills databank to share with the larger Learning Societies/Walkouts Collective. Below are the texts from session participants:

## **Tony Singh:**

Currently company executive at New York Life. He is interested in empowering people towards knowledge (learning, access to info, etc.).

NEEDS: Want to give back what society has done for me.

OFFERS: Time, experience and contacts to facilitate execution of ideas.

## **Walter Peter:**

Doing “theatre in education” work with children, parents, and teachers; it integrates self/family/education and society.

NEEDS: Working spaces. Love. People who really want to do the same thing.

OFFERS: Available to do workshops on any issues with any group or community, not only using theatre but incorporating all art forms and nature.

## **Jinan KB:**

Interested in recovering authentic being.

NEEDS: More people to attempt de-textualization. To meet more people to create a crisis (to stimulate) me.

OFFERS: To initiate de-textualization. Sensitizing senses. Creating crisis.

## **Gunjan Doogar:**

Her passions are trees, medicinal plants, playing with natural colours and classical dance (Odissi).

NEEDS: Diverse experiences. Skills in theatre. Exposure to different arts. Friends.

OFFERS: Sharing my passions and friendship.

## **Blaise Joseph:**

Wants to live with people from whom he can learn and re-invent his denied sense perceptions. His passions and interests are painting, sculpture, dance, creating music, and meeting people.

NEEDS: Very minimal. Just to make the present sustainable.

OFFERS: Creating a community with others, with a readiness to cooperate.

I have kissed this world with my eyes and my limbs;  
I have wrapt it within my heart in numberless folds;  
I have flooded its days and nights with thoughts  
till the world and my life have grown one,  
— and I love my life because I love the light of the sky  
so enwoven with me.

- Rabindranath Tagore

## Rohit Sood:

Rohit works with children in a free progress school. He likes to travel and learn from everyone. Rohit is searching for alternatives. He loves nature photography, music and dance. He likes to be with himself at the end of the day. His quote: *All life is yoga, Sri Aurobindo.*

NEEDS: Love, care and understanding. A good camera with a zoom lense to capture my imagination.

OFFERS: A hand to make a difference in our lives. 100 monkeys. Perfect awareness.

## Patrícia de Caires Sogayar:

Passions: PEOPLE! Intercultural communication and learning through relationships traveling. Music, dance, theatre and contact with nature that includes trekking, WATER! — swimming, scuba diving; and hugs and meditation. Doing. She enjoys traveling around the world to know different communities, learning centers and eco-villages, and wants to document and share this experience and start a learning and living center in Brasil near São Paulo.

NEEDS: New examples of how to start and keep learning and living centers sustainable. Better understanding of interaction with local community: Who can join the local community and how? Governance in general: Can we start from a democratic form without a group of leaders? How money can help communities in a healthy

## Escovila - Brazil

### Vision and Mission

*To be a learning and living village, in a sustainable and integrated manner: with ourselves, the community and the planet. Contributing in this form to restoring harmony to Life.*

### Assumptions

#### 1 - By learning :

we observe that real meaningful learning happens mainly beyond formal instruction, through emotions, relations and community. So we want to stimulate more spaces where this can happen and we can learn with each other. Some of the practices could be just being together, sharing in circles, in dialogues, through arts, and the contact with nature, exploring all our senses and contemplating different ways of learning. We acknowledge multiple intelligences and honor diversity.

#### 2- By living:

We believe that coherence is fundamental. To think, say and act in the same direction.

To really walk our talk. Therefore, we cannot discover the power and contributions of being sustainable but continue to live the old paradigm back in our homes. Or how to live in plenitude not just one day, but practice it and share our whole being and our talents with the community. Combining observation, reflection, action, evaluation to our daily-life and learning.

#### 3- By a sustainable and integrated manner:

##### a. With ourselves:

We recognize that in order to change the world we need to start changing ourselves. We recognize therefore the importance of connecting with ourselves and discovering who we are, what are our talents to share and what shadows we have to work with.

##### b. With the community:

We aim to balance the individuality and the collectivity within the community. This involves some different aspects: Governance (a shared leadership), Communication (diverse and intercultural partnerships), Economy (being financially sustainable), Culture

(bringing our talents and creativity, contributing to the whole), Health (integrated medicine for healing).

##### c. With the Planet:

We are conscious of the impact we cause on Earth and therefore want to find ways of living, which still integrate technology, but are more sustainable and harmonious with the Planet.

#### 4- By contributing in this form to restoring harmony to Life:

We consider that being able to create this learning village in an integrated and sustainable manner will demonstrate in a microcosm a different alternative of living, which could also be expanded to the macro-level, with an exponential impact on a better world, with more quality of life for all living beings.

### **ellerni – learning community**

Patricia de Caires Sogayar & Augusto Cuginotti, <escovila@ellerni.org>  
Website: [www.ellerni.org](http://www.ellerni.org)

way? Funds to publish book/CD for the traveling experience.

OFFERS: Experiences from Egypt, Jordan, South Africa and Zimbabwe around learning centers. My perspective of life: hugs, enthusiasm, love, contact with people and networks (also Pioneers of Change), meditation, Tai Chi, etc.

### **Del R. Hornbuckle:**

Del's passions are film, art and books. She is developing an alternative public library in the United States that is also a socially-concerned art space, play room, media center, social change book collection and study/research center.

NEEDS: More books from non-western cultures to offer Americans a glimpse of diverse communities and different ways of knowing. Ways of helping urban dwellers lead more environmentally-sound and sustainable lives. Connections with other knowledge systems and learning spaces and new ideas about them. Gardening: teaching people to grow their own foods and to support local farmers and food co-ops. International children's books. Exposure to art and creative expression from traditional communities from all over the world.

OFFERS: Information about alternative resources from all over the world. Advice on starting a small lending library. African American history resources. Alternative media.

### **Nao:**

Shares about the Whispering Seed in Thailand.

NEEDS: Space for learning and organic farming. To create green, begin with nature; and grow own food. Simple life. Living with love and in community.

## **Provisions Library: Resource Center for Art & Activism - USA**

Based in Washington, DC (USA) and almost three years old, Provisions Library is an alternative library, breaking down barriers between people from diverse communities both within and beyond the United States and offering compelling sources for inquiries and dialogues about *what is* and *what if* in our global community.

Provisions Library differs from a public library in that it brings to light marginalized and suppressed points of view, promoting creative means for social change and purposeful space for reflection and social engagement. At Provisions, personal experience and its creative expression are the primary means for sharing information and gaining knowledge.

The mission of Provisions Library is to empower and inform people to be active in social change, specifically, peace, economic and social justice, environmental sustainability, and respect for the diversity of life and communities. The Library presents many open doors through which one may enter, from anarchy and revolutionary practice to nature awareness and nutrition, from youth activism to voices from the global South.

These values are evident in the Library's emphasis on fiction, poetry and memoir in our book and periodical collection and in the central role of visual, performance arts and film in the Library's overall programming.

The daily experience at the Library is a holistic one; there is a print collection highlighting suppressed ideas, silenced voices and cultures of liberation throughout the world, alternative media and computer workstations. Socially-concerned artwork is displayed throughout the space. The Library is a "third place" a space, separate from home, school and work that invites purposeless social gathering and connections.

The Art and Story Collection are an artistic information and transformative learning resource tool that utilizes narrative traditions and illuminates the lives and experiences of ordinary people all over world. This collection offers different ways of knowing and opportunities to make personal connections with, and new and analytical understandings of, different cultures, communities and individual experiences. The Art and Story Collection, we believe, is a key and valuable source of alternative learning that flourishes alongside facts, statistics, and levels of expertise as secondary sources. Narration and art become primary sources for learning and research. The benefits of this approach to transformative learning are the endless possibilities of cross-cultural connections, a deeper respect and an empowering humanity for all peoples, cultures and the biodiversity that sustains us all.

