

A person is shown from a high-angle perspective, sitting on the ground and weaving a basket. The basket is made of numerous thin, yellow reeds or willow branches, which are being woven together in a circular pattern. The person's hands are visible, with one hand holding a bundle of reeds and the other hand working on the basket's rim. They are wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and a brown, textured hat. The ground is covered with dry, brown pine needles and some small twigs. The overall scene is outdoors, likely in a natural setting.

making
our own
paths of
learning
and living

swapathgami

Zero Waste and *Kabaad se Jugaad*

February 20-25, 2007

Chandigarh, India

Every day, people in the cities of India are churning out mountains of plastic and non-biodegradable waste, which are threatening to eclipse our living spaces. Even biodegradable waste is not finding its way to composting or animals' bellies. Many of us feel overwhelmed by the scale and endlessness of this problem. So we are seeking ways to transform some of this *kabaad* (garbage) into *jugaad* (useful, durable, beautiful things). We are also trying to change our own lives, to make them eco-friendly and zero waste.

Thankfully, in small towns and villages around India, as well as with experimenters around the country, a tradition of 'upcycling' and zero waste living continues. How can we expand such thinking and actions, especially in the face of globalization, development and big-city lifestyles? How can we expand our understandings around Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Regenerate, Upcycle, Unlearn, etc.? The gathering will be hosted at Nek Chand's rock garden in Chandigarh, UT. Youth, adults and children are all welcome. Please confirm your participation with Shilpa <shilpa@swaraj.org> or call 0294-245-1303.



are you interested?

I'm looking for people who are interested in a gathering around **Self-Healing**. This would include various forms of healing (reiki, herbal medicines, nature cure, panchkarma, etc.), diet, bodywork (yoga, for example), and various lifestyle changes to promote healthy individuals, families and societies. Contact me to help decide dates, design an invitation, outreach to participants and much more!: Ramawtar Singh <shikshantar@yahoo.com> or +91-294-245-1303.

Do you love to make your own music? Create instruments out of waste materials? Make songs about your own life experiences and real questions? Jam with other friends? And perform in various public spaces? Then, we are looking for you! We want to have another **Swapathgami Music Jam** (the last one was June 2005 in Indore). If you would like to come or help to organize the event, please contact us: Ravi Gulati <ravi@manzil.in> and Sunny Gandharva <shikshantar@yahoo.com> or +91-294-245-1303.



cycle yatra

mewar, india

october 25-31, 2006

Calves bump their mothers with heads while feeding. (Ouch!)

Nomads name all of their sheep, all 5000 of them.

Villagers are philosophers!

When you run out of water, chew some sugarcane from the nearest farm.

Each home in a village looks vastly different from the others.

People in villages build their own homes with mud, wood and cow dung.

When brakes fail, find a suitable, relatively safe corner and JUMP!

Wounds can heal in two days with herbal medicines.

Goat milk is rich in nutrients 'cuz goats feed on leaves in the jungle.

Utensils can be cleaned with ash, without using any water.

Village skies have a million more stars than the sky in my city.

- shared by Neha Singh <nehasingh82@yahoo.com>, in the 'zine' put together by cycle yatri following the trip. Find more on: www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/cycleyatra.htm



"...to break through the iron wall between what I feel and what I can express..."
-Van Gogh in one of his letters to his brother Theo.

We all find ourselves struggling against the same wall. At the swapathgami film workshop, some of us came together to share this struggle and to widen our horizons. To widen them, even go beyond, the wall itself. And to do this, we explored the language of visuals and moving images. We had to cure ourselves of our various verbal diarrheas and to learn to talk through pictures.



Now, old habits die hard, so the first exercise of individually shooting just one shot that described our quality was rather frightful for most of us. We survived but in the discussion that followed I found myself talking for ten minutes about my ten second shot. So basically, the iron wall was standing with all its might in between me and my shot.

i guess I had to understand my story first, story about me, my feelings- just like every other participant of the workshop. Filmmaking here was not just about 'mass communication'; it was about sensitively, humbly and respectfully telling stories. The story could be your own, a dhobi's or a river's. What the story teaches you as a filmmaker, and the person who lent you his or her story and anyone who is involved with film in any way, is what a film is made of. I realised that my struggle was how i could reflect this growth in my film.

And as I worked on the exercises with my group, I realised all I had to do was to build a real and honest relationship with the people I was shooting, and to document their story to understand it and not just to tell it further.

Another interesting point in the workshop was that there were not just a few facilitators from whom one could learn about making films. You, yourself was the most important facilitator, for it was your own responsibility to learn what you needed to learn: to recognise it and to go for it. You could take anyone's help, even someone struggling to learn just like you.

filmmaking workshop udaipur, india september 15-25, 2006

The learning exchanges validated this point- that everyone had a skill or knowledge to share. The learning exchanges were two hours of learning where at least seven participants volunteered to share some skill or knowledge with the others. These seven different sessions happened at the same time. No one was bound by one learning group. One could always go hopping to various sessions.

The nights spent with the whole group, the swimming in the lake, the garba night, the polythene play in the sabzi mandi and the many arguments with customers in the mandi about plastic bags were all cherries on top. I went with one story- and came back with many more as part of my own.

