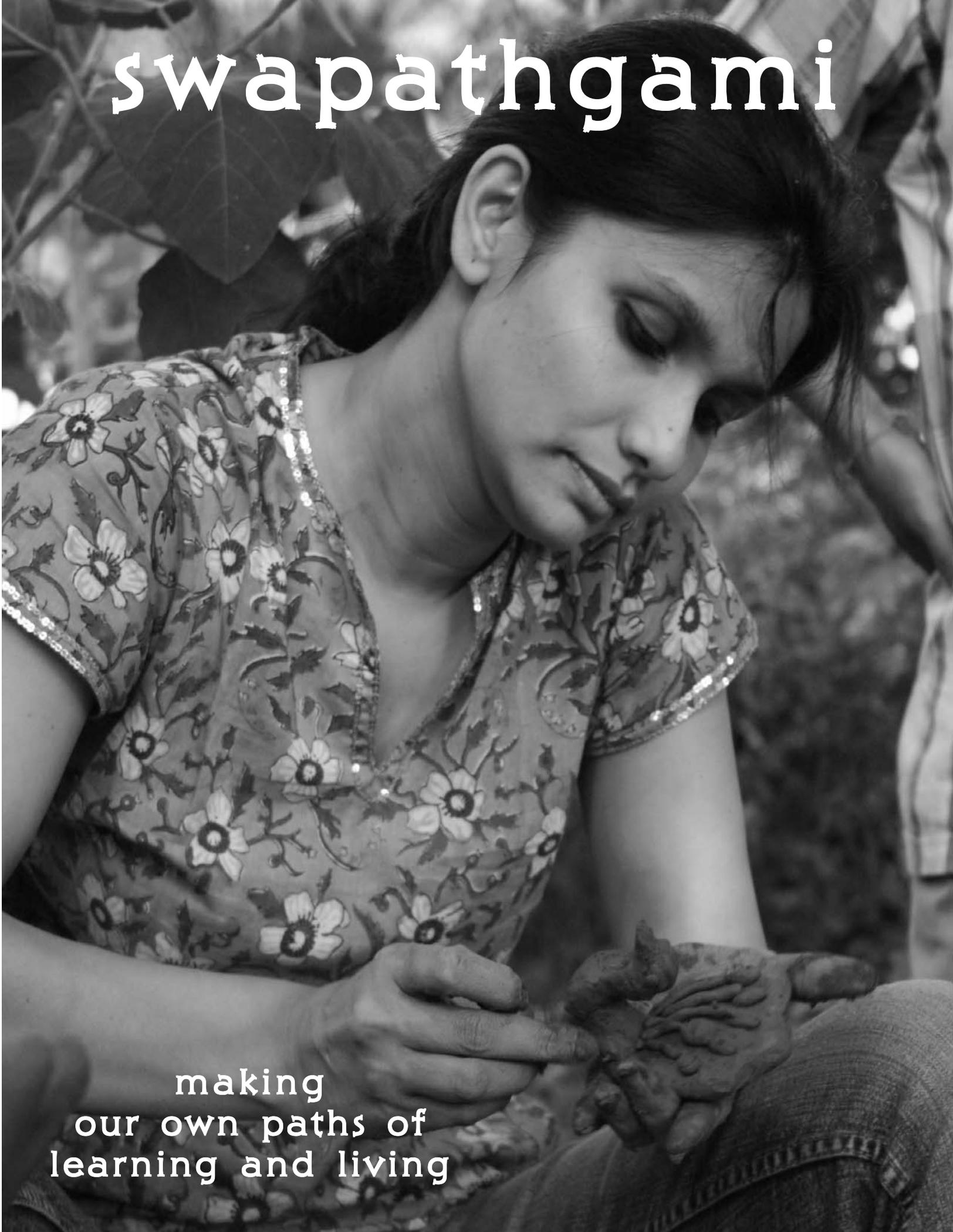


swapathgami



making
our own paths of
learning and living

the swpathgami network

In Hindi, *Swpathgami* means *one who makes his/her own path and walks it*. In contrast to the labels of 'dropout' or 'failure', swpathgamis see the decision to rise out of institutionalized structures, as a positive choice to reclaim control over one's own learning and life. Walking out and walking on is a chance to be the change we want to see in the world by realizing each individual's power to co-create the world. As people who make our own paths, we engage with society from our own perspectives and, in the process, re-configure the relationships we have with the mainstream.

The Network has four main kinds of activities:

Learning Journeys – to connect and learn with innovative thinker-doers in different places.

Celebrations/Gatherings/Public Dialogues – to intensely explore challenges/opportunities among walkouts, build strong relationships for future collaboration, and enhance the public discourse.

Communications – to share our stories and experiences, in print, on the web and in films.

Walkouts Sub-Groups – to make new experiments and possibilities (film, art, music, organic farming). We invite you in co-creating what comes next...

kabaad se jugaad meet

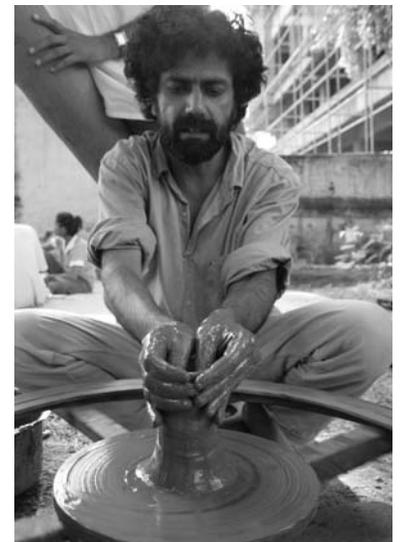
Every day, the cities of India are churning out mountains of plastic and non bio-degradable waste. And yet, ours has been a culture of not wasting anything, of reusing every scrap. In small towns and villages, as well as with experimenters around the country, this is still the norm. In this *swpathgami* meeting, we hope to explore:

- What kinds of creative and useful things are we making (or can we make) out of waste?
- How can we connect 'recycling' and 'upcycling' with art, architecture, music, farming, festivals, etc.?
- How do we expand understandings around 'Refuse, Reduce, Recycle, Reuse, Regenerate'?
- How can we make a healthy livelihood from waste?
- How do we nurture 'zero waste zones' in our families and communities?

Bring your *kabaad* creations and join us at Karm Marg, in Faridabad, Haryana, India, from December 16-19, 2005 for an interactive gathering. Contact Ranjan De <bridginggaps03@yahoo.com> to learn more.



network update



swpathgami filmmaking workshop - august 25 - september 2, 2005

why did you walk out of ... ?

a film shoot

I had gone for a shoot as a part of a team of cinematographers for a 'Reality TV' program in which a family from Lebanon had signed a contract to live with a tribal family in India for a few days. The two families were expected to have difficulties in adjusting, but towards the end, were supposed to have a good time. It was obvious that the 'reality' of their experience was pre-decided, manufactured by the producers of this very popular TV program.

Every night, the Lebanese family had to give interviews about their daily experience (referred to by the director as "confessions"). It was 'good news' if they broke down. To make things difficult (and create greater stress for them), they were not given proper information about where they were to sleep, the toilet, their daily routine, etc. They were deliberately left alone to cause them anxiety. By the end of the first day, the mother was crying, saying she wanted to go back: "Khallas!" she had had it with this experience! One of the other camerapersons was shooting this, while I just left my equipment and sat outside. I had avoided it that day, but I knew eventually I would be asked to shoot a similar situation. So by the end of the first day, I was clear that I wanted to be out of this shoot.