- Del R. Hornbuckle, Provisions Library, <[dhornbuckle@provisionslibrary.org](mailto:dhornbuckle@provisionslibrary.org)>  
[www.provisionslibrary.org](http://www.provisionslibrary.org)

Learning community center. Home for orphaned children. Alternative education conference. Learning journey: international youth trip to Thailand.

OFFERS: Good at organizing trips. Designing programs that network people and east-west cultures. Volunteer to live in community service. Making flowers from mature leaves. Being a resource person. Connection for learning community in Thailand.

### **Jim Connor:**

Shares how Whispering Seed is concerned with co-creating with children, working with natural fibers, making herbal medicines, nonviolent communication, infant massages, holistic care for children, and living a simple and natural life.

SEARCHINGS: Working with volunteers. Working with natural dyeing techniques. Sustainable models of energy/appropriate technology. Resource books for library. International children's books. Connecting with projects with "orphaned" or "abandoned" children.

OFFERS: Networking with alternative learning communities around the world. Co-creating learning spaces with youth and children. A quiet and rural setting to most visits, conferences, workshops, seminars, and dialogues. Mudhouse building. Permaculture and sustainable design resources.

## **Whispering Seed - Thailand**

The Whispering Seed is a village-based community learning center and home for orphaned and abused children focused on finding the joy in serving others through cross-cultural exchanges and sustainable living skills. We are situated in Western Thailand in a beautiful valley next to a river along the Burmese border. Our vision is to create sustainable models of caring for children, each other and the Earth. We are committed to working specifically in the areas of holistic childcare, alternative/democratic models of education, international cultural immersion programs for youth, traditional and sustainable crafts and sustainable models of living.



### *Our Area of Focus: The Borderlands*

The local area is mostly Mon and Karen Hilltribe groups and migrants (refugees) from Burma and many people do not speak Thai language. Because of their background and status in Thailand, many adults and children have no recognized nationality or citizenship, which leaves them with very little rights within Thailand. There are many children who are abused or left homeless along the border because of the living conditions, as well as poverty, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, leaving both children and adults in a very high-risk situation without access to many resources.

### *On the Land*

We offer a loving home for children in need of care coming from all over Thailand and Burma. The children will be able to grow and learn freely in a healthy and happy environment, able to explore the world in their own way. The children will learn from themselves, each other and the community around them at their own pace, allowing their own rhythm of learning to naturally unfold. Through the community learning center, we will be offering spaces for both people from the local community as well as foreigners coming from abroad to share and learn with each other in a natural environment. Some of the workshops that we have previously offered and continue to offer are focused around natural building, holistic models of learning, Permaculture, organic farming, organic cotton weaving and spinning, youth leadership programs and cultural immersion programs, traditional wisdom and more.

*For more information about the project or upcoming courses and workshops, please visit [www.whisperingseed.org](http://www.whisperingseed.org) or email Jim and Nao at [whisperingseed@wildmail.com](mailto:whisperingseed@wildmail.com)*

## The Global Ecovillage Network

Ecovillages are urban or rural communities of people, who strive to integrate a supportive social environment with a low-impact way of life. To achieve this, they integrate various aspects of ecological design, permaculture, ecological building, green production, alternative energy, community building practices, and much more.

The motivation for ecovillages is the choice and commitment to reverse the gradual disintegration of supportive social/cultural structures and the upsurge of destructive environmental practices on our planet. For millenia, people have lived in communities close to nature, with supportive social structures. Many of these "ecovillages" exist to this day and are struggling for survival.

Ecovillages are now being created intentionally, so people can once more live in communities that are connected to the Earth in a way that ensures the well-being of all life-forms into the indefinite future. Ecovillages typically integrate three dimensions: **social** (supportive communities, participatory decision-making), **ecological** (providing for daily needs by personally connecting to the living earth), **cultural** (artistic expression, spiritual diversity, love and respect to nature).

The Global Ecovillage Network is a global confederation of people and communities that meet and share their ideas, exchange technologies, develop cultural and educational exchanges, directories and newsletters, and are dedicated to restoring the land and living "sustainable plus" lives by putting more back into the environment than we take out.

*Check out [gen.ecovillage.org/](http://gen.ecovillage.org/) to learn more about ecovillages, and to see how to visit one near you!*

## The Resource and Learning Centre - Tamil Nadu

Chennai is choking. Roads are jammed with traffic, wells have run dry, garbage clogs the streets, smoke fills the air, rivers have become sewers, food has become poison, cancer hospitals have become more crowded. Media, schools and colleges are explicitly and proudly serving corporate interests. Chennai-vasis are in different stages of waking up to this crisis.

The Centre aims to provide a platform and opportunities for:

- The Curious, to question and learn through books, discussion forums, film screenings and informal interactions with like-minded people.
- The Confused, to get some support in finding out the truth about things, and to explore their own ideas.
- The Concerned, to volunteer their time contributing towards positive social change.
- The Creative, to get help with resources to translate their ideas into reality.

The Centre will have / host the following on a regular basis.

- A library of resources (books, films, CDs, posters, pamphlets) that ask new questions, challenge conventional ideas and paradigms, present information and offer fresh insights on social issues.
- Sale of books and CDs by publishers like Other India Press, CIKS, Alter Media, SIDH, Samanvaya and CSE.
- An information section carrying
  - A database of learning opportunities such as apprenticeships, internships, *yatras*, even job opportunities with social activists and organisations in and around Chennai.
  - A directory of small producers and service providers in food, clothing, shelter, arts, in and around Chennai for leading a socially and environmentally responsible lifestyle.
- Short 'Reading Courses' at two levels (introductory and advanced) on different topics like globalisation, agriculture, water, pollution, social action, village economy, health...
- A discussion forum (*Thinnai*) for the youth to understand and discuss issues of social relevance, undertake independent research and analysis.
- Talks by activists and documentary film screenings.
- A dynamic list of action projects like organising campaigns, exhibitions and melas, compiling and translating information booklets, site visits, camps, etc.

The Centre will also provide the space for different activist groups to have their meetings, which will then promote interaction among them.

The initiative is currently led by Rajeev Natarajan, Sangeetha Sriram and Naveen Kumar. The organisations who have shown interest in collaborating with the Centre in different ways are Samanvaya, AID India, Naturagros, Earthworm Bookstore, Forum for Corporate Accountability, and Shikshantar.

- Sangeetha Sriram <[sangeetha\\_sriram@hotmail.com](mailto:sangeetha_sriram@hotmail.com)>

## Sundays in Bombay

I have been interacting with NGOs and leftists, and I always felt that they get stuck after a point. Everything for them then is almost from a rule book. Even though they might use terms like sharing, democracy and equality, it doesn't seem to be a part of their practice.

In the last few months, I have learned so much that I don't know where to start from. I learned about some of my own contradictions. I learned that if I go into a group as a child discovering the world, only then can I get pleasure from it.

Children, parents and friends from my neighborhood in Bombay get together on Sundays, generally in the afternoon at 3:30 at the colony bus stop. We go for walks in the Aarey colony, which is a big dairy farm. It has some paddy fields, plantation forests and some patches of natural forests too. This place has witnessed many leopard attacks, which have become more frequent now as human settlements are taking over the forest.

In the first walk, we heard some kids calling a buffalo 'a cow', 'a pig' or 'a rat'. They then learned that milk comes from buffaloes. They played on the haystacks, and the first response from parents was that they will get some allergy from hay. As they played for some time, parents seemed a little bored waiting for them to go ahead. Very soon we realized that it is not the kids who get bored, but if we take

a path which kids want, the parents often get bored. It was a question of keeping the parents involved. So some who could find their own pleasure in it continued with the group, while some just sent their kids. Even though initially we had been insisting that parents come with the kids, we could not refuse those kids whose parents are not coming. I think they are losing out on an opportunity to interact with children and adults from the neighborhood in a non-competitive atmosphere.