- Sukhmani Kohli, Chandigarh, India
<bogused@gmail.com>

network update

the walkouts-walkons network

The Network is a collection of people engaged in exploring individual pathways outside of institutionalized structures. As *swapathgamis*, we trust our own creative intelligence over the prescribed lives of the Ready-Made world. By 'walking-out' from unhealthy and isolating lifestyles, we are 'walking-on' into endless possibilities. Anyone can be a *Swapathgami*, and all are invited to join us for:

Learning Journeys – to connect individuals and groups engaged in exciting thinking and doing.

Celebrations/Gatherings/Public Dialogues – space to explore crucial issues and to build strong relationships between people with common concerns. Possibilities for future collaborations often evolve during these events.

Communications – print, film and web resources to share experiences of walking-out and walking-on.

Communities of Practice – collaborative explorations and sharing of skills. Past groups have focused on a diversity of projects including (but not limited to) film making, music, eco-livelihoods and *kabaad se jugaad*.

For more information, explore our website:
<www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/walkoutsnetwork.htm>
You are invited to share your experiences as a *Swapathgami* co-creator!

natural farming, natural learning, and natural living warud/amravati, india january 25-31, 2007



We started off like countless others do, grew up in cities, went to well-known schools and colleges and got jobs in large publicly acclaimed corporations. But soon, work stopped giving the excitement it was supposed to give and life became monotonous. Worse, work started controlling our time. What about other things that we liked - music, dance, reading, travel, cooking and eating leisurely? What about spending more time together as a couple?



That's when we both left our regular jobs, and wanting to be closer to nature, joined small companies organising outdoor camps and adventure travel. We thought we might start a similar venture of our own. We did enjoy the feeling of being different and the newness of it all, however, the market forces were still at work, and our time was still controlled externally. Moreover, the work demanded more time in the office rather than in the outdoors. This is when we decided to move to a different city and started exploring other ways of living.

Then, a newspaper article about organic food caught our eye. Over the next year, we read more about it, including Masanobu Fukuoka's book, *One Straw Revolution*, which excited us tremendously. We then spoke to organic and natural farmers and worked at such farms a little. We slowly understood that natural farming is about living harmoniously with the earth, not exploiting it for whatever we can get out of it. We think that being a natural farmer is a way of life, not just a profession.

Attending the meet at the Futane's farm in Amravati gave us comfort to know that we're not alone — there are other people in transition like us. We still don't know enough about farming, and questions still remain, like: How will two city-bred people adjust to life in a remote farm? Once at a farm, will there be space and time for our other aspirations, like travelling?



But we are now hopeful that the answers will come eventually, if not now. The experience of living, cooking, working and singing together at the Futane farm was very satisfying. So we think that it will be nice to live in a small community of like-minded people who work on the farm together and pursue their interests. We are currently looking for land where we will live in an ecologically sound way, and grow our own food. If you think alike, we would love to hear from you.

- Vanaja and Shirish, Pune, India
<ajanav@yahoo.com> and <shirishkher@yahoo.co.in>

Visit the Futane family and learn about their work with natural farming, vermicomposting, eco-building, gobar gas and more!
Contact them at: Rawala P.O., Satanoor, Block Warud, District Amravati, Maharashtra 444907; phone: (07229) 238171;
<vinayfutane@rediffmail.com>

My husband and I would always argue about what kind of house we would build. I insisted on concrete; he wanted mud. I finally told him we would build two houses next door to each other, one concrete for me, one mud for him. But after living in a beautiful mud house at the Futane farm, and learning about its value and purpose, I now feel that a mud house is best for both of us. The gathering also inspired me to rethink my food choices. I became aware of my addiction to *chai* and tried to drink herbal tea, even when it was difficult for me. I also feel I will eat less oily dishes and more salads!

- Vaishali Raut, Nashik, Maharashtra
<mindblowingsandip@yahoo.co.in>

living la vida dulce

The first extended period I spent out of an industrialized, consumerist society had a profound impact on my perception of the world, on the ecological crisis, and the human relationship to the planet. In 1997, I took a bus to the Mexican border and walked across with my backpack, my first time leaving the U.S.

As I traveled, I saw with a great sense of joy, and some latent longing, people living from their environments directly, unmediated by advertising, packaging, or stores full of products of obscure origins. I saw, for the first time, what ethnobotanist Gary Nabhan calls 'cultures of habitat.' Not only did I see, but often participated with, planting and harvesting gardens in Belize and Guatemala, gathering wild plants for food and tea with Q'ueq'chi Mayans, participating directly in the provision of my own and others' sustenance, something I had done very little of before, growing up in mostly urban America. The deep satisfaction it brought, when compared to modern life in the U.S., caused me to feel that for many years I had been deprived of happiness by the false ease and anonymity of the cash-mediated, global supermarket. That system, for all its apparent abundance, had estranged me from the Earth, and from meaningful work.

It was a slowly unfolding epiphany of sorts. I realized, as Alistair Reed wrote, "we are the Earth's own eyes, looking at itself." But challenges to the viability, to the justice and certainly sustainability of the affluent, consumerist lifestyle are fiercely denounced by its ideological gatekeepers. Dick Cheney thundered in 2001 that "the American way of life is not negotiable!" Even mainstream environmentalists in the U.S. seemed unwilling to confront the uncomfortable fact that Americans are consuming a disproportionate share of the Earth and producing the preponderance of its waste, and that therefore in order to really protect 'the environment' (including ourselves), deeply and lastingly, we need to drastically change our economy, and ourselves.