I shared my discomfort about what was happening and my desire to leave, with the cameraperson who had recommended me for this shoot. He tried to convince me to stay, talking of "professional ethics", claiming they wouldn't be able to get a replacement there. I regretted my agreement to come for this shoot, but "professional ethics" sounded like the emptiest words on earth to me. I didn't buy his argument that I should only worry about the camerawork, and that I should leave the content and overall process to the director.

The next morning, I told the producer I was leaving, and I would pay the airfare for another cameraperson to be flown from Mumbai. My obvious reason for leaving: I didn't like the way they were falsely making the 'reality' of living with a tribal family in a village, as hostile and difficult. In the process, they were torturing a Lebanese family. I didn't want to participate in that torture.

I also told him that I didn't like the overall set-up. As with most film shoots, there was a defined hierarchy among the director, assistants, camerapersons, spot boys, etc. This usually leads to situations where some have the power to raise their voice, and this energy travels down the chain. I had been in such a situation before, and I noticed then how I also started speaking and acting rudely with others. I didn't want this to happen to me again.

They tried convincing me through various forms of peer pressure, but I maintained that I wanted to leave. On the third day, I was replaced; the moment I came out of that space, I felt a sense of freedom and lightness. I walked out with a smile on my face.

- Shammi Nanda, Jaipur, India <shammi_nanda@yahoo.com>

mouhammed and democracy

As usual, Mouhammed came back from school carrying his heavy bag on his back and his hate for school in his eyes. With an empty stomach, aside from a few nail bites, he comes home to a mother that notices nothing of all this, except for the absence of his young brother's left hand in Mouhammed's right hand.

"Where is your brother, Mouhammed the young?" she asks.

He puts his bag on the table, opens it and takes out his brother's small cadaver, all tainted in blood, thyme and oil sandwich, and book shit. He cried then: "Today, as the teacher was explaining democracy, my brother raised his little hand asking for permission to go to the bathroom. The teacher smiled and said: 'Mouhammed, is peeing more important than democracy'?"

Mouhammed smiled and said: 'Right now, peeing is more important to me than democracy and human rights even.' The teacher didn't smile. He put his white chalk down and replaced it with a black gun from which he fired three bullets in my brother's head.

And Mom, the teacher tells you that this time, he settled it with killing him as a first warning. However, next time, he will throw him out of school."

And since that day, Mouhammed's mother prepares the thyme and oil sandwich for her children, along with the water flask and a small empty plastic bottle that they could pee in when necessary. So they wouldn't be expelled and become futureless cadavers without any degrees.

- Abdel Rahem el Awji, Lebanon
<alien_abed@hotmail.com>

As a small boy, Abdel Rahem dreamed of becoming an usher, so he could watch all the plays and movies he wanted to for free. He left school at age 15 and began to read what he liked and write what he wanted. He got involved with a youth theater group and has begun acting, making films, writing plays and, of course, ushering.
** thyme & oil: a traditional Lebanese sandwich*

"I prefer to take the company of those searching for the truth, rather than those who think they have found it."

- Vaclav Havel, the Czech Republic

As swapathgamis, we feel there are many paths to truth, many ways to be explored. Friends from around the world share their perspectives on some of the burning questions of our times.

I prefer to go by my gut reaction when I meet and talk with a person. I am more interested in a person's attitudes than in what they know or what they can do. A person who is interested in life, has enthusiasm and shows an understanding of children has far better qualifications for our learning environment at Montessori Society.

- Sharon Caldwell, South Africa
<sharon@freedomtolearn.co.za>

why do you say 'NO' to degrees in your organization?

Today, at Samanvaya, we can say with pride that we know more about the family backgrounds, native place, native culture and interests of the individuals with whom we are associated than about which college they went to or what degree they possess. At times knowing about these degrees provide for good laugh.

- Ram Subramaniam, Chennai, India
<chief@samanvaya.com>

YES! has hired more than 100 staff over the last 16 years, and when we've hired people, we've always looked at someone's character, passion, and commitment to the cause our organization stands for. As time has gone on, we've also learned to look at their skills, wisdom, functionality, references, ability to add to organizational diversity, and relevant life experience.

- Ocean Robbins, USA <ocean@yesworld.org>

An old Palestinian peasant once said, "Anything you can buy is cheap"! How insightful! Similarly, at the Arab Education Forum, we feel anything you can measure is insignificant. Reducing the worth of a person to a number, letter, adjective, certificate or degree, embodies several destructive things: (1) it kills the richness in life, by seeing the world through narrow one-dimensional perspective, (2) it kills diversity in people and living, (3) it blinds us to the relationship between the person and her/ his surroundings, (4) it robs people and communities of valuing relationships and how people treat one another, (5) it shatters the inner world of the person by making one's reference outside rather than inside the person (one's conscience), (6) it tears the social spiritual fabric in communities.

- Munir Fasheh, Palestine
<mfasheh@yahoo.com>

We have discovered at Abhivyakti that there exists a tacit knowledge in people, in organisations which needs to be valued, brought to the surface and appreciated. This tacit knowledge doesn't come with degrees; it is what people develop from practice, from their own observations, peer behaviour and dialogue.

- Nitin Paranjape, Nashik, India
<abhivyakti@sancharnet.in>

I remember, during a discussion in a local community, one old man took his Identity Card from his pocket and said with anger, "The modern life has reduced me into this small tiny piece of hard paper. If I do not have this ID card, Government and other institutions are not ready to acknowledge me as a resident of this land in which my forefathers are living from centuries." At the Institute for Development Studies and Practices, we believe that a person's experiences are more valuable than degrees. A piece of paper is not enough to tell us about a person and declare his/her identity. And one who does not have a degree, is not blank or knowledge-less. We have experienced this first hand.

- Naseem A. Panezai, Pakistan <naseempan@yahoo.com>

Join the "No to Degrees!" dialogue at www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/notodegreesdialogue.pdf

the power to confront my devotion

I have devoted these past three years of college to women's studies, human rights and international development. To gain real experience of women's studies, I decided to pack up and head to India on the most hands-on academic program available. (I now know that I could have gained plenty of valuable knowledge learning on my own instead.) I hoped to complement my goal of professionalized law school training to ensure women's rights. I was in for a rude awakening from the beginning.

Not only did I realize that I am not as easygoing about cultural difference as I thought, but I also had to accept that as far as women's studies in India, I am totally lost and utterly unqualified. No amount of theory, books or lecture could have prepared me. Women's lives here are so different from those of Western women, that comparison is not possible or even realistic. Now I wonder what business I thought I had trying to change a culture that upon arrival, I didn't know a damn thing about. It seems strange to think that I was more initially more interested in 'helping' than learning.

In Udaipur, I began a project on women's empowerment. I first observed that women are not so downtrodden as I previously thought. The women I met were curious about me and wanted to know what I do, where I came from and whether or not I am married; not once did any woman asked me for the solutions I thought they needed. When I interacted with women, I found it more valuable to just be curious and learn from them instead of asking specific questions about their conceptualizations of power.

Previously, I thought that empowerment was something that I have as an

outspoken, Western academic feminist. I can vote, seek whatever profession I please, buy as much as I want, and even attend a university to pursue a women's studies degree. Women of the developing world, I thought, desperately needed this same power from me. And, only women like me have the tools to give empowerment and if these women spoke the same language, they would ask me for help.

In the Development model, 'empowerment' frequently means to give people the tools to fit into the dominant global systems of the market, education, technology and social interaction. Women's development schemes are no exception. This may be profitable for some, but for many, they are profoundly disempowering. Entrance into these systems does not result in instant happiness; instead it often means a life of dependence on money, education and the persistent struggle for more power. Given these results, how was my past conception of 'empowerment' and 'help' really healthy? I believe instead that what is healthy is the ability to share and respect and listen. My experience in India would have been nothing without the interactions I had.