One negative fallout of insisting that parents also come with the kids was that initially parents thought that they are coming to take care of their own kids. One day, when we were flying kites, I saw that each parent was only helping their own

child. We can understand that kids are more comfortable with their parents, but it was something that we took notice of and thought that it should not be like this. I was flying kites after almost 20 years and I really enjoyed it. As some people were struggling, a boy from a Warli tribal family joined us and helped everyone fly the kites or disentangle the thread. Soon the kids were running after him, calling his name "Kanna!" I think that even if they had lived right opposite that Warli family for years, they would have never played with them or been friendly with them. But flying kites brought them together.

Our colony buildings have signs outside, which say that visitors should park their vehicles outside, hawkers and salesmen are not allowed, and non-colony children are not allowed to play. Some kids were telling us

### Some Sunday activities so far:

- Played marbles. Only 20 Rupees for 200 marbles! So many people had a nice time.
- Flew kites.
- Pottery is one of the regular things. Aditya made a sundae and he dipped his sundae in water and called it a Wet Sunday.
- Went to a Mohammed Ali Road which is a predominantly Muslim area, on Eid, played on the swings and merry go rounds. One of the parents was scared of sending the kids as they thought that riots can happen anytime in a Muslim area.
- Tied and dyed with vegetable dyes. Everyone wants to know whether it will fade or not even though tie and dye itself is such a random thing. It's the notion of durability we have learnt from the market.
- Went to Juhu beach and jumped in the dirty water and ate Chinese food. I realized that kids really like roadside Chinese food.
- We travel by public transport only, and these days all the kids buy their own tickets.
- Made gujia and karanji for Holi as a community kitchen activity.
- Made mango panna, pickle and bhelpuri. Sudarshan with his experience of origami made a small cup with a newspaper, and everyone learned how to do it.
- Did knitting.
- Went to the World Social Forum.
- Took a lift on a truck one day. It was the first time the kids saw the truck from inside.
- Went to a Gurudwara and ate langar. We talked about the concept of *sewa* in Gurudwara.
- Bird watching and looking at plants goes on during all walks.
- Storytelling sessions, rigmarole.

that they can't play in their building, because if the ball goes close to some older women sitting in the small park of the building, they don't give it back. It is unfortunate that people are fighting like this for public spaces in the city. In one building, where our friend Sudarshan lives, a ball hit and damaged a car. So the housing society was about to decide to ban kids from playing in the compound. Sudarshan said in the meeting that if we do this, we will be a society of idiots.

Once we decided that we will do origami. Initially the parents were looking for an expert, but then they thought that they can learn it themselves. Some of them studied from a book and practiced it so we could do it. Malay, who was the one who was showing it, was struggling with the language, to find words that are a part of our vocabulary and the children's. I think it was Malay's first experience to address a group of people, and I could see him getting more and more comfortable with it. On one of the Sundays, we had planned to do origami session, but the kids started playing with the puppies and swinging on banyan roots. It felt so freeing to do things which were not a part of a plan. Initially some people felt that we should call the kids to do origami, but we realized that whatever is enjoyable is a learning opportunity.

We often go to a temple in Aarey and do our stuff. I also realized that temples are still public space. I realized the stupidity of a recent Bombay High Court Judgment which has ordered roadside shrines built after a certain year to be demolished. This also made me see religion differently.

I can go on writing about all our experiences, but for the time being I will just list out some activities (*see box on previous page*). Every one of them gave us pleasure and was a unique learning opportunity. I would also like to say that Sundays are my best days in Bombay. The kids call it 'Sunday Picnic' or 'Sunday Program'. Someone suggested that we give the group a name, but no one wants to do it. Some times we don't have it, as we are not ready or busy but that is also fine. It is not something which has to happen on every Sunday.

- shared by Shammi Nanda <shammi\_nanda@yahoo.com>

## My Dream Learning Center...

If I had the very good fortune of meeting someone with great wealth and a compassionate heart, concerned with offering a legacy for our children and grandchildren, I would ask him or her to initiate throughout the world centers to help humanity learn how to think and learn differently for an increasingly fast-paced, interconnected and interdependent, and complex world. By so doing, this man or woman of vision would recognize that the future will require individuals with the capacity to innovate in new ways, the ability to care about each other and collaborate at deeper levels of understanding, and to think about systemic issues within a futures context.

Although I have no answers, I would suggest one consider creating centers to help develop a new type of "learning guide" evolve, to be able to facilitate the following:

- Develop capacities for new types of learning experiences that integrate
  - a) various modules of knowledge and future trends.
  - b) the ability to ask appropriate questions.
  - c) the capacity to see connections in everything...not just direct connections, but direct, indirect and oblique.
- Combine the need for learning basic skills and knowledges, unlearning old ideas and methods that no longer are appropriate, and "unlearning" how to see multiple connections as the world becomes more complex. In my opinion, one key idea will be the balance of simplicity and complexity, whatever is appropriate. It will not be either/or.
- Help children and learners of all ages become what we call and/both, connective thinkers...not just someone who looks for one answer. My sense is that one of the key problems with much of our policy development and decision making stems for how we see the world and the search for only one answer (a historical focus of western education). Sometimes one best answer is appropriate; sometimes the very opposite is what is needed.
- See the importance of the ecological principles of sustainability and balance, whether it relates to physical ecology, rethinking economic development or the need to balance human, moral, economic and ethical values.
- Help others learn how to see future trends and weak signals and understand how to think about emerging issues within a dynamic and increasingly complex futures context...learn how to listen to an emerging and different future.

*Rick Smyre, Communities of the Future <rlsmyre@aol.com>  
www.communitiesofthefuture.org*

## From Bharat Mansata

On 64 acres of land (halfway between Mumbai and Pune), two dozen or so of us pooled money to buy about nine years ago. We initially called this 'Vision Acres', but since the past five years, it is locally known as 'Vruksha Mandir, Van-Vadi'. The regeneration of the forest (very high in biodiversity) has been marvellous, and we now have several thousand trees more than 25-30 feet tall. We have identified (through local adivasis) over 100 traditionally useful species, including more than 40 plants that have recognized medicinal value, and over 30 species that seasonally yield 'wild' uncultivated foods (fruit, vegetables or tubers). We have five local adivasis who live and work on the land, while our own group (largely city-based) plays more of a supportive role.

A few of us are very keen to start a non-formal learning centre here, particularly (but not exclusively) with local adivasi youngsters and teachers. A major focus would be on farming and the wealth of the forest, apart from reading, writing, arithmetic, music, dance, art, crafts, story-telling... We would be very happy to have collaborators in this dream, whether as supporters, occasional visitors or more settled dwellers.

*An excerpt of Bharat's proposal follows below:*

Earth Vision Learning Alliance\* is land-based and 'down to earth', 'non-formal' and multi-levelled – at (or adjoining) Van Vadi, around which a mutually supportive 'learning community' (partly resident, partly floating) then evolves 'organically', attracting more people with like sensitivities and aspirations.

There may be two broad (sometimes interweaving) strands or levels of

---

\*For kids, 'ELF' (Earthcare Learning Family). Also a suitable Marathi name, perhaps 'Vasudhaiva Vadi'.

functioning in this learning alliance: one, at the level of villagers, particularly adivasi youngsters, and two, at the level of 'nature sensitive' urban folk, particularly youngsters. The unifying focus of the alliance would have these core themes:

- 1) Earth care values and principles.
- 2) Progressive and ecologically benign self-reliance in meeting basic needs like food from local resources.
- 3) Natural health and healing.
- 4) Traditional knowledge, skills, crafts, livelihoods.
- 5) Cultural activities.
- 6) Spiritual inter-linkage with lifestyle, culture, attitude.