On my trip, I also saw some of the 'sacrifice areas' and hidden shame of the global economy, where distant consumerism touches down, affecting real people and places. The American way of life became less obscure – endless monocultural plantations of bananas and pineapples in Guatemala and Honduras, young boys walking between rows with hands and wrists stained purple from the pesticides they were flinging on the leaves. All of it, and countless other examples, in the service of US consumers, who see such distantly-grown tropical luxury products as a normal part of their everyday diet, as their right.

By seeing first-hand some of these effects, I learned another fundamental lesson, that of the problem of

distance. I believe very few Americans who are buying and eating the bananas and pineapples that originate from those forest-destroying, poisonous plantations, would consciously support those things if they knew about them. The problem, of course, is that they do not know, because ignorance of these and all the other externalized, hidden costs of production is an inherent result of such distance. As Helena Norberg-Hodge has said of the global economy, "Our arms have been so lengthened that we no longer see what our hands are doing."

On the cold, dry Tibetan plateau of Ladakh, where barley is grown on terraced fields between craggy mountains; on the other side of the world in Central America where corn is planted amongst lush cloudforests; on the grass-covered mountains of the central Andes; and for that matter in every city and town I've been to in the U.S., I have seen the same products from the same companies causing the same health, environmental, and cultural destruction. I have been told by people in all places that they are 'backward' for everything from not being able to speak English to still working the land – attitudes that are sadly not surprising given decades, or centuries, of assailing by this degrading message from outsiders: colonists, development agents, school, television, advertisers.

Yet in all places I also continue to see great hope in the ongoing conversation with the rest of the nature; with whole communities living locally; nurturing the barley and the quinoa, the maize and potato; making houses from the soil and stones underfoot; maintaining the skills and knowledge of living *la vida dulce* [the sweet life].

While I realize that we are all victims of the pervasive corporate-industrial system that constrains our own ability to live *la vida dulce*, I also see great hope in the fact that the victimhood is not complete. There is still much we can do to resist that system and simultaneously generate positive alternatives. In my own life, I have tried for many years to live zero waste: refusing disposable packaging, carrying cloth bags and bamboo cups and wooden spoons, buying in bulk and locally, etc. I have tried to register my quiet protest against the permanent growth economy and GDP by buying second-hand products, avoiding 'primary consumerism' as much as possible, making things by hand, from scratch. Gardening, foraging wild food, supporting farmers' market — these are a few of the ways I try to eat sanely wherever I am. Though I feel strongly that bigger political and structural change is needed too, in the end I do these daily things because they are within my power to effect now — no permits or certificates required.

- Alex Jensen, Turtle Island
<khamzang@wildmail.com>

a walkout challenge

I always wanted to be a revolutionary. But probably just could not make it happen. I always tried to live my life on my self-made roads. I tried to find like-minded people to walk up and down outside the wall.

Some hand in hand and some gathered together in bands. I wished that these bleeding hearts and artists will make their stand. And then you know, when they've given you their all, some will stagger and fall, after all it's not easy, banging your heart against some mad bugger's wall.

But it was too difficult as the wall was so strong, after all strong bricks like us are still in the wall. We have been supporting this wall and have been nurturing it by putting more bricks in it.

I was also amongst those who couldn't fulfill the wishes for themselves. I also didn't have any option that time, after losing last hope of joining defense, but to do engineering what other bricks were doing to make the wall tougher. But I wasn't ready to blindly follow the trend of being a sheep, and I decided to select my own road to satisfaction. I joined a design institute as I thought that this field might give an answer to my restlessness. But again I found the education system same as a factory in which engineers, doctors, MBAs and designers are manufactured. So I left the course in between and looked for the best possible for me, knowing the fact that it will waste one more year of my life.

I was too confused, I hardly had a night to sleep without questions striking my ears, "What you want to do in your life?" I never gave an answer to anyone as they would have laughed if I would have said "a revolution", as an answer. But, I myself wasn't too sure, then I thought of doing communication design studies which could have given me freedom of expression.

And then I thought I was lucky that I got through the selection exams for one of the best communication design institutes in the world. Selections were conducted just like any other premiere institutes where the 'better' bricks are selected to put into the wall!

But even after coming here, I find myself restless and incomplete. I want to make films in life, and i have heard that for filmmaking one doesn't need to do formal studies, but should study life by living it. I know that I'm bound in lots of roles which i have to play in life for family, for friends and for myself.

I hope I will soon complete this course and will accelerate my life. I hope my films will satisfy myself. Then I hope I will soon demolish the wall around me. I hope I will soon be able to play the role i always wished to play for myself. I hope I will start a revolution. I hope the day will come soon. I hope...

- Ridham Janve, Udaipur, India
<ridham@nid.edu>

Many of us feel entangled in the dominant economic-political-social-institutional system and are seeking to find ways out. Where are our growing edges? How can we support one another in the face of serious challenges? Where do we draw our strength from?

on our edge

letter of resignation

September 11, 2006
ED-HR, Ashok Leyland

Dear Sir,

Over the last two years, I've had the opportunity to be involved in many Environmental projects in this Company, and also interact with people formally and otherwise at various levels of the organization. From these experiences I have come to the conclusion that it would be futile to work for the creation of a just and sustainable society from within a Corporation, especially within the framework of their current design, vision and core values of competition, limitless growth, and pre-occupation with profits. While I've felt that Ashok Leyland is much better than many other Corporations, I believe that it too suffers from the same deeper systemic afflictions as the other ones do.