One woman, who runs her own non-governmental organization, insisted that power was inherent in choices and availability of accurate information. Another woman gave me a beautiful new perspective on spiritual power and the need for all humans, not just women, to find the ultimate source of their power within. Another man who works with the rural migrant community expressed that financial stability and capability are important facets of power. The newest perspective for me was from a man who started the interview by correcting my

distinction between women and men; he did not think it needed to exist.

All of these perspectives have conglomerated into an endless stream of questions. Why were so many vast perspectives neglected in my learning process? Aren't all of these views just as valid as the essays that I have read by published authors? Most significantly, why was the importance of finding my own perspective not emphasized or even encouraged? How is my own perspective to be developed if I do not place myself inside as many new learning situations as possible?

So, I am trying to unlearn my dependence on academic theory and teachers. I still find the classroom space to be valid on one level, but yet its widespread acceptance does not justify the neglect of all other avenues of learning. Now that I find myself so confused and lost within a subject that I thought I knew so well, I am scared but excited to proceed. I feel that this is a new period of self-honesty, more honesty than I have ever allowed to penetrate my precious women's studies.

I face a truth that my university knowledge of *Western* women's studies is not the only perspective, and theory cannot take the place of experience. I also think that people find their own power in themselves and that is something that cannot be given, no matter how professionally qualified or virtuous one's intentions may be.

-Amanda Grubb, Columbia, USA
<aegmr6@missouri.edu>

Assumptions, stereotypes, lies: how do we let go of the things do not serve us? What experiences enable us to question that which we have been taught by schools, the mass media, government propaganda, consumerist conditioning? Where do our unlearning journeys lead?

letting go

breaking identity categories

For as long as I can remember, "class" has been a complex subject for me. To this day, I struggle with and reinvent this category in my mind over and over again as my social and economic circumstances shift. As soon as I became aware of class, I realized that it was as socially constructed as race (why is aunt Dorothy "black" momma and her skin is whiter than most "white" peoples'?). How could my family members who made around \$25,000 a year and friends whose parents made around \$250,000 a year both label themselves "middle class"? To complicate things more, it seemed that people working in blue-collar jobs making very little money were "poor" and my parents' friends that were teachers or social workers making the same amount were "middle-class." Was class only about economics? Did it have more to do with social status? Was it a combination of the two?

My parents fell somewhere in the middle of those incomes and called themselves middle class, too. We had a nice house in a mixed race neighborhood in the suburbs; my sister and I went to predominately white private schools from kindergarten until college; we always had everything we needed; and we got most of what we wanted (making us prime targets for being labeled "spoiled" by most of our cousins). And that was the stuff that made you middle class, right? Although everyone around me thought so, I never really knew for sure.

Growing up, most of my cousins went to public schools, lived in all-black working class-neighborhoods, and didn't get the newest toys for Christmas. As a result of our "privilege," my sister and I would often have to endure low-level torture from them: being called stuck up and snooty because we "talked white" and went to "white schools;" getting our toys broken or stolen out of jealousy; being made fun of because our parents were too strict. When I visited my white friends, I would be confronted with black domestic workers, talks about summer homes and racist innuendo (if not blatant racism) from their parents. These extremes kept me confused, and I didn't have an outlet for dealing with my bewilderment.

As a result of this seesaw, I have tons of unresolved hate, envy, and fear issues, towards white people (as a social category); and I am ridden with guilt and regret because of early interactions with my cousins and their friends. One of the main issues that I worked on for years was anger and resent towards my parents, though.

I was so pissed with them because I wasn't as rich as my white friends and I wasn't as cool as my black cousins. Because of many of the ways they raised me, I was left wondering if I was black, white, a wannabe



black, a wannabe white or just crazy. In addition, I am still working through the immense pressure that I felt from them to succeed.

My father often said, "Your sister and you are going to bring recognition to this family." I felt added pressure with the name that they gave me, as my first name is my mother's maiden name. So, in my imagination,

if I messed up, I was bringing dishonor to both the Bryants and the Terrys. Conversely, if I excelled I would bring honor to both sides of the family.

I don't want to paint my parents as evil manipulative people. I realize that they were doing the best that they could with the tools that they had, and I understand the complex historical, economic and cultural realities that pushed them to make certain decisions. But knowledge of these factors didn't lessen the pressure I felt early on to make a lot of money or become famous; it didn't help me reconcile my reduction of black identity to "ghetto" and white identity to "rich"; it didn't erase the psychic damage that going to all-white schools has done to me; it didn't make it easy for me to leave a Ph.D.

For most of my life, I allowed my parents to project many of their fears and class anxieties on me. I went to graduate school because I thought being a professor would make my parents happy (since I refused to go to law school). I dreaded being there the whole time, and when I left, I had hell to pay. The fact that my sister was starting medical school when I was leaving graduate school made it seem like I was straying from this trajectory of greatness even more.

When I decided I wanted to go to culinary school, my parents didn't get it: "*Black folks spent centuries getting out of the kitchen and now you are going back into it. What are you doing with your life? How are you going to make money? Why can't you be focused like your sister? Are you gonna be a martyr and save the world or make money and save yourself?*" I was so confused I couldn't fully embrace this passion for food that I had always had.

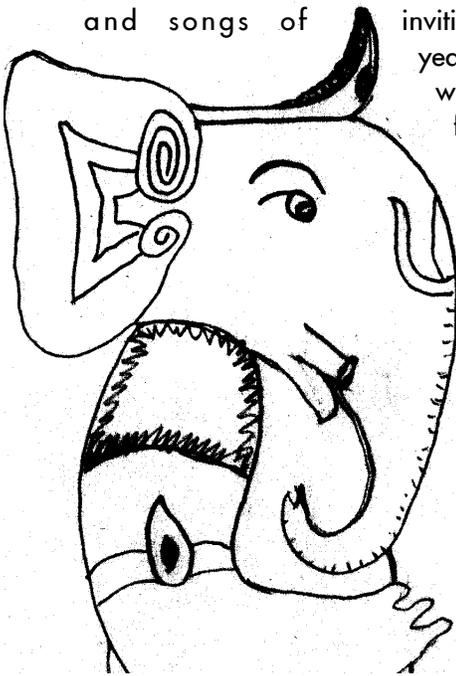
Yet, starting B-HEALTHY (www.b-healthy.org) and working in depth around food and food justice issues, has helped me to transcend narrow notions of identity. It's a journey I'm still on, but I'm finding my way...

- Bryant Terry, San Francisco, USA
<bryant@b-healthy.org>

idol pleasures

The Ganesh Utsav. A joyous festival that comes every year in September in Maharashtra, my state, and brings with itself family, celebration, energy, and Lord Ganesh. Ganesh, the son of Lord Shankar and his wife Parvati who reside in the Himalayas. A god with a big belly, an elephant head, and a sense of humour. Sometimes even lazy. Yet considered wise and scholarly, he uses his cunning to make up for his laziness. Generally-speaking, the most favoured and liked god in Maharashtra.

In this festival, Ganesh comes into our homes in the form of an idol for a 10-day ritual, and is treated like a visitor. Sweet dishes are made for him daily, worship ceremonies (*pujas*) done for him twice a day, dances and songs are performed for him, and lots more. After 10 days, we take our idols of Ganesh to a nearby water source and immerse them in it. A last goodbye and songs of



inviting him back next year are sung as we watch Ganesh flowing away with the current of the river or the tides in the sea.