- Contact <bharatmansata@yahoo.com> to learn more.

## Kufunda Learning Village - Zimbabwe

"I continue to be humbled by the power of simply creating a space where love and learning and a spirit of service can co-exist.

**At Kufunda Village, we are learning how to work with the principles of life and living systems.** It means learning to work with the inherent messiness and creativity of life, and letting go of old habits of seeking control and certainty in the interventions we make into organisations or communities (in fact, we *don't* make *interventions* into organisations or communities). Our aim is to learn from life, and the wisdom of this place and her people, to regenerate and revitalise our communities. As we do our community building work, we do it as students of nature and traditional culture.

**We bridge individual and community growth and development.** The two are deeply connected, but we pay careful attention to supporting the development of individuals in line with the development of the community as a whole. We treat people as agents of change instead of as poor rural peasant farmers. The influence of this in their sense of self-worth is quite remarkable. We tap into people's passions and dreams for their community making it easier to shift people into a desire for taking action and leadership for making positive change. We also practice collective leadership, asking each person to step into a role of contributing what they can during their two weeks at Kufunda.

**We practice holistic development** – paying equal attention to a healthy mind, body and spirit. This means taking time for play, dance, music, non-sectarian meditation, yoga, other forms of exercise, and much more. This contributes, we believe, to the deeper shift and transformation of people living and learning at Kufunda."

- Marianne Knuth <marianne@kufunda.org>, [www.kufunda.org](http://www.kufunda.org)

## The Berkana Exchange

*The Berkana Exchange is a learning community and resource exchange that connects pioneering leaders throughout the globe around their shared commitment to making a difference in and beyond their communities. These leaders are developing the capacity to solve their most pressing problems — such as community health, ecological sustainability and economic self-reliance — by working locally, connecting regionally and learning globally.*

When we look around the world, we see increasing economic and political instability, growing divisiveness, failing systems and forsaken communities. We also see thousands of programs and organizations desperately being revised and improved to try to create real change in the world. And we wonder, why do we keep working harder, going faster and doing more of what isn't working?

At Berkana, we believe we are living in a period when many of our fundamental beliefs and practices no longer serve us. Worse, they are causing great harm and disabling us from being effective facilitators of healthy change. The longer we continue to depend upon old, familiar methods for creating change, the more impotent we become to create the world we want.

We believe that the old leadership paradigm has failed us and that our current systems will continue to unravel. But we also know that in communities all over the world, pioneering leaders are experimenting with new approaches for resolving the most difficult societal problems. We know that the leaders we need are already here, emerging everywhere, among thousands of people who are stepping forward to create a future of possibility and hope. Our commitment is to do everything we can to support their pioneering efforts.



*The Berkana Exchange creates the means to support and sustain leadership learning centers, and to connect these learning centers to a global community of like-minded people committed to offering one another their wisdom, wealth and relationships.*

A leadership learning center is a local initiative committed to strengthening a community's leadership capacity and self-reliance by working with the wisdom and wealth already present in its people, traditions and environment. We have found these learning centers in Zimbabwe, India, Senegal, Brazil and Croatia. We know they are everywhere.

And we know they often feel isolated and alone. By connecting them to one another — and to people worldwide who want to support and learn from their experiments — enormous power for change emerges.

For this reason, we have created *NewWorkSpaces*, a pioneering online collaborative space for creating and sharing knowledge across distance and difference.

The mission of the Berkana Exchange is to *name* the community of pioneering leaders; to *connect* them to one another locally at learning centers and globally in *NewWorkSpaces*; to *nourish* that community with wisdom, wealth and relationships; and to *illuminate* their stories to the world.

*To learn more about the Berkana Exchange, contact Debbie Frieze <[debbie@berkana.org](mailto:debbie@berkana.org)> or Bob Stilger <[bob@berkana.org](mailto:bob@berkana.org)>.*

## Al-Jameah - the Arab World

With all the groups that we are working with, and the diversity of ways in which people learn, we decided to embark on a project that would combine all what is available in providing a different vision for a multi-versity, that reflects the meaning of the word in Arabic and that recognizes, supports and opens up a wide and diverse ways for people to learn.

*Al-Jameah* literally means "a 'thing' that gathers 'everything'"; it gathers people, facilities, resources, farmers, teachers, artists, learners ... A learner is a person who is working on something and wants to understand it more and do it better. In other words, the essential "element" of al-Jameah is learners.

As for the "campus", it could literally be the whole world. Every person is potentially a teacher, and every experiment, experience, tradition, institution, professional, place, equipment, book, tool, etc is potentially a resource. It totally depends on the learner, on his/her initiative, and what s/he needs in order to improve what s/he does. This is the only "requirement" for "admission". [People who would be at this stage are usually at least 15 years old.]

Any place where the learner is and where the teachers and resources are is part of the "campus" for that person and that moment. It could change – even for the same learner. Sometimes money is needed, but it won't be needed as high fees (there are no fees), but needed

for real matters such as possible travel, materials, and for the "teacher/s" in some cases...

The idea (which is prevalent today) of telling the vast majority of people (depending on very narrow – often even meaningless or irrelevant – ways of measurement) that they cannot go on with their learning is absurd, to say the least; it usually reflects pitiful minds and attitudes.

We believe that any one who started to work on something of her/his choice and in accordance with her/his passion, and who wants to learn more in order to understand it and do it better, is eligible to be "enrolled" in al-Jameah.

Currently, many students are interested in things that have no departments in existing universities. In al-Jameah, any topic or concern is possible.

It is very important to stress here that al-Jameah is not an alternative to current universities in the sense of replacing them. It is a "space" which is open for all, including those who are currently in "regular" universities and those who have graduated from them. And it is a "space" that will cooperate with those working in such universities and uses their facilities.

The purpose is not to add to the waste or to compete or to prove anything to anyone. Rather, it is to stitch the fabric (social, spiritual, intellectual, cultural...) within and among peoples... especially those that currently are told they cannot learn!

- shared by Munir Fasheh  
<mfasheh@yahoo.com>

## Pahal - Madhya Pradesh

Newly launched in 2004, Pahal is a group of walkouts (those who have walked out from an imposed and readymade system, and walked on to self-learning and interdependent creation). We all live in and around the city of Indore. "*Pahal*" means to take a risk, to initiate something new. The purpose of all of our activities is to try to strengthen the process of learning in/with different places (i.e., the family, neighborhood traditions, customs, arts and crafts, etc.). Our activities are also a resistance to the centralized and imposed system of education.

At the time of planning our activities with walkouts, we keep in mind two interrelated aspects. On one hand, where does the local community stand today? What are the limitations, material and mental state of the people? What are their dreams and desires? On other hand, we keep our purpose and philosophy in front of our eyes. The stream of activities flows from the answers to these questions at the present time. So far, we are actively working on:

\* **Organic manure, Organic farming, Organic life:** returning to nature-based ways to be free from market dependency.

\* **Apana Manch:** forums and spaces for creative expressions (art, theater, music) by youth.

\* **Kabaad se Jugaad:** challenging the idea of 'rubbish' by making useful/beautiful items from waste materials.

\* **Learning Exchange:** internships and apprenticeships with local artisans, artists and other resource people.