So, henceforth I would like to spend my energies working on things I find more meaningful and closer to heart. Like working with children, strengthening local-food systems, community media, etc. Towards this, I would be grateful if I could be relieved from my duties here at AL at the earliest.

I also wish to clarify that my disillusionment is with the structure and its priorities and not the people. Maybe with some institutional roles, but not the individuals per se. In fact, I've met many warm and kind-hearted people here, whose goodness had given me the hope to carry on for this long, despite the frustrating and suffocating circumstances.

Many thanks for the opportunity to work here and all your help during this period. It has been an important learning experience.

Yours Sincerely,
Naveen Kumar V
<http://naveenasudevan.blogspot.com/>

just won't fit

I worked briefly as a visualiser in an e-greeting cards company. It was a hierarchical virtual factory with its head office in the US of A. My team comprised of a copywriter, an artist and Photoshop/Image Ready 'specialists'. That was my job: to visualize and execute cards using the 'hands' of my teammates (not their hearts or their heads, mind you! That would be insubordination). Getting the best out of the team through collaborative brainstorming was out. The unspoken code for a team-leader was kicking backsides, i.e., getting work 'done'. "Order away, Atreyye. Why do you ask for their opinions? You are the boss and time is money!"

All my Photoshop skills I learnt from watching 'them' (the non-intellectuals) and bored myself silly during lunch-breaks learning absolutely nothing from 'us', unless I wanted frequent refresher classes on 'kicking the subs and kissing the bosses'. I found myself escaping into large scribble pads of storyboards and characters, even though other visualisers wouldn't deign to stoop so low as to generate text (Why do we have a copywriter!) or scribble notes and sketches to aid the artist (But then you are making his life easier!) I was an anomaly in an arid atmosphere of workstations and techies. After all, every one wielded a mouse and not a Rs.10 black gel pen!

Deadlines and much company politics later, I left after four months of intense creativity and trauma (I have come to believe the two are not mutually inclusive as popular art history would have us believe!). My family sustained me the best way possible — bless them — by simply letting me be. I pretty much disappeared into a room on the roof of my family house in Calcutta. I drew and painted and wrote; it was one of the best times of my life. It was one afternoon a character walked into the pages of my sketch book, and I realized I could cartoon!



After a stint at three more jobs (each more dissatisfying than the last) including at a residential school in the foothills of Darjeeling, I had let myself forget about writing or drawing. Until my last job — a corporation school for dropout kids — where I found myself drawing a boy asking a magician... "Can you make school disappear?"

Something was wrong with the alternative school I was working at, even though my co-workers seemed to know it all: Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich, John Holt, Sylvia Ashton-Warner! So why did it sound not quite right? Was it the school system itself? Gradually I came to understand that ANY system was a problem when it lost its organic ability to reinvent or question itself. Being strong means being vulnerable and open to suggestions and change. There are chances of an ever-growing blind-spots and fuzzy vision, even among a group of intelligent, creative and capable people as my colleagues here were.

Our school was fast becoming like any other school! So I decided to go part-time. That's when Earthcare Books, Calcutta asked me whether I'd like to illustrate a book. They agreed to the cartoons being stand alone comments on our educational system in general and not simply support for the text.

Bottom line! I am immensely grateful to all the people I've met and places I frequented during my attempts at a so-called 'career'. If it were not for them I would have never known what I do not want to do or to be. Why did it take me so many suicidal attempts at trying to fit before taking the tentative step away and freelance and explore? I confirmed last year what I suspected all along from my nursery teacher who lives behind my house. I was a 'slow-learner'! Boy, was I relieved! I had never been part of the race which forced you to run and not walk at your own pace! Yet, the slow seed still sprouts. Let's see where it winds up and how it grows.

- Atreyye Day, Pune, India <vedartist@yahoo.co.in>

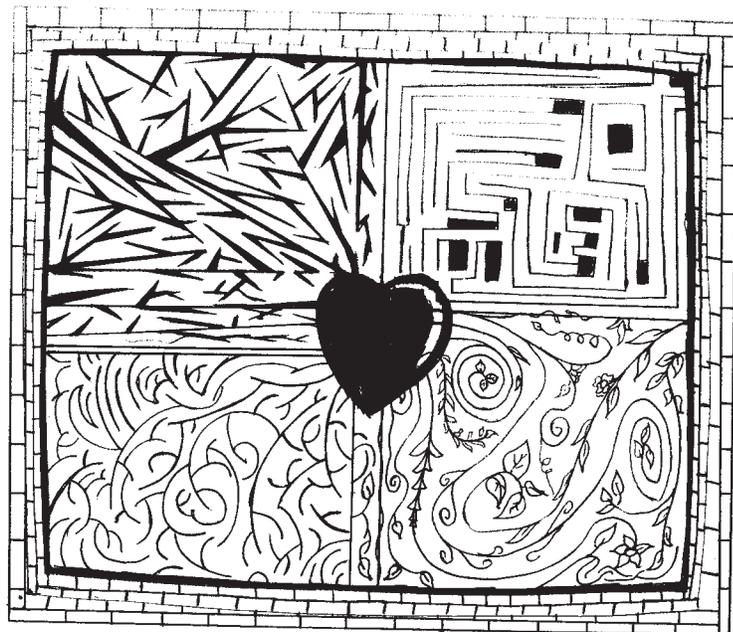
how can I heal myself from “the west”?