This festival, for us people, is a chance to eat good food, wear nice clothes, to dance, sing, get together with family and friends [which is one of the rare times we do that] and enjoy ourselves.

The only thing which, I think, is unsuitable for this festival are the idols we use to portray Ganesh. They are readymade of plaster-of-Paris and coloured with artificial chemical colours. Though beautiful to look at, they are absolutely NOT bio-degradable.

Last year, when about a hundred thousand idols were immersed in the Arabian Sea in Mumbai, more than half of these idols came back to the beach with the tides and were there for almost three days. Finally, people had to put them in the garbage. Imagine, just a week ago these idols had been 'God'; had been worshipped

*"Where roads are made, I lose my way.
In the wide water, in the blue sky, there is no line of a track.
The pathway is hidden by the birds' wings, by the star-fires,
by the flowers of the wayfaring season.
And I ask my heart if its blood carries
the wisdom of the unseen way."*

- Rabindranath Tagore

Rekindling our faith in unseen ways can help us to challenge the Readymade World and its push for greater consumption, standardization and institutionalization of all life. In their own lives, *swapathgamis* are offering alternatives, great and small. They remind us that other worlds of learning and living are possible, since we all carry wisdom within.

and danced and sang for, and now they are nothing but useless garbage?!

I thought about this issue a lot, and wondered, what can be done to stop this usage of artificial idols? A friend then suggested that I could make an idol from clay with my own hands. She told me that clay is bio-degradable, will dissolve as soon as is put into water and plus, there is no need of buying artificial idols from the markets!

Making Ganesh was not that hard. Maybe because he has an elephant face; so all you've got to do is make a flat, oval face and then attach a long cord to it for his nose. The rest of Ganesh too was easy enough; somehow, as I put my hands into the clay, I felt the technique coming to me naturally!

One major problem was talking to my grandparents about worshipping an idol made by me. At first they laughed it off, saying that I couldn't even make an idol, forget worshipping it. When they realised I was serious, they said I could try, though hesitantly. However, when the idol was done, they appeared to be quite pleased with it. I once even [over]heard my grandfather proudly telling some of his friends that this year their Ganesh idol had been made by his own grand-daughter!

My grandmother also shared a wonderful thing. Ganesh was sculpted, not birthed, by his mother. The story is that one day Parvati wanted to take a bath and needed someone to guard her house. So she scraped out all the sandal and dirt from her body and with it, shaped a form of a boy, whom she gave life and named Ganesh.

After this experience, I've decided that I'm going to make Ganesh's idol each year and also make more things by hand. Ideas and suggestions are welcome!

- Sakhi, Nashik, India
<sakhi_na@rediffmail.com>

ode to my bicycle

I like the gentle purring of the wheels of my cycle as they turn on a quiet dusty road.

I like that my choice of transportation does not intimidate the people who choose to walk. They are not forced to make way for me as they do for a large, speeding, loud sounding, engined two or four wheeler. I like being in harmony with walkers, they are my fellow campaigners for environment preservation.

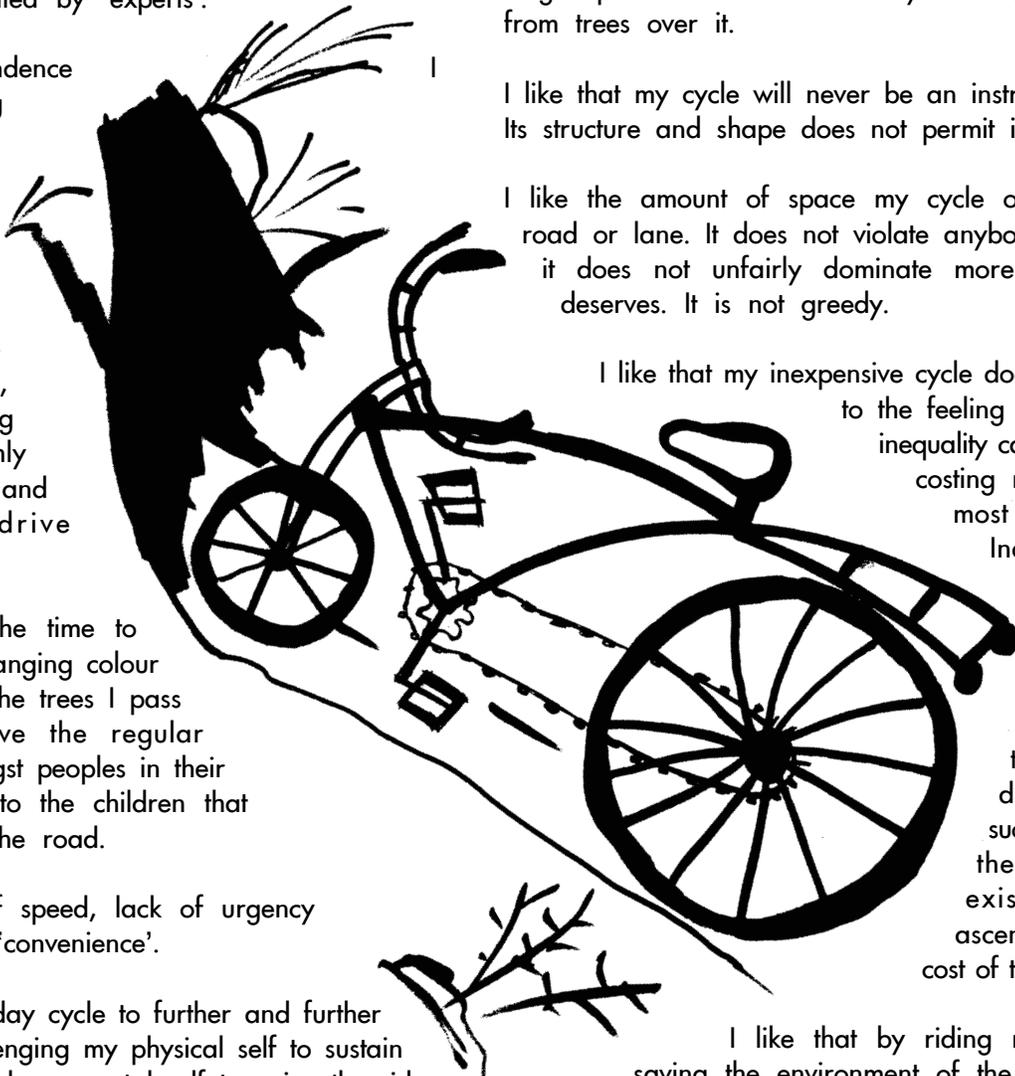
I like that every time I cycle, I push myself a little further towards physical fitness. I like that my regiment contributes towards pursuing the other activities in my life, it is an integral part of my life. It is not something I compartmentalise into one hour and treat as a activity in itself. It is not isolated in an air-conditioned room with fancy equipment and hour long schedules regimented by 'experts'.

I like the independence experience owning a cycle - independence from petrol bunks, service centres, vehicles washers and cleaners, expensive security systems, music producing equipment, monthly loan repayments and license to drive requirements.

I like spending the time to appreciate the changing colour of the leaves of the trees I pass everyday, observe the regular interactions amongst peoples in their houses and talk to the children that sell earbuds on the road.

I like the lack of speed, lack of urgency and the lack of 'convenience'.

I like that I everyday cycle to further and further destinations, challenging my physical self to sustain the momentum and my mental self to enjoy the ride despite the deafening horns and long and winding traffic dominated by vehicles many times larger than mine but transporting people disproportionately fewer.



I like that I understand how my cycle works. I can maintain it myself. It needs no book, no 'expert', no certificate to understand its simple mechanics.