- shared by Amit and Gayatri <pahal\_g@rediffmail.com>

### From KB Jinan

I am planning to set up a learning centre in the village to support informal as well as formal learning for 'dropouts' and potential dropouts. The age group is from 11 to 16. We need to do bit of compromises to get the parents to send children to me. Schools provide food in the afternoon and a small stipend. This I will have to give the students. What I have in mind is to get children to learn various general skills like simple farming, cooking, house repair, carpentry/ electrical connection/ motor mechanism, swimming, cycling, pottery, etc. and language and mathematics, computer etc. In case, the children want to do a degree, that also needs to be supported. A small library, instruments and tools, etc. is also required. I will require support in building a small house with four rooms to serve the purpose of office/store/library and theory sessions. The children will be out in the community doing various things, and the village is the classroom. Another expense is for an administrator and teachers who will be hired for teaching various subjects once in a while. One guestroom is then required, as these teachers will be coming for short stays.

### From Kishore Saint

Jinan, I'd suggest that right from the start you should include in your plans the adult community also and encourage them to think and learn about their own future, that of their children and of their locality.

### From David Wolsk

Jinan, two suggestions: 1) it may be worthwhile having the students set up and manage a small vegetable and fruit garden on the grounds as a site for interdisciplinary experiential learning; 2) the GLOBE programme <[www.GLOBE.gov](http://www.GLOBE.gov)> helps learners experience practical science along with learners in many other countries. It may be possible to get a grant from a foundation to support the equipment costs.

## Universidad de la Tierra - Mexico

They came from villages and *barrios*, mostly Indigenous. They were naive *refuseniks*, fed up with the classroom. They came with curiosity, rather than conviction. They heard about Universidad de la Tierra [in Oaxaca, Mexico] from friends or acquaintances and decided to give it a try.

They knew that we have no teachers or curricula and don't provide educational services. They loved the idea that they would be in full control of their own learning – the content, the rhythm, the conditions. But it was not easy for them to take in their hands such control. Even those that suffered the school for only a few years were already conditioned to be thought, to be passive receptacles of instructions. As soon as they arrived, they started to work with a tutor, a person doing what they want to learn, who is willing to accept them as apprentices... To define areas of apprenticeship, we explore with the communities both the kind of knowledge or skills not available in them and the kind of learning they want for their young people.

Our 'students' have been learning faster than we expected. After a few months they start to be called by their communities to do there what they have learned. Some of them are combining different lines of learning in a creative way. One of them, for example, combined organic agriculture and soil regeneration (his original interest), with vernacular architecture. He is thus enriching, though a variety of experiences and tutors, what a good peasant usually does. Instead of producing professional services, to get dignity and income by selling such commodity, he learns how to share what he is learning with others. Like the peasants.

We are playing with the symbols of the oppressive educational system. After one or two years of learning, once they successfully perform the activities they want to learn (as Agrarian Lawyers or Alternative Medical Practitioners, in Popular Communication, Vernacular Architecture, Forestry, Social Research, etc.), we give to the 'students' a magnificent university diploma. We are thus offering them a 'social recognition' denied to them by the educational system. Instead of certifying a number of ass-hours, as conventional diplomas, we certify a specific competence, immediately appreciated by the communities. We are also extending similar diplomas to wise people, who may never have been in a school or our university. Their competence is certified by their peers and the community. The idea, again, is to use in our own way, laughing, the symbols of the dominant system...

- shared by Gustavo Esteva <[gustavoesteva@terra.com.mx](mailto:gustavoesteva@terra.com.mx)>

## Abila Creative Center - Kenya

In Abila, we also aim to create context-specific perspectives on some of the major concepts of our times, such as education, justice, democracy, environment, gender, race and ethnic relations, etc. We realize that one of the most difficult things to do these days is to speak, with authority, on any matter regarding Kenya (and Africa), given its diverse cultures, peoples, their capacities, identities, creativities... Yet we feel that for us to have a future, it is important for us to work actively towards understanding ourselves. Abila is also working to systematically build strong partnerships between the public, private, NGO and corporate sector in Western Kenya to support critical consciousness and learning rooted in our cultural sensibilities.

Abila's facilities currently include a performance space that can hold about 60 comfortably seated and about 100 people crammed. The center has a resource center that has over 2,000 texts. In addition to this, there are two functioning computers and one printer. The center also has a small art shop where products by local artists are displayed. Abila is part of the rhythm of the daily and seasonal life of the community — not just the physical locale and its people, but also the community who interact with our learning activities. Activities include:

- **Research on local knowledge systems, wisdoms and expressions**

We will invite individuals with a deep understanding of local knowledge systems and wisdoms to share, either in writing or through dialogue, alternative reference points for youth to engage with.

- **Dialogues and workshops with young people**

We will arrange provocative discussions and workshops with potential youth leaders, to deepen and expand perspectives on concepts such as self-learning, critical thinking, self-transformation.

- **Creativity and self-esteem building processes**

By using theatre, painting, craftwork, film and photography, as well as cooperative games, we hope to help regenerate the natural creativity and confidence of young leaders in Kenya, which will be vital for innovative actions to emerge.

- **Intergenerational open space forums on issues of mutual concern**

We will bring together youth and adults, to open up new ways of understanding old issues (like unemployment, for example), which can potentially lead to new actions.

- Charles Otieno <charles@swaraj.org>

## From Patricia de Caires Sogayar

Can a learning village in Zimbabwe learn something from a spiritual center in India? Can an ecovillage in Brazil work together with one in Scotland? How can we create a learning community? Is there a common ground, where experiences can be shared so that each new initiative does not have to spend its energy in "reinventing the wheels"? Can they also focus on what makes them unique? How are they sustained?

These were some of the questions I had before entering the plane towards the unknown. I had a great desire to be a bee to pollinate different methodologies across the many communities I visited, but the strong concern of not imposing my learning or experiences as the Truth. On the contrary, I wanted to be able to live as part of their community, to try to see things through their perspective and be of service.

Time passes very quickly and these months of discovery in India, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Egypt, Jordan, Germany, Spain, Scotland, England and Brazil have been quite intense. I learnt the power of adaptation and empathy and felt very welcomed in each community visited. I learnt to appreciate the beauty of diversity and each individual. I realized how challenging it is to become sustainable, from the ecological and the financial perspectives. Normally we still taste the consequences of capitalism, reinforcing each day that this system can not sustain us. But nor can socialism, as has been proved. An ecovillage is one of the alternatives to test other possibilities that could potentially expand our talents, and bring us back to our essence, closer to ourselves, improving the way we relate to each other and to mother Earth.

Now my questions are: How to be coherent to the idea in praxis, in the day-to-day living? How to build something new and embrace new people to come, as well as keeping the connection with the current system, without losing your central pillar? What tools can we create to share our experiences in a meaningful way? Welcome to a world full of possibilities! Are we ready for the change?

# more from the learning societies network

## Lifelong Learning Movement

In the past three decades, there has been a growing movement to reinvent the way citizens learn and how young people are introduced into society. Homeschooling, charter schools, cyberschools, unschooling, life-long learning, Waldorf schools, and Sudbury schools are just a few of the elements of this movement. The movement has been growing exponentially each decade since 1980. It has become a challenge to the traditional school/teach/educate system.

The bottom line in this movement is to provide the freedom, opportunity and resources for self-learners of all ages, with their families and in community, to choose to learn what they want, when they want and how they want to self-learn.

Motivations for moving toward self-learning and abandonment of traditional public schooling are many. Perhaps the most prevalent is parental concern about the loss of control of the learning of young children. Many families want to take direct responsibility for their curriculum, approach to learning, and the principles and values upon which these are based. Some parents believe that the public school system instills values which run contrary to those of their family. Some are explicitly guided by their religious beliefs to direct the education of their children. Others have had disturbing experiences with schoolyard bullies, unfeeling teachers, or misdirected bureaucracies. A few hold that government support is inherently controlling, and that their tax dollars are binding families to a failing system.

Self-learners are also influenced by education critics, philosophers and religious leaders. Some, like Ivan Illich, believe our current life, including school, is based on the principle of work now for future rewards. They urge that schooling, and life, be convivial and vernacular. That is, that learning and work should be carried out in joyful collaboration with family, friends and neighbors. And

that it should be embedded in the local culture, ecology, and friendships.