The term “West” is not an academic or intellectual term, and it is not geographic. To me, it means pain, injustice, destruction, and anger within me, and insensitivity on the part of institutions. It is not abstract but rather very concrete and has been disrupting my life, almost daily. The League of Nations legitimized the British occupation of Palestine. The United Nations legitimized the Zionist occupation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights robbed us of our dignity. Development robbed us of our resources. Foreign donor agencies destroyed our ability to survive and function on our own. ‘Local’ NGOs are tearing the social-cultural-spiritual fabric in our societies. The UN legitimized the invasion of Iraq in 1990; it is now legitimizing the siege of Lebanon... Again, to take Palestine as an example, the killing, starvation, and destruction of all kinds are taking place in Gaza with total support of EVERY western country and of big organizations and institutions, including Arab nation states that were created in the region (including even the pseudo Palestinian one). For me, this collaboration of institutions (during the past 500 years) to destroy human communities, and transforming human suffering – at best – into intellectual dialogues, is what the term “West” provokes in me.

For many years, I carried that “virus” (institutionalization of all aspects of human life) and spread it through my work, mainly as a teacher of math and physics. I embodied the West in my perceptions, conceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. I internalized it in many aspects in my life: I believed that the western path is the path to follow if we want to get ahead; I felt that my duty was to help develop my people, community, and country (which implied that I know what is good for them!). I spread the seeds of education wherever I worked – until finally, during the first *intifada*, I decided I could not do that and feel good within.

The pain I felt made me think of the West as a disease. I felt I needed to heal from what I internalized. It took me many years; I am still struggling. That probably explains why I never felt that fighting the West is an appropriate approach. By fighting, one gets contaminated. ‘Healing’ I feel describes the relationship more accurately. The need to heal is what I see common to people who have been exposed to hazardous materials such as education, mass media, and processed foods.

Before I continue, I want to clarify a few things. By West, I don’t mean people (after all, I have been married to an American for almost 40 years, obviously I don’t mean to heal from her!) The West I want to heal



from is the embodiment in my perceptions, conceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Also, I believe that the West differs from other cases of destruction. Wiping out, almost completely, peoples and civilizations of three continents, is something that did not happen before in history. And, even more significantly, Europe created universal tools/means through which it was able to spread its universal message and impose its universal claims. Education is the prime example.

For example, the Israeli military occupation protected us from a worse occupation: the defeat from inside (which actually started in 1993 when the World Bank and similar carriers of the disease were allowed to enter our society). One can throw a stone at a military tank but not at the World Bank. Prior to its entry, Palestinians had hope and were able to manage their affairs; after 1993, hope was killed, expectations took over. We became mostly complainers and demanders. In this sense, the worst modern disease is perceiving the self as underdeveloped, and the biggest challenge is to heal from such a perception. This is not a call in support of military occupations but a warning that between military occupation and feeling underdeveloped, the first is of lesser evil, because it does not get internalized. Perceiving self as underdeveloped makes the person helpless, always looking for solutions from the outside; one loses faith in one’s ability to live and to heal. If something is wrong and needs to be changed, then the motto that the Zapatistas raise is in line with healing: changing traditions in traditional ways (which means that you look for what is healthy, inspiring, beautiful, and abundant in you as a basis for healing).

Healing in my experience always started with a change in perceptions. Since 1971, I have been struggling to

heal, both at the personal and community levels. It started with the voluntary work in the community and with math and science clubs in schools: they were the first challenges to dominant meanings of words such as 'learning', 'knowledge', 'math', 'science', and 'logic'. I refused to engage in any activity that gave tests and grades as indicators of the worth of people; refused to play the game of competition and career; healed from the belief that life can be fully understood by the mind. What kept me feeling alive and helped in the healing process is hope. Modern people, as Ivan Illich reminds us, suffer because they live with expectations, which lead to worry, fear and frustration. Hope belongs to another world.

An important aspect of healing, for me, has been how to move away (as much as possible) from comparing and measuring people. Claiming a measure to be objective and universal assumes that there is some 'unit' common to all people, according to which people's worth can be assigned. Such comparison of people (or, for that matter, countries, nations, societies, cultures) is – to say the least – inhuman, disrespectful, unfair, meaningless, and harmful. I found that the conviction or belief that every person is a source of meaning and understanding to be healing. In dealing with others, I encourage people to avoid as much as possible using a word if they don't have a personal meaning to it, because then they would be mere consumers of meaning. In my opinion, this is the most dangerous (and most subtle) form of consumption.

I feel anger, but I have managed not to have hatred. Hatred always leads to the opposite of being able to deal with what is hated. That is why I think it is more accurate to perceive the West as a disease rather than an enemy. The challenge is then to heal and protect rather than to fight and blame. Since the 1970s, I can say that I have been concerned with exposing the logic rather than blaming people.

I was lucky with three things: I lived a good part of my life in the pre-development age; the main teacher in my life was an illiterate person; and I lived most of my life without a 'national' government. The three provided me with a 'worldview' that is not attainable through institutions and professionals. I feel lucky because I had to rethink constantly about dominant measures and meanings; because I had to be responsible for what I felt was to be done; because we mainly had to live and work with what was available; and because our strength resided mainly in the relations we had with one another. All that led me to build on what is beautiful, inspiring, healthy, and abundant in people, communities, and culture.