I like that the animals that I encounter on the way do not feel threatened by my cycle, they do not move away, they do not chase me, they do not see their space as being violated.

I like that my cycle does not draw attention to itself. It is not loud, it is not big, it is not decorative, it does not have flashy lights or a horn or a sound system. It does not destroy the rhythms of the nature and does not disturb the birds and animals.

I like that the weight of my cycle respects the ground on which it rests and moves. It does not crush vegetation on it, it does not run over small animals that inhabit it. Its height prevents it from violently shaking off branches from trees over it.

I like that my cycle will never be an instrument of death. Its structure and shape does not permit it to become so.

I like the amount of space my cycle occupies on any road or lane. It does not violate anybody else's space, it does not unfairly dominate more space than it deserves. It is not greedy.

I like that my inexpensive cycle does not contribute to the feeling and imagery of inequality caused by vehicles costing more than what most households in India earn in 3 years.

I like that by riding a cycle I am challenging the societal definition of success that dictates the extent of its existence by the ascending size and cost of the vehicle I own.

I like that by riding my cycle, I am saving the environment of the burden of one more vehicle's chemical toxic waste.

- Pooja Hirandani, Bangalore, India
<verislava_53@yahoo.com>

solar fires burning

I learnt of the Symington Solar Array in October 1999. At the time, I was writing for a youth information magazine and was on the lookout for good stories. I met Tracy Symington at a retreat in Canada; when I saw the Array a month later, I was impressed by how fast this solar technology could heat an oven to 500F. I decided to adopt the solar array, to not just study and write about its development but also to fight for it, to promote, even to peddle it.

Before I could lead the solar array from the workshop to the world, I first needed to understand and participate in making the technology. During the summers of 2000 and 2001, I spent many weeks in the Symington family's make-shift workshop: pounding tin, cutting screws and frames, painting, focussing mirrors, cutting steel, and sometimes simply cursing the perversity of things. There, I learned inventor Fraser Symington's common-sense rules of shop life: "Measure twice and cut once." "What can go wrong, will go wrong." "By the time you figure out how to do something properly, you will no longer need to do it." Working in a shop with technologies was much different than studying them!

In January 2001, I met Gustavo Esteva after reading his book, *Grassroots Postmodernism: (Re)Making the Soil of Cultures*. The stories he told resonated strongly with my outlook and mindset. Esteva suggested that before going to Unitierra in Oaxaca, Mexico, I should spend some time in Cuernavaca with the inventor of a marvellous waterless-toilet, César Añorve. There, I experienced first-hand how an appropriate technology was successfully introduced and distributed throughout Mexico. It was not a commercial or governmental technology transfer. Rather, it happened through the contagiousness of a good example. It was a type of sharing that involved the user, not as a passive consumer of a product but as an active participant in a social and political process. This way helped to instill self-confidence in the people who adopted it, showing them that experts are not needed for better ideas and products, but rather people can develop and maintain these new technologies themselves.

I was convinced that this was the way to proceed, but this kind of distribution required me to break down ingrained barriers between thought and action. I stopped thinking in terms of goals and strategies and more in terms of day-to-day living and working.

I originally went to Mexico with the idea of setting up a few pilot projects to show how the Array could be used for intermediate scale roasting, baking, distillation of water, and firing ceramics. I hoped we would soon find ourselves manufacturing thousands of arrays within the sunbelt, thus fostering the coming economy of solar-made durable goods. Somewhere in between, the ends and means got reversed. I stopped seeing the technology as an end in itself, and started seeing it as a tool to support the social co-motion already taking place at the grassroots. The Symington Solar Array transformed into the Fuego Solar (in Spanish, literally, 'solar fire'). It became a means to participate in the energy discussion, and support some ecologically-sound, socially-just small enterprises, within indigenous communities and cities alike.

At present, we find ourselves in an exciting place. Our workshop (known as CACITA) deploys a number of ecological technologies, ranging from rainwater harvesting, dry toilets, worm composts and solar cookers. In the coming year, we want to turn the workshop into a hostel for non-local students wishing to apprentice in the arts of solar technology. The Fuego Solar is gaining in popularity, providing local women with an economical, ecological and time-saving alternative to both big expensive roasting as well as traditional roasting technologies. Their solar-roasted peanuts, cacao, and coffee are attracting interest locally and in the North American market. Chocosol, the youth-led collective we began, is working to become an intermediate scale supplier of chocolate and solar-roasted cacao. Finally, the solar array will never stop being improved. At present, our goals are to: 1) integrate a solar roaster with a bicycle technology to enable grinding, de-pulping, rotating the roaster and de-husking nuts; and 2) make a solar water purification unit to sterilize at least 500L of water per day using nothing but sunlight.

I've learned that research means re-searching and bringing out what one feels is already there. It means continuing to work, even when presented with logical reasons why it won't work. It means being flexible. It is an engaging way of living that does not respect traditional boundaries of work and leisure; some of the best insights come when you are relaxing. It is a work of faith and love.

- Michael 'Chivo' Sacco,
Toronto, Canada
<dr_sacco@hotmail.com>



Come volunteer with us, build CACITA, share the solar array with others, make a donation, etc.!

sweet melodies

I started singing in choir in high school. Why? Because of hormones. I had a HUGE crush on Robyn, the president of the choir. When she talked to me, I felt lightheaded and my heart started beating techno. I probably would've eaten my own fingers if she asked me. Fortunately, she only asked me to join the choir.



Choir was okay, but the thing that really got me hooked on singing was the first time I sang *a cappella* (without instruments). I was placed in a small, all-male ensemble. The first time I heard all our parts together, I was almost breathless. I was a part of music that felt alive to me.

When I went to college, I thought it was to decide if I was going to be a lawyer (like my parents), a doctor, an investment banker or some professional (i.e. wearing a suit in an office). But when I was there, there were so few student-led musical outlets that I decided to actively participate in existing ones and start new ones.

Eventually, I was forced to figure out what really lit me up, what made me feel like no matter what else was going on, if I had it, I'd be fine. That turned out to be singing. I got so into writing and singing that I walked out of expectations for law school and moved to San Francisco, so I could immerse myself in the scene of a major city. Making that decision was the first time I felt like I was actively choosing what to do with my life. I realized how little excitement I'd felt before because I didn't feel like I had anything fresh to offer in my school/college realms. It wasn't beyond my ability to be a lawyer or suit-wearing professional, but at a certain point I felt compelled to decide what I wanted and what I was going to use my abilities to do.

After realizing that I wasn't being taken as seriously as the instrumentalists (because even though I'd started bands, I was just a singer), I started experimenting with bass guitar. I realized how satisfying it was to be able to express myself creatively in another way. I started using bass lines and bass riffs as skeletons on which to hang my melodies and lyrics. I felt like I was finally able to say something that I'd needed to say for years.

I had grown up listening to a rather eclectic mix of music. I was trying to find a voice for myself as a songwriter, creating songs that I would want to listen to. I found it somewhere in the spaces between some of my seminal influences: Peter Gabriel's otherworldliness; Stevie Wonder's soulful and sober-eyed present-day focus; Tracy Chapman's poignant and articulate social criticism; the inscrutably twisted and delicate poetry of Kurt Cobain and the razor-sharp confessional wit of Tori Amos.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Skill to do comes of doing." For me, songwriting was the same way. I was a very good academic writer. But when I started writing songs, I realized that I needed to strip the analytical language out of my vocabulary and style. I spent every lunch break (during my crappy temp job) writing lyrics and poetry and trying to figure out a felt, instead of stated, way to say things. Eventually, I got to where I could just write what I felt.