With Paulo Friere, some see schools as perpetuating the socioeconomic rich/poor status quo and preventing the natural social evolution that would occur if future citizens were given more freedom to self-learn in their own families, communities, and nature.

Following John Holt and others, many believe that every brain, that is every student is unique, and no two are prepared to learn the same thing, at the same time, in the same way. They believe that schooling is not an efficient way to learn, nor to introduce future citizens into society.

Most great philosophical traditions, including those embodied in Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo and Krishnamurti, recognize a spiritual component to learning. Knowledge is more than a way to get a job or score well on a standardized test; it is the purpose for living, it is being human. Rabindranath Tagore started his learning community, Santiniketan, to transform the human mindset from self-interest, competition and materialism to mutual aid, cooperation, and the love of learning. Growing out of a variety of personal, philosophical, educational, or religious motivations, the life-long self-learning movement continues to expand.

This movement is not only addressing the why, how, when and what all citizens learn, but is also rebuilding the foundation for the society in which we all live. How we learn determines the kind of society we build. Authoritarian, hierarchal, undemocratic schools prepare future citizens for an authoritarian, hierarchal, undemocratic society. A life-long learning system based in family, community, society and nature could be the foundation for new democracies of freedom, equity and justice.

- shared by Bill Ellis <[tranet@rangeley.org](mailto:tranet@rangeley.org)>, [www.creatinglearningcommunities.org](http://www.creatinglearningcommunities.org)

# search re-search



one's own 'search' and learning path, a process which leads to diverse expressions and a deeper understanding of different learning experiences, no one of them claiming to represent the ultimate truth,<sup>1</sup> but rather regenerating diversity of worldviews.

As part of the gathering in Mumbai, we explored the idea of a collective research within Learning Societies on emerging assumptions, meanings and worldviews among the communities we belong to.

While mainstream institutions are often aware of the intellectual basis supporting the need for alternative discourses in education, the actual initiatives and resourceful paths for individual and community learning that lie behind the discourse and their outcome are not so visible or understood. These initiatives are born out of personal life experiences, an exploration of what makes sense in the realities of life, work and interactions and an inquiry into what has been lost in one's ways of living, knowing, learning, understanding and relating.

Search / re-search thus emerged as a 'learning space' for mutual exchange, involving a number of individuals and groups who deliberately turned away from mainstream institutions and dominant worldviews, which they perceived to a large extent as dehumanizing, debilitating, controlling and consumerist. Instead, they turned towards a 'search' for new meaning in their lives, reclaiming control over their own learning process. This search leads to an engagement with others, such as local communities, social movements, networks, and indigenous groups, but also to a re-search for wisdom and alternative ways of living and learning. 'Re-search' in the context of this initiative is therefore understood as re-examining anew and with others in the light of

UNESCO sees it as part of the search for diversity and new thinking around community and societal learning for pluralist societies<sup>2</sup> as well as its commitment to 'humanizing globalization'<sup>3</sup> and advancing knowledge in its areas of competence, within and beyond current international frameworks such as Education for All, the United Nations Literacy Decade, the Millennium Development Goals and others. Search / re-search will explore a diversity of resourceful learning paths and thereby address, but also put into perspective the homogenizing effects of current globalization practices, and contribute to 'knitting the fabric' of pluralist learning societies across the world. See the UNESCO website: [www.unesco.org/education/nfe](http://www.unesco.org/education/nfe) for more details.

- shared by Sheela Pimpare  
<[arnipash@wanadoo.fr](mailto:arnipash@wanadoo.fr)>, <[ccngo.efa@unesco.org](mailto:ccngo.efa@unesco.org)>

<sup>1</sup> This notion of re-search is different from academic research, commonly understood as a thorough scholarly or scientific investigation and observation, so as to present a matter in a detailed, objective and accurate manner.

<sup>2</sup> 'Pluralist' societies is understood as societies, which enable and nurture the expression of cultural diversity. For notions on 'cultural diversity' and 'pluralism' see the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* at [www.unesco.org/culture](http://www.unesco.org/culture).

<sup>3</sup> The idea of "globalization with a human face" is woven into the very fabric of UNESCO's strategic responses to globalization, whose challenges, drawbacks and opportunities constitute the global agenda of our time. For more information see UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2002-2007) at [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) (Strategy and Programme).

## families learning together net- work

A small group met on the last day of the Learning Societies Conference to discuss some of the issues surrounding families today, and possibilities for creating more spaces with(in) the family for learning, growth and happiness.

### Conditions with each of our families

Ashwini spoke about how she is trying to unlearn and learn with her two children, and trying to integrate the philosophy that she follows and preaches at work, at home also, but that it is very difficult. Vidhi felt that it is a crisis today because most people feel that children are a burden and the feeling of “what to do with them” creeps in. If people start making divisions like “this is a kid” and “this is an adult”, they miss the flow in life. How can we meaningfully integrate the “child’s” world and “adult” world?

Priya observed that she would have a different perspective, since she can speak from the position of ‘daughter’ alone and not ‘mother’. She feels that time is a very important issue with families today. Everyone is so “busy” and the pace of life is so fast that there is very little time to be spent at home. How then do we create the spaces for learning together in the family? Madhulika also agreed that time is one of the major problems today, and as joint families are breaking up, children don’t have any experience of interacting with older generations. She said that although her family was a joint one, her child gets mixed signals from everyone in the family.

### Challenges to family learning spaces

\* *Television* – The entire group felt that television and media are one of the most significant corrupting factors in the well-being of children and families.

\* *School and Competition* – schools seem to be removing children from reality, curbing their imagination and creativity. They become insensitive to their surroundings and many times very thoughtless and self-centered.

Additional discussions took place on issues of discipline, joint family systems, managing roles of mother and career person, creating with our families, spaces beyond the urban paradigm, and sharing with the family and children.

It was decided to start an online group <LearningFamilies@yahoogroups.com>. This newly forming group seeks to explore the learning opportunities within the family and how to face the challenges of today, so that we may create spaces for learning within the family, in order to better connect to/understand what is happening around us.

Contact Vidhi <vidhi@swaraj.org> or Priya <priboynagesh@yahoo.co.in> to learn more and to join the network.

## Youth Jams

When musicians get together and play unprepared music, or ‘jam’, they create songs that have never been heard before. Not only does memorable and beautiful music emerge, but the musicians have a chance to share their unique skills and knowledge, while learning from other musicians. They get to hear and experience different styles of music, expand their horizons, and make something unique. They have fun, build community, and combine their collective talent, inspiration and skills to create something far greater than the sum of its parts. This fertile ground of diversity, trust and joy sprouts some of the richest seeds in history. Such is the inspiration for Youth Jams.

Several members of the Learning Societies community are collaborating with YES! (Youth for Environmental Sanity, based in California, USA) on its Youth Jams project. Youth Jams are week-long events which connect, support and inspire 30 committed young leaders (ages 15-30) from all around the world. These leaders are dedicated to building a thriving, just and balanced world for all. Events like the World Youth Leadership Jam and the Leveraging Privilege for Social Change Jam provides a healing and transformative context for community building, networking, rejuvenation and expanding the effectiveness of outstanding social change leaders.

The Jams embrace a holistic view of social change, believing with Gandhi that: “We must be the change we seek in the world.” Participants are selected given their commitment to growing and building positive change on three simultaneous levels: the internal (they are growing spiritually and personally); the interpersonal (they are seeking to bring love, integrity and honesty to their relationships); and the societal (they are building a world of justice, dignity, peace and balance). The Youth Jams believe that the personal and the public are connected, and as such, synthesize the exploration of personal lives and journeys with collective work for a better world. They provide a space for participants to examine not only their work and commitments, but their beliefs, values, emotions, and modes of analysis — all in a community of trust that allows important insights and perspective to be gained.