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

random acts of kindness

I had spent 26 days at a meditation retreat, mainly to begin the process of self-purification through self-discovery...I guess you could call it a renovation of the interior walls of my mind. As I walked back into my studio home on Sunday, WOW, a few folks had decided that they would self-purify my home and renovate its interior walls as well. The place had been tiled, every corner painted, the fridge stocked, light switches replaced, new furniture added, an infinite amount of love poured into every inch. On the table, in the middle of my room, was a flower pot with one smile card attached to the stem.

The coolest thing I found was one forgotten pink piece of paper in the cabinet that had the handwritten words: "kitchen: yellow and orange trim". That piece of paper provides the only evidence of the magnitude of planning that went into this gift — and the fact that this was actually conducted by human beings!

The walls reverberate generosity. I'm not sure how I ever became capable of witnessing so much love in my life. I hope that I can live my life with as much integrity as possible to make myself worthy of this gift. I'm not exactly sure whose hearts were in this process, but I bow my head to these givers. If something like this could happen in my life, then I have no choice but to keep on serving, to keep on paying it forward.

My neighbor who got to witness this effort on a daily basis was also blown away. Her husband shook his head every night; he couldn't believe that people like this exist in this world. They invited their daughters, son-in-laws, even relatives from Sacramento to witness the product of this miracle. I can't imagine how this is affecting them, I can't even imagine how it is affecting me right now.

Now it becomes apparent that the food I eat, the car I drive, the place where I live, the clothes I wear, all exist only because of the gifts of another. It seems as if my entire life is a donation. I have no choice, but to give myself away to this love that surrounds me. "Thank you" isn't really thank you anymore.

- Sukh Chugh, Los Angeles, CA
<sukh@bethecause.org>

Ever experience such an act of kindness? Share your story and find others at <www.helpothers.org>

alice in amerika

Over a year ago, I joined a film and discussion group in medium-security prison for male offenders in the heartland of Amerika. I'll call it Prison Y. I began volunteering at the prison largely because of the persuasive influence of a prison activist who pointed out that this particular prison was in my community and that the people incarcerated there were my 'neighbors.' I had managed most of my life to avoid thinking about people living in cages, but this use of the word 'neighbors' discomfited me in a way I couldn't ignore.

Though I had seen statistics showing the racial profile of incarcerated men in the U.S., it was still shocking. Just by going through a wired fence no more than 10 miles away from my house, I found myself in a world that looked to me like a gated community, say, in a suburb of Nairobi where a grand party is about to take place, and the servants, locals of course, are milling around sweeping the grounds and arranging the flowers. I was Alice and I had fallen into a hole that felt like it could never be completely plumbed for all of its unfamiliarity and pretensions.

The next stupefying moment was when I discovered that the film for the evening was 'The Weather Underground', a documentary about a group of radicals who throughout the 1970s had waged a low-level war against the U.S. government, promoting direct action events, e.g., "days of rage" against the Viet Nam War, while successfully evading one of the largest FBI manhunts in history. I could not believe that *this* film was going to be shown inside a prison and that I was going to talk about it with a bunch of convicts. As the final credits of the film rolled up on the screen, one of the inmates broke the silence by asking, "Well brothers, what happened to the revolutionary power that existed back in the 60s and 70s in America?" This question precipitated one of the most vigorous discussions I've ever been a part of, about the forces that drive resistance and the forces that kill it.

The prison officials require prior approval for all the films we show, and there are rules: no films about gangs, no R-rated films. Sexual content and violence are okay. Still, we got a number of remarkable documentaries and indy films into the prison. We've relied both on our ability to spin the content and the ignorance or carelessness of the prison overseers. For example, we've shown:

Manufacturing Consent: about Noam Chomsky, arch-critic of American foreign policy and neoliberalism.

Bowling for Columbine: Michael Moore's film about America's culture of violence and fear.

The Revolution Will Not be Televised: about Hugo Chavez and the failure of U.S. backed coup attempt in 2002.

The Future of Food: about genetic engineering and the loss of food security.

Rize: about a youth dance movement in East L.A. promoting self-expression and gang resistance.

The End of Suburbia: about the decline of cheap, abundant oil and the projected consequences.

We build the content of our "curriculum" collectively as much as possible. Discussions never fail to evolve. Inmates that come to see the films know that what is going on in that room is more than diversionary entertainment. Men have told us that they come back each week because during those few hours on Tuesday nights they can express their ideas and beliefs with far less anxiety than anywhere else in the institution.

In exchange for showing films and participating in the discussions, my co-sponsor and I are being tutored every Tuesday night in issues related to racism, class, masculinity, prison culture and African-American history. Without being fully aware of it, I know that I've also learned survival techniques in conditions where scrutiny — by guards, by other inmates, by the fraction of yourself that watches the watchers watching you — is endless and unrelenting.

As a person committed to revolutionary change — and opposed to liberal agendas or reformist attitudes (that can only make a bad system more tolerable) — working at a prison is for me an irony. Charity alone can never be enough because it is a cosmetic effort that does not strike at the root of the problems most people endure whether or not they are in prison or 'outside'. We are all cogs in the machine; the same chains restrain us all.