Also, when I started writing music, the lyrics always came first. I'd then try to figure out a way to make the melody hang on them. Now I usually start with a musical idea, some sort of guitar melody and work on the two components, the lyrical and the musical, at the same time. It's a more symbiotic process in which the music and lyrics combine to express something neither could say alone.

I've learned a lot about myself through music: that I'm a self-starter, that I'm able to conceive of, develop and complete projects at a high level. I've learned that I'm good at teaching myself how to do things.

I've never seriously contemplated giving up music, but I did consider taking a hiatus after the current US government administration started its perverse and pervasive abuse of power. I started wondering whether or not I'd serve my community more effectively as an activist for change than as a musician. I voiced my concerns with a number of politically-active friends who share my views, and they unanimously told me to stick with music.

However, since then, I've more actively sought out ways to combine music and activism (see list). I also try to encourage teens to think outside the box about their life paths. And for those who are passionate about music, to believe that they can make a living as a musician through other avenues besides mega-corporate media and highly commercial venues.

- Austin Willacy, San Francisco, USA
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I share myself and my music with:

Bread & Roses:

www.breadandroses.org

Freight & Salvage:

www.freightandsalvage.com

Active Music:

www.activemusic.org

Little Kids Rock:

www.littlekidsrock.org

listening to the heart

Last year. I was considering leaving my job, I was exhausted with living in New York City, I could barely make ends meet. I was considering major changes but wracked with insecurity and worry. The concerns of money, housing, loans, responsibilities, resume, all loomed over me. I found it hard to listen to my heart and to find the courage to act. At the same time, others were dealing with similar questions in their lives. My mother, Premeeta Janssens-Sannon (PJS) had left a well-paying job, been laid from another, and then made the decision to pursue a radically different career path. One friend, Pavithra Vasudevan (PV) decided to leave her job and pursue dancing, while another Chuck Thornton (CT) decided to leave college to write a novel. We can all find a million reasons not to change our lives, but I share these stories to remind us that we always have options, and that those paths have magical and life-altering potential.

What led you to the decision to walk out?

PJS: My decision to leave seemed sudden but in actuality, all the years of not liking what I did caught up with me. My job was monotonous and I had missed the creative end of the business for years. I hated who I was becoming. To deal with my boss, I had to become aggressive and rude; and that disturbed me.

PV: A few months ago, sitting at my computer doing mindless administrative work for my 'nonprofit' organization, I asked myself, "How the hell is making thousands of copies a week good for anyone? How did my very intentional social/political/personal path get railroaded?"

CT: Deciding to leave school, shifting my professional requirements, saving money for the process of publishing (commercial or small press), disconnecting from popular culture habits (tv, radio, sports!), all initially seemed like a radical midlife-crisis response. The decision to change felt like insanity until I realized it was a permanent readjustment to a life that had grown stale and stagnant.

What were some of the internal and external obstacles you faced in making your decision?

PJS: Initially, an obstacle to leaving was that everyone thought I was crazy. They say that after 40 you really can't get a job, so there wasn't all that much support. But internally, I felt so free and sure. It was that internal belief that made me do the impossible.

PV: I was worried that I was somehow failing by leaving my job without a more definite alternative. It took many conversations with friends who didn't have traditionally defined 'career paths' to become more open to the possibility of living life more fully. I made a vague plan

for myself – I saved up enough money to get by without a job for a few months; made myself a daily schedule; started asking about temporary jobs so I could get work in a hurry if I needed to.

CT: The most difficult aspect of rearranging my life for writing was making an unconventional plan and running with it. People of color are taught a very systematic way of goal setting. For example, as a counter attack to institutional racism, we're taught fear – that you must armor and insulate yourself before taking chances. We're taught to finish school, pay into a pension plan, buy a car, buy a house, buy real estate, get married, have kids. Basically, fulfill all your biological requirements before attempting to spread your wings and experiment.

Everyone else seems to be living a deferred life – living for a day other than today: their day-off, their vacation, some arbitrary future time that hasn't occurred yet. But because I'm striving for my dreams, because I operate in the moment, I feel out of sync with the rest of the world — hence sometimes I feel 'wrong' or 'misguided'.

What are you learning or unlearning?

PJS: One of the reasons I gave up my best-paid job was because I felt I wasn't learning much except negative things. What I am doing now, nothing prepared me for this professionally. Yet, I feel all of my professional life, I have been picking up skills that are relevant. Once I can put the fear away of "It's a brand new thing that I am doing at the age of 52," then I see it's not scary in the least and that I can actively contribute. I didn't allow myself to get intimidated by this new career. I never allowed myself to think "I don't know anything and I don't know what to do." I instead resolved "I am going to learn as fast as I can."

PV: I have been reminded again how there is no such thing as a 'little thing' in life. The amount of energy I spend with family, with friends, the food I eat, the time I give myself to meet people in my neighborhood, to go for walks, to simply BE without doing something constantly - those are all equally as important as working and being useful to society (or useless, as the case may be).

CT: I learned a cool thing: that a walk in the park is a blessing from God, that even if the book I am writing sucks, I was so lucky to be able to take a year plus to find out: "What if?" How many people have that? I also learned that I can be grateful every single day of the week, that the less I own, the happier I am. I can't tell you the last time I was bored or idle.

- Shreya Janssens-Sannon, New York, USA
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All around us are diverse people, places, books, films, readily available to support us in growing and deepening our learning. They can expose us to new cultures, ways of living, useful skills and lifelong friends. In the process, we understand ourselves and our world a little better. Here, swapathgamis offer their experiences with various opportunities and resources, so that others feel free to take a chance and engage with them too. Consider sharing with us some of the meaningful stopovers in your own learning journey for a future issue!

Discover **permaculture and natural building** with activists, architects, builders, and community members. Buddha Smiles will be hosting a hands-on workshop from December 30, 2005 to January 28, 2006, in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India. Contact Ramu Manivannan <smilesbuddha@yahoo.co.in>



Climb to new heights at the **Himalaya Mountaineering Institute** in Darjeeling, India.

Learn about the ecology of the Himalayas, climb rocks and glaciers, camp, canoe and trek. Their Basic Mountaineering and Adventure Courses are for men and women; the next course starts in December. Visit http://darjeelingnews.net/himalayan_mountaineering_institute_courses.htm

film review: other worlds of power

We Feel Responsible, a collective I am a part of, recently organised a film festival on environmental and social issues. Considering the resources we had, we decided it would be good idea to use films to create a forum for young people in Chennai to explore the world they are inheriting. Films on various themes like water, pollution, corporate crime, youth culture, etc., were screened.

In Search of Other Worlds of Power, one of the films, was a big help in gaining some insights into my life. Just before reaching the venue, I was involved in discussions with some friends to see how we could take forward an idea. By the end of it, I found myself thoroughly drained. Five years of promoting a better world, campaigning for causes, trying to walk against the tide, and pushing myself hard for it, was finally taking its toll. Engaging with people, even loved ones, was getting tiresome. Any situation where I had to explain my beliefs and opinions had become repulsive. Cynicism, perceived or otherwise, made me angry. Add to this, the disappointment of unmet expectations from myself and fellow travelers.

Have I burnt myself out trying to sell 'swaraj' ? (Which I define as "learning to live in harmony and peace with all life around me"; for a poem, which describes the meanings I attribute to *swaraj*, see www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/satish_prayer.htm) *Am I pushing myself too hard to 'be the change'? What am I doing wrong here?* were all questions that had popped up just a few minutes before I sat down to watch the movie.