Contact Ocean Robbins <ocean@yesworld.org> or visit <www.yesworld.org> to learn more.

Forty-eight people from 18 countries across five continents participated in the Diversity in Learning meeting. The countries included India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Brazil, Mexico, France, Germany, and the US, and nine Arab countries. The conference took place in Jordan for the duration of four days from April 17 till April 20. It was organized by the Arab Education Forum, Shikshantar (India), UNESCO (HQ in Paris, regional office in Beirut, and the Amman office), and the Arab Theater Training Center. It is a follow up of the first meeting that took place in Lebanon in October 2003, and also of other conferences around the same topic, which took place in Udaipur, India (December 2002), Porto Alegre (January 2003), and Mumbai (January 2004).

In the framework of *Al -Jame'ah*, the Arab Education Foundation (in collaboration with several co-partners from both the Arab world and outside it: Beirut DC, Al-Jana, Al-Warsha, Shikshantar, Abhivyakti, UNESCO HQ, and several new groups and individuals in the Arab world) are planning to engage in several activities that fall under the umbrella of *Al-jame'ah*, with the themes of learning societies, diversity in learning, and search/research as common threads knitting them together. These include the following:

1. In collaboration with one partner, Beirut DC, a space in Lebanon is being arranged for October 2004 to host several activities/ small meetings (social research, old cities, taking care of maimed people, Arabic, science, history of all forms...) Hold a four-week workshop in October 2004, where several sessions will take place as manifestations of *Al Jame'ah* project.

# diversity in learning

2. Provide space/ opportunity for three or four persons who have had rich "mature" experiences to start writing their stories. These form examples of searching for self-understanding that could lead to more authentic and relevant meanings and knowledge.

3. Al-Jana, a Lebanon-based partner of *Al Jame'ah* as part of its annual summer camp for youth in the Palestinian refugee camps, wishes to initiate a project for school walkouts in the refugee camps in Lebanon. With the help of resource persons from India, they want to look at leaving schools not as a 'dead-end' situation but as an opportunity for moving on. This includes gathering stories about people from the camps who have walked out of schools and led productive lives, or who have abilities that can lead to productive lives. The plan is to extend this to include walkouts from other Arab countries in future projects.

4. Al-Warsha, an Egypt based partner of *Al Jame'ah*, has been using theatre and popular culture as a way of learning. It has been documenting forms of popular culture past and present with the purpose of creating a renewed dialogue. A main aspect of the work of Al-Warsha has been to capture the spirit of daily life - as it is played out in the village and the city, and as we have encountered it, both collectively and individually. Documenting the spirit of daily

life, as it is manifested in various cultural forms of the lives of women in Menia and Aswan, is what is proposed here.

What is common to all the above, and the thread that seems to be also common with the projects in India, Pakistan, Mexico, and Zimbabwe, is the centrality of how people perceive themselves, and how they express themselves in various ways, and in particular, through stories that reflect their learning paths, and their search for meanings, understandings, and knowledges. The dominant way (e.g. in academia) is to start with words, terms, and concepts as a basis for building knowledge and understanding. The approach we have here differs from the dominant one in two ways. The first is the use of senses, experiences, stories and imaginations as starting points in people's search for appropriate words and in their investigations of meanings, perceptions, values, and measures, and in their attempts to build understandings and knowledge. The second difference is considering the growth of the self (i.e. the spiritual dimension) and the relationship to the surrounding as organic parts of understanding and constructing knowledge.

Continuing the practice followed in Udaipur and Mumbai meetings, a pre- and post-conference interaction and discussion, via e-groups, have been active.

- shared by Munir Fasheh  
<mfasheh@yahoo.com>

## UNFOLDING LEARNING SOCIETIES II / CELEBRATION OF WALK-OUTS II

### Alphabetical List of Co-Creators

Alok Ulfat  
Avikal Theater Group  
nanhidunyalife@rediffmail.com

Amit  
walkout, Delhi  
amit\_manzil@rediffmail.com

Amrita Lalljee  
Shriram TIE  
amrita\_lalljee@mantraonline.com

Anand Gandhi  
Avikal Theater Group  
karma\_string@yahoo.co.uk

Anita Borkar  
Abhivyakti  
anita@abhivyakti.org.in

Anjali Panjabi  
filmmaker, Mumbai  
anjalipanjabi@yahoo.co.in

Ashok Medle  
Lok Panchayat  
lokpanchayat@rediffmail.com

Ashwini  
Abhivyakti  
ashwini@abhivyakti.org.in

Aspi Shroff  
Possibilities  
hi\_possibilities@hotmail.com

Augusto Cuginotti  
Ellerni  
augusto@ellerni.org

Barkat Shah  
IDSP-Pakistan  
bshahkakar@yahoo.com

Bharat Mansata  
Earthcare Books  
bharatmansata@yahoo.com

Blaise Joseph  
artist, Jesuits Society  
blaisesj@yahoo.com

Chloe Keraghel  
EHES  
ckeraghel@hotmail.com

Claire Mollard  
Miel Video  
mielvideo@yahoo.fr

Claude Alvares  
Other India Press  
oib@sancharnet.in

Del Hornbuckle  
Provisions Library  
dhornbuckle@provisionslibrary.org

Emad Tharwat  
Salama Moussa Foundation  
emadtharwat@yahoo.com

Ganesh Mandrekar  
Abhivyakti  
ganesh@abhivyakti.org.in

Ganesh Sharma  
Goli Ki Hamjoli  
ganeshsharma786@yahoo.com

Gayatri Sharma  
parent, Udaipur  
ganeshsharma786@yahoo.com

Gopal Lal Sharma  
Shikshantar  
gopalpandit108@yahoo.com

Gopal Singh Chauhan  
walkout, Bikaner  
gopal\_bkn1@yahoo.co.in

Gunjan Doogar  
Seva Mandir  
gunjan\_doogar@yahoo.com

Harish Arya  
walkout, Delhi  
harish\_arya\_@rediffmail.com

Hemant  
walkout, Delhi  
capt\_hemant@rediffmail.com

Hisham Bustani  
hbustani@gawab.com

Japan Pathak  
walkout, Ahmedabad  
japanpathak@yahoo.com

Jim Conner  
Whispering Seed  
whisperingseed@wildmail.com

Jinan KB  
Kumbham Murals  
jinankb@eth.net

Jock McClellan  
Wiser World  
jandjmccllellan@yahoo.com

Jyoti Rai  
walkout, Delhi  
jyoti\_victoria@yahoo.com

Kishan Prajapat  
Shikshantar  
k\_prajapat24@rediffmail.com

Leslie Nazareth  
Phase Five  
phasefive@vsnl.net

Madhu Suri Prakash  
Penn State University  
msp1@psu.edu

Mahesh Kamble  
kamblemahesh@rediffmail.com

Mandar Vaidya  
Abhivyakti  
mandar@abhivyakti.org.in

Manish Jain  
Shikshantar  
manish@swaraj.org

Manisha Pote  
Yuva Mitra  
yuvamitra@rediffmail.com

Mariana Cifuentes  
UNESCO  
m.cifuentes@unesco.org

Mithun Shah  
Asal  
mail@asalworld.org

Mudit Singhvi  
student (age 12), Jaipur  
mudsin@rediffmail.com

Munir Fasheh  
Arab Education Forum  
mfasheh@yahoo.com

Nitin Paranjape  
Abhivyakti  
abhivyakti@sancharnet.in

Nyla Coelho  
Multiworld Network  
taleem@multiworld.org

Pandurang Jadhav  
Lokbharati  
abhivyakti@sancharnet.in

Panna Lal Patel  
Shikshantar  
panna\_lal\_patel@yahoo.com

Patricia de Caires Sogayar  
Ellerni  
patricia@ellerni.org

Praful Lodaya  
13/1031 Jain Temple Premises,  
Trikovil Lane, Calicut, Kerala  
673001