Despite this point of view, visiting these men in prison, has become the centerpiece of my life as an activist. I have come to care so much about many of the men I've met — many of them who are more expressive about their feelings and beliefs systems than any other men I've met elsewhere. Deep down, I know that the kind of passion we'd like to inspire in people for another kinder world could burst into flames one day. I also know that whenever this has happened before, it has been preceded by years of tenuous labor by a small band of seemingly marginal activists.. But with few exceptions, no one even wants to talk about voluntary transformation. Everyone here says that things are going to have to get a lot worse before they are willing to give up the affluence and privileges they enjoy... A hard rain is falling.

I don't mean we should all roll over and die, or stop working for social justice, or feeding the songbirds. But, I would be a liar not to admit that my hope for another possible world rests on the collapse of the old one.

- Alice, USA (name changed to protect identity)

south african adventures

It was the first time that I stayed away from home for so long and that too in a foreign country. I went to share my experiences and talents with *jugaad* and zero waste, and learn about the many things happening in South Africa.

My first stop was the **GreenHouse Project** <dorahl@ghouse.org.za> Built with a lot of wood and glass, so that plenty of light could come in, even the floors were made of dirt dug from around the area and small pieces of bricks and tiles. They have dry compost (eco-friendly) toilets. I was impressed to see that they grow a lot of green vegetables for self-consumption. The GreenHouse Project mainly conducts different workshops around the concepts of zero waste, water harvesting, eco-buildings and eco-villages. While there, I hosted some workshops on up-cycling the waste from the surroundings, like wood, bottles, glass and paper, to make interesting tables, key chains and diaries. I also helped to make a checklist for their Recycling Center so that some of the work could be more organized and less chaotic. We asked ourselves: What waste do we have? Who brought it? Who sold it and for how much? This kind of research was an entirely new experience for me.

The **Creative Inner City Initiative (CICI)** <carol@pixie.co.za> is a place where artists offer training on different kinds of art such as graffiti, mosaic, screen printing, carnival art, paper making, etc., for free. I took part in a mosaic workshop. While making the mosaic, we started a discussion on how this specific art form was invented. Maybe it was just about upcycling and *jugaad* of waste, because that's all that was used to make absolutely beautiful mosaics. Now in modern days, people buy all the materials for mosaics from the market. After this discussion, we decided to change the flow of the workshop and went on to make a new mosaic, using only the waste that we collected from the surrounding areas. We bought nothing from the market. We then brainstormed on what else we could do with waste and the mosaic technique of art. We ended up



making photo frames, clothes hangers, door knobs and lamp shades, by putting different waste items and tiles into these forms.



Do you know of any good learning resources or opportunities that you would like to share with other swapathgamis? Write to us with your non-institutionalized and welcoming spaces of co-learning, unlearning, and uplearning!

co-learning

When I first arrived at the **African Cultural Center (ACC)**, the youth were dancing the way they wanted to, full of spirit. No one was aping any particular style. It was very spontaneous and beautiful. At ACC, most of the kids and youth are involved in theatre, as a medium to share what was going on in their families and communities. I thought we could use the waste from their center and surroundings to make interesting props and costumes for their theater. Beyond this, I wanted the waste to actually be functional and necessary to their work, performance and lives.

Along the way, I met a few Grannies, who showed me some interesting uses of plastic bags, which, according to me, are the biggest culprit in pollution and a major enemy today. These amazing ladies taught me how to make hats and baskets out of plastic bags by knitting. Even at their age, they like to make these things, so that they don't get bored, and so their skills don't die.

At **Somoho**, they make different kinds of musical instruments, objects of paper mache and picture frames. They have also created an organic garden with the help of local people. Somoho is raising questions around globalization through their art. After talking with Sydney, a team member at Somoho, we both felt that India and Africa (like other places) have many people who are worried about what is happening, and feel committed to doing something about waste and its alternatives.

Most of my conversations on Zero Waste were with Muna Lakhani <muna@iafrica.com>, who runs the **Institute for Zero Waste in Africa (IZWA)**. Muna's focus is on how governments and multinationals can become more aware of zero waste. He stresses that all production should be oriented towards things that can be reused, recycled and composted. All waste should be collected, segregated and given to a recycler, and incinerators/landfills have to be stopped completely.

I can hardly believe that a year has passed since my three-month visit to South Africa. In many moments, I find myself channeling the inspiration I received there.

- Vishal Singh, Udaipur, India <aachi8@gmail.com>

living fields, learning fields

Sudeshha *behan* walked in front of us, the fields in varying shades of green, the forest deep blue green and the sky brilliant azure. She is a frail elderly hill woman, a farmer, a social leader and a repository of mountain wisdom.

Ajay and I were trailing behind her. Ajay knew a lot about hill agriculture, having done it himself and he was asking Sudeshha *behan* many questions. To me, it was just a wonderful moment to listen to them talking and wondering, wandering around in thoughts. We were in Rampur, a tiny village next to Khaddi, on the Rishkesh-Tehri route.

We stopped near a patch where wheat was growing. Next to it was another plant. "See? This looks like peas," Ajay showed it to me. "What do you call it?" he asked Sudeshha *behan*. "This is *kalula*. It is not planted, but grows naturally here. And we make *dal* with it; it tastes like *masoor*," answered Sudeshha *behan*. Ajay said they call it *chatri matri* in Himachal Pradesh.