In Search of Other Worlds of Power is a documentary shot during the Learning Societies Conference at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Bombay in January 2004. Though I've seen it before, this time some imagery triggered within me some things that I am thankful for.

For example, a gentleman from Nashik is riding his bicycle on this village road, while also narrating his own story. It dawned on me that my journey is my own. Many people might come along and walk parts of it with me, but at the end of the day, it is still mine. Of late, I realized I had let go of some of that responsibility.

Another person in the film describes how he met a blind shopkeeper selling books at the WSF. The shopkeeper trusts his customers to pay him the correct change. At the end of the day, he didn't have to regret his trust, as everybody paid him correctly! That, to me, was a reminder of the goodness that exists in each of us.

On further reflection, the film reminded me of the importance of recharging oneself, to take breathers and rebuild energies. I have been in the 'stretching oneself' and 'resist the system' modes for a long time now. I need to find spaces where I can rest, heal and grow stronger. I've figured out to take time off to connect to myself — by doing things I enjoy, like reading, playing with children and by not socializing like crazy (as I usually do!) and not taking on too many 'roles'. Apart from these, making time and space for taking a fresh look at my beliefs and opinions and asking myself again the guiding questions I try to live my life by, has also been a huge help.

I also now realize, as difficult as it is, 'walking out' is only getting to base camp. 'Walking on' is the bigger challenge, the actual climb. My respects to the climbers and best wishes for the wannabes!

- Naveen Kumar, Chennai, India
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For a copy of the film, write to *Abhivyakti Media for Development* <abhivyakti@sancharnet.in>

the shire - canada

I walked out of my workplace 5 months ago, not only because I did not want to be part of an "old game" that didn't work for me anymore but also I felt in my guts another calling, another way of being and working. For some time, I'd been contemplating on how to step out of the mechanistic paradigm to create something that is more life-affirming, in harmony with nature and uplifting. "How to live an authentic life, from the work I do to the food I eat to the transport I use" has been a growing question in me. I was intuitively sensing a shift in my awareness; I needed to step out of my habitual patterns and start practicing what I want to create in the world. I needed a safe, nourishing space to give birth to this new life and to unfold my calling.

Then came the invitation. From a place called 'the Shire'. It was a genuine call for volunteers from Tim Merry, someone I had met a few years ago at another magical place, Castle Borl <www.borl.org>. Tim was setting up a learning center called the Shire in Nova Scotia, Canada. At once, I knew this was the time, this was the place for me to go. And this epiphany was followed by a series of events that made my hunch become reality.

The three months I spent at the Shire as a volunteer proved to be a chrysalis-like-experience: lots of green, sun and rain to nourish the spirit, lots of people to learn and play with, lots of contemplation and stillness to see and sense myself and my life...In every moment of the adventure, magic settled in, whether it was eating berries from a bush on a sun-washed path, or creating a



permaculture garden out of cardboard mulch and tasting the peas and cucumbers it produced later on, or meeting the kind of people who opened their hearts so generously that I would find myself amazed, again and again...

This place really helped me to find the ever-present sense of magic,

The Shire <www.oftheshire.org> is an incubator-space, a learning center, 165 acres of forest, meadow, wetlands, streams and lake in Nova Scotia, Canada. The Shire offers residential and non-residential programs supporting leaders in their spheres of influence both locally and internationally; it also supports local initiatives in the town of Yarmouth for community growth and development. The Shire practices sustainable agriculture, forestry, building, land management, local traditional crafts, entrepreneurship and business rooted in passion and real need. Contact Tim Merry <tim@oftheshire.org> to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

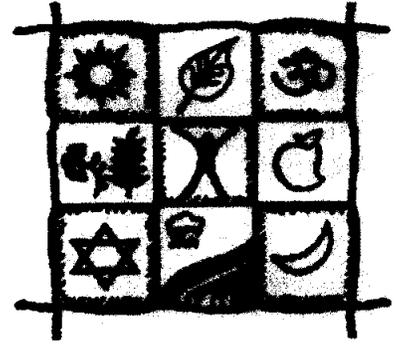
possibility and well-being in everyday life, which I believe will be present for me wherever I go. As I worked on the land, I reconnected with the earth which gave me a real sense of the perfectness and inherent richness in all. I slowly started shifting from a scarcity mindset to one of abundance. I was more able to acknowledge my own gifts and wisdom, instead of dwelling in what I was lacking and constantly looking outside of myself. Looking at how we created the Shire facilities from the most basic and recycled materials, I finally understood that real wealth starts in one's mind and heart. As a result, I came to cherish my qualities and gifts and found immense inspiration to put them into the service of life. The trees, the birds, the wind, the lake, all advised me to do that in a lighthearted and playful manner!

As I walked through being me and re-connecting with life and earth at the Shire, I came to see and reaffirm what I want to create in the world: I want to host a learning/nourishing/reconnecting space for higher consciousness and sustainable living. I want to create an *innovation kitchen*! I envision the innovation kitchen to be an interactive learning space where people will gather to cook together (literally), in playful and creative spirit, while they will also 'cook' ideas, learn, inspire and get inspired by each other. The 'kitchen' concept was born out of my best experiences: that food is sacred and nourishing, not only for body but also for mind and spirit. Cooking together is a co-creation process; it invites a playful and creative mood which allows people to connect, share their wisdom and learn genuinely.

I strongly feel that the Shire has been my gateway from a secure yet stagnant life into a more chaotic and creative life open to possibilities and magic.

- Filiz Telek, Turkey
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Started in 1989 to motivate people to look after their own health, The Health Awareness Center emphasizes 'Health through Nutrition'. Connections between living habits, environment, food and health are explored through their nutrition re-education classes, cooking workshops, health seminars, personal health counseling, library and documentation center and organic food lunch service. Volunteers can come learn with their lunch service or organic farm. Learn more at THAC: Streehitavardhini, Lokmanya Nagar, K. Gadgil Marg, Mumbai, 400025, phone +91-22-2436-1672;; email: health_awareness_centre@hotmail.com



the health awareness center - mumbai

Tanay was born in my maternal home – a naturally delivered, wide-eyed child, out in a slide within three tremendous pushes, supported and encouraged, held and received with close friends and family, all associated with The Health Awareness Center, which was started by his grandmother, Vijaya. With THAC's support, our family has had to self-embrace and create our own learning resources and our own opportunities for growth... and we left behind the texts of government-controlled measures – be it Hospital Birthing, Pediatric Cures, Immunization Boosters, Processed Food Propagandas, and Factory-Schooling. THAC's influence on Tanay (now six-years-old) include:

- No 'regular checkups' to the doctors or specialists.
- No medicines and injections.
- Vaccine-free body.
- No junk foods (i.e., no colas, sweets, chocolates, packaged foods).
- No food fuss; eats whole-heartedly.
- No childhood diseases (skin rash, colitis, colic, ear infections, etc.).
- No milk, milk products, non-vegetarian foods.
- Potty-training, weaning, sleep rhythms were miraculously smooth.
- Despite the three-culture traveling (Mumbai, Goa, Denmark), Tanay has no health breakdowns, no adjust trouble. He transits easily.
- Illness (colds and fevers) are the time for resting, reading and soaking in our active presence around him.
- Thanks to eating fresh, natural food, he has developed a passion for plants, trees, gardening, and caring for the earth.

- Navina Venkat Sondergaard, Goa, India

1. **Raw** (the best):
fruits, vegetables, nuts.

2. **Solar drying and solar cooking:**
only water is removed; nutrient value is retained in dry fruits, vegetables.

3. **Steaming:**
the nutrient value is retained.

4. **Stir frying:**
short time on fire, so some nutrients are retained.