Praveen  
Abhivyakti  
abhivyakti@sancharnet.in

Priya Nagesh  
Samanvaya  
priya@samanvaya.com

Ramawtar Singh  
Shikshantar  
ramawtarsingh@yahoo.co.in

Rania Saheli  
Arab Resource Collective  
raniasaheli@gawab.com

Ravi Mahor  
NECTAR  
nectarsudha@hotmail.com

Raziq Fahim  
IDSP-Pakistan  
raziq2000@yahoo.com

Rohit Sood  
Mirambika  
rohit\_matilda@yahoo.com

Rustam Vania  
Gobar Times / CSE  
rustam@cseindia.org

Saima Gul  
IDSP-Pakistan  
gulsaima2006@yahoo.com

Sandeep  
Abhivyakti  
abhivyakti@sancharnet.in

Saowanee Sangkara (Nao)  
Whispering Seed  
whisperingseed@wildmail.com

Sarah Chee  
community activist, Korea  
chee5192@yahoo.com

Sarang Pande  
Lok Panchayat  
lokpanchayat@rediffmail.com

Shammi Nanda  
filmmaker, Mumbai  
shammi\_nanda@yahoo.com

Sheela Pimpale  
UNESCO  
arnipash@wanadoo.fr

Shilpa Jain  
Shikshantar  
shilpa@swaraj.org

Shivram Narayan  
walkout, Goa  
vwatch@rediffmail.com

Shruti Ulfat  
Avikal Theater Group  
nanhidunyalife@rediffmail.com

Siddharth  
walkout, Delhi  
S-11 Prithvi Raj Lane, Khan Market, Delhi -3

Sonia Nimr  
Tamer Institute  
sonianimr@hotmail.com

Subhash Rawat  
Khel Khel Mein Seekhna  
rawatsubhash@rediffmail.com

Sunil Pote  
Yuva Mitra  
yuvamitra@rediffmail.com

Sujata Babar  
Abhivyakti  
sujata@abhivyakti.org.in

Tania Chattopadhyay  
filmmaker, Mumbai  
supertania@yahoo.com

Tasqeen Macchiwalla  
parent, Mumbai  
tasqeenm@yahoo.com

Tiana Lins  
community activist, Brazil  
tilins@hotmail.com

Tony Singh  
parent, Delhi  
anuroop.singh@maxnewyorklife.com

Tushar Kulkarni  
Abhivyakti  
abhivyakti@sancharnet.in

Vidhi Jain  
Shikshantar  
vidhi@swaraj.org

Vilas Shinde  
Lok Bharat  
lokbharatis@yahoo.co.in

Vinay  
walkout, Delhi  
vinay\_manzil@rediffmail.com

Vinay Futane  
walkout, Amravati  
vinayfutane@rediffmail.com

Vishal Singh Dhaybhai  
Shikshantar  
aachi36@rediffmail.com

Vishwanath Mandle  
Yuva Mitra  
yuvamitra@rediffmail.com

Walter Peter  
Shriram TIE  
walterpeter@indiatimes.com

Vispi Shroff  
Possibilities  
hi\_possibilities@hotmail.com

Yasmin Shroff  
Possibilities  
hi\_possibilities@hotmail.com

Zeina Sfeir  
Beirut DC  
beirutdc@inco.com.lb

In the folk musical traditions, not just in Rajasthan but in the world at large, you learn but you are never taught. It is like your own mother tongue, which you imbibe without anyone teaching you. When a child is even three years old, it has a vocabulary of hundreds of words. The child doesn't know who taught him these words, nor does society know who taught him the rules of grammar. The same situation holds true in folk music...

- Komal Kothari

## Additional Contributors to the Learning Societies On-Line Dialogue

Alok Singh  
alok@pioneersofchange.net

Amit and Gayatri  
pahal\_g@rediffmail.com

Anil Pradhan  
anil1969@rediffmail.com

Anuradha and Krishna  
thulir@tribalhealth.org

Arif Tabassum  
ariftabassum@yahoo.com

Ashish Kejriwal  
ashish\_as\_learner@yahoo.co.in

Ashok Chatterjee & Keshav Prasad  
ashchat@icenet.net

Bibek Kumar Anand  
anand\_bibek10@rediffmail.com

Bill Ellis  
tranet@rangeley.org

Bliss Browne  
bliss@imaginechicago.org

Bob Stilger  
bob@newstories.org

Camy Matthay  
maha@chorus.net

Chandrasekhar Devana  
csdevana@hotmail.com

Charles Otieno  
charles@swaraj.org

Coumba Toure  
kuumbati@sentoo.sn

David Wolsk  
davidwolsk@shaw.ca

Debbie Frieze  
debbie@berkana.org

Dee Dickinson  
building@newhorizons.org

Fabiana Chianese  
f.chianese@unesco.org

Gurveen Kaur  
gurveenkaur@rediffmail.com

Gustavo Esteva  
gustavoesteva@terra.com.mx

Hegazi Idris  
h.idris@unesco.org

Jan Visser  
jvisser@learndev.org

Kishore Saint  
chand67@bppl.net.in

Linda Mbonambil  
mbonambil@durban.gov.za

Lisa Aubrey  
lisa\_aubrey@hotmail.com

Manish Bapna  
mbapna@care2.com

Marianne Knuth  
marianne@kufunda.org

Mashhood Rizvi  
Mashhood@cyber.net.pk

Mille Bojer  
mbojer@pioneersofchange.net

Mona Patrao  
redstone@vsnl.com

Nandini Rao  
amansridhar@vsnl.com

Naseem Panezai  
naseempan@yahoo.com

Nesar Ahmad  
ahmadnesar@rediffmail.com

Norman Longworth  
norman.longworth@free.fr

Pat Farenga  
pfarenga@comcast.net

Prashant Varma  
prashant@lotusoutreach.org

Ramesh Thanvi  
raealra\_jp1@sancharnet.in

Raj Sethia  
rajsethia@hotmail.com

Ram Subramaniam  
samanvaya@vsnl.com

Ramasamy Selvam  
thulir@rediffmail.com

Ravi Gulati  
gulatir@vsnl.com

Rick Smyre  
rlsmyre@aol.com

Sanat Mohanty  
altworld@riseup.net

Sangeetha Sriram  
sangeetha\_sriram@yahoo.com

Sanjoy Sinha & Damyanti  
satyagrahee@yahoo.co.in

Scott MacPhail  
scottmac@supercity.ns.ca

Serene Huleileh  
aeforum@go.com.jo

Stephanie Pace Marshall  
marshall@imsa.edu

Sudha Cannan  
sudha@mafoi.com

Sudhir Pattnaik  
skppp\_bbsr@yahoo.com

Sue Canney  
sue@pipal.com

Sugandhi Baliga  
sbaliga99@yahoo.com

Sumi Chandresh  
jeevanpremi@hotmail.com

Surendran K.K.  
suren@indigen.org.in

Susanne Schnuttgen  
s.schnuttgen@unesco.org

Sylvia Lee  
kmi@kmintl.biz

Tatiana Glad  
tatiana@span.ch

Vachel Miller  
vmiller@educ.umass.edu

Venkatesh Iyer  
vr\_ier@yahoo.com

Vineeta Sood  
vineetasood@hotmail.com

Vivek Bhandari  
vbhandari@hampshire.edu

Wasif Rizvi  
rizviv@akesp.org

Yusef Progler  
yusefustad@hotmail.com

Zaid Hassan  
zaid@pioneersofchange.net