5. **Boiling:** no use of oil but some nutrients are destroyed.

- All nutrient value destroyed in -

6. **Baking:** with or without oil.

7. **Deep frying:** oil outer shell absorbs oil.

8. **Shallow frying:** absorbs and retains all oil.

9. **Microwave** (the worst):
food is zapped out dead.

THAC's spectrum of healthy eating

About a year after I started a natural diet (to cure my kidney stones and high blood pressure), my brother told me about THAC. We joined their eight week course and my life changed forever. The rationale behind what to eat, why to eat, when to eat, was explained with such loving care and effectiveness. We learned that food is only 10% of nutrition, that nutrition also includes breathing, sunning, exercising, positive thinking, relationships and spiritualism. The final session at Vangani (THAC's organic farm and forest land) was a fitting final touch to an experience that brought me closer to and more appreciative of Mother Nature.

I had done quite a bit of reading before THAC, but I learned a lot more. Looking back, I don't see it as a course but as a way of life. The cooking methods they shared were easy and practical to use. My family now uses these at home, and I avail of the THAC tiffin service when I am at work. Most of all, I have gained the wonderful feeling of being a part of the THAC family that wants to make a difference and knows how to do it.

- Krishna Shetty, Mumbai, India
<shettykrishna@hotmail.com>

the road to health: an interview with Vijaya Venkat

What triggered the first step in your journey around health? How did you start?

50 years ago, I had worked seriously and systematically as a scientist. I had institutional support, degrees, diplomas and research qualifications, all to obtain results. Yet, none of these helped me in asking relevant questions, and actually led to more uncertainty, more doubts.

The real trigger was Navina (my eldest daughter). She was a naturally delivered, breastfeeding, smiling child. But when she had her first immunization, she was crying, reddish, with a fever for three days. I thought, If a well child becomes sick from immunizations, then how can they make a sick child well? From then on, I followed my heart, never regretting a moment, through this journey.

What are some of the lies you have unlearned from the dominant nutrition/health model?

- (1) That doctors, the UN-WHO, hospitals, are in charge of your health. In reality, they treat you like a number.
- (2) That there are 'cures'. I believe instead there is only care, which we give to ourselves and each other.
- (3) The definition of nutrition is a lie. What I learned in college about nutrition was marketing for company products. Nutrition is not only what we take in our mouths; it is through our eyes, ears, nose, touch, our relationships.

What is your approach to food?

I feel we are each products of nature and nurturing. We need to use common sense, instinct, to make decisions. Food is biodynamic and interacts with the body. My intuition told me to avoid the wrong and fine tune the right. When I started sharing with family and friends the ills of sugar, salt, oil, milk and chemical/refined foods, I became eager to make tasty food that used wholesome, natural ingredients instead of these "five white poisons".

How do you relate food to other issues?

The environment is being destroyed, under the pretext of the needs of people, especially food. My experience with the Narmada movement showed me how big development projects, aimed at improving individuals' lifestyles, in actuality ignored the individual.

I did not want a platform, or to lobby, protest, attend rallies or seminars to show the connection between food and disease, food and personal health, and the health of Earth. I wanted to practice, not preach. "Self Care is Health Care is Earth Care" became my motto. And food became a path from intellect to instinct, a way to develop our abilities to ask critical questions.

How did THAC begin?

Once I knew it, I had to do it! I didn't start with any model. I just had courage, intuition, and the overwhelming desire to apply in practice what was clear in my mind. Passionately caring about good health has opened up many different avenues over these last 15 years: to build understanding, to provide economical nutritious food, to protect all energy (moral, environmental, political, physical, spiritual and ethical). Today, at THAC, our dedicated team does personal counseling, hosts nutrition re-education classes, and runs a specially-designed lunch service for over 200 clients across Mumbai.

How do you explain discrepancies between your approach and *ayurveda*?

As I understand it, *ayurveda* is a life science. But today it is practiced like a cure. I don't believe in any 'pathy' (homeopathy, allopathy, etc). I believe instead in wholesome, natural, spontaneous, cyclical CARE (Circulation, Assimilation, Relaxation, Elimination). Or 'doing nothing intelligently'. The body is a source of intelligence, evolved out of eons of *tapasya*. Why disturb or disrupt it? To me, symptoms as signals, reminding us to get back to relationships, starting with our relationship to our own body.

What are your tips for healthy living?

Trust yourself completely. Listen to your body; understand its constant and consistent message. Eat fruits whenever, then eat what you want. Take vegetable juice or lemon shots with your meals. Chew when you are thirsty. Sip water, don't drink it. Activate yourself at least five times a week (like creative dancing, exercising, yoga). Sleep; it is an art to be cultivated, not to feel guilty about. Make it a habit to be happy about at least one thing during the day. Practice living enlightenment and responsibility: respond to your ability to give, trust, uplift, nurture, share and care. If you walk with the two legs of humility and patience, you will never be a patient.

I share these tips, because I believe that health can only come by respecting natural laws, never through industry. I have realized that perfection already exists within the body, within Nature, within ourselves. All we need is to stay open to it.



As THAC's founder, Vijaya invites people to live a life without medicine. She loves hugging, dancing, and being like a child. The mother of six children, Vijaya sees every moment as perfect, and is looking forward to having as many grandchildren as possible.

learning webs : food

The Food Revolution

www.foodrevolution.org

Find on author John Robbins' website many articles and organizations, which are challenging popular fad diets, genetically modified foods, factory farms, the destruction of living ecologies, and offering healthy, balanced alternatives.

Living and Raw Foods

www.living-foods.com

Natural, uncooked, pure energy! Discover recipes, articles, on-line discussions, and other members of the raw food community.

Solar Cooking Archive

www.solarcooking.org

Harness the power of the sun, and leave electric/gas/wood-burning stoves behind! Make your own solar cooker, try out exciting recipes, learn about solar cooking around the world.

Slow Food Movement

www.slowfood.org

Started in Italy in 1992, Slow Food directly challenges both fast food and the 'fast food lifestyle' (speed, consumption, waste). Those joined in the movement seek to bring the kinship, natural balance, and healthy pleasure back into our eating process. Start a chapter in your community!

an invitation

"We make the road by walking it."

- Antonio Machado

The power within *Swapathgami* comes from our own practical experiences and relationships. We invite you to share your essays, poems, cartoons, photographs, stories, quotes, films, books, websites, etc. Contact:

Shilpa or Ramawtar
c/o Shikshantar

21 Fatehpura, Udaipur (Raj) 313004 India

Phone: +91-294-245-1303

Web: www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/walkoutsnetwork.htm

Email: shilpa@swaraj.org

**"If we turn our attention to problems,
and speak of problems,
problems proliferate.**

**If we turn our attention to miracles,
no matter how small, deliberate or accidental,
and speak of miracles,
miracles proliferate.**

**Such a statement stands as an invitation.
Many times in the past it has been refused,
no doubt it will be refused many times in the future.**

**If you accept this invitation, you get lost in creativity,
far from the world of comparisons,
with only splendid moments, words, and images
to carry around in the mind's back garden
until we share them together.**

**Our only concern becomes
staying in that particular proximity;
as long as we do, the world and its creatures
respond.**

**Maybe this is what they mean
when they talk about good writing,
of beauty and learning,
of change or failure -
now these all start to look
like categories of the miraculous.**

**If they tell you this is an easy road
don't believe them;
it is the most fearsome
and the most delicate.**

**Never give it up
keep it alive
keep it breathing."**

- Matthew Goulsh, Goat Island Performance Group
gtisld@interaccess.com; www.goatlandperformance.org