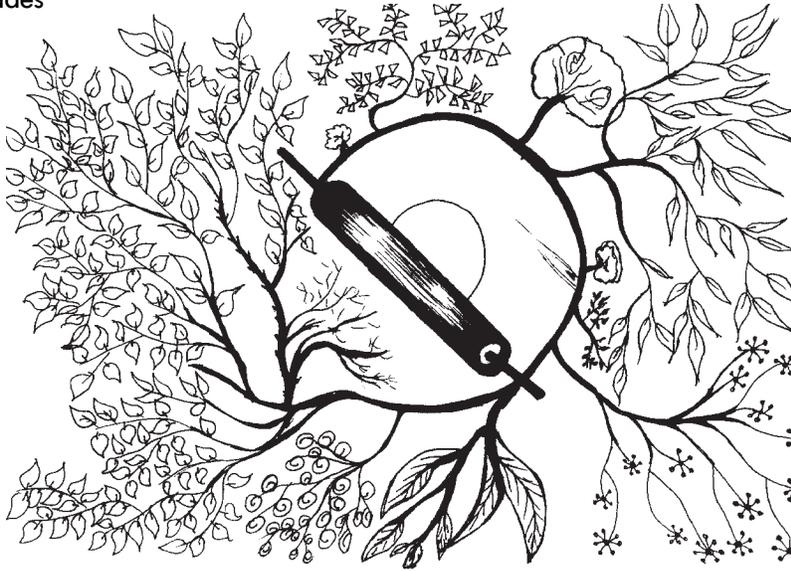
It is wonderful to know how nature provides dal with chapatti on her own. The wonders of a natural farm were being revealed to me. And imagine, this *kalula* would have been killed violently with weedicides in the high-tech educated farms (at extra costs, of course).

The water channel, called *gul*, is a non-intrusive low-cost friendly irrigation method. The *gul* ran through the fields. Sudeshha *behan* pointed to a beautiful big-leafed plant, "This is *paapdi*, a variety of *arbi*. We make *saag* [vegetable dish] with its leaves. It just grows wild along the *gul*. And there is another plant, *amalda*, whose leaves are sour, which we add for flavour to this."

resources

Jardhargaon, a village in Uttaranchal, hosts a people's movement to revive traditional agricultural practices and conserve indigenous seeds. The movement is known as the **Beej Bachao Andolan** (BBA) (Save Our Seeds). In addition to collecting indigenous varieties of crops, BBA also promotes traditional farming methods, like diverse intercropping. Contact Vijay Jardhari, Beej Bachao Andolan, PO Nagni, Tehri Garhwal, Uttaranchal, India to learn more.

I was calculating the *subzi* bill in Delhi where you pay so much for chemical-ridden stale vegetables... And here a feast is laid out, all tasty and growing for free as a bonus in a farm, while you cultivate other things.



"Some stupid people cement up the *gul*. Panchayats also promote cement as a way of preventing water wastage. But you lose all these wild vegetable growing along the *gul*. It also leads to water logging in places, which is bad. And you also hurt yourself pretty badly if you fall," Sudeshha

behan says, as she deftly leaps across channel on to a rocky bank.

Later that night, we were talking to Bhopal, who is from a different village in another valley, about *chatri matri*. He says, "Oh, that! We never separate it or cut it. We harvest it along with wheat and grind it. It is good." So the wheat he uses is actually fortified with extra protein and extra fiber.

We all doubled up laughing about the stupidity of grinding the wheat into a snow-white *atta* without life – and then buying bran at exorbitant prices, adding it to the *atta*, to make it healthier, when all the while it was always there to begin with.

Sudeshha *behan* is a part of Beej Bachao Andolan, a farmer-led movement to conserve traditional seeds, through cultivation in the agricultural fields as a part of living tradition. We had gone to meet with friends from the movement of which Ajay is a part of. I was there as a friendly tag-along on the pretext of doing a play at the andolan's meeting.

I have been at it for a long time – Quit this! Walk out of this lifestyle! – and this trip helped me celebrate the beauty, richness of every agricultural field. I have decided to shift to organic dals, *atta* and oil. It might seem expensive at times, if one lives in the city, but organically, naturally-grown food is a good bargain.

- Jaya Iyer, New Delhi, India
<junglejaya@gmail.com>

pravah learning fellowship

"Throw your dreams into space like a kite, and you do not know what it will bring back: a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new country."

- Anais Nin

September 2006. I am 26 years old, recuperating from a long illness, dissatisfied with teaching in a private college in Calcutta when I received a learning fellowship from Pravah, a Delhi-based organisation.

This fellowship requires the learner to have a clear vision of **what** she wants to learn, as well as **how** that is going to help her contribute her gift to the rest of the world. It is a one-time amount of up to Rs.20,000 and fellows are encouraged to spend time with groups/organizations that reflect and help them evolve their own vision. The selected fellows are asked to use a theory of experiential learning as a guideline to design their exposure/exchange visit.

In my design concept paper, I addressed the inadequacies of mainstream classroom teaching. This came from my experience of teaching literature. In my classes, I often felt like a 'misfit' talking one-way with young people who had been brainwashed into 'passing' and 'failing' modes, afraid to think independently and creatively. After reading a beautiful lyric of the Romantic period, would they protect nature in their daily lives? After reading "Sons and Lovers", would they understand relationships better, and choose wisely in their lives? Would the history of the industrial revolution help them understand the present age more, and inspire them to speak up for marginalised people? In short, would they *apply* their newfound perceptions in their lives in order to make the world a better place?

I wanted to be a co-creator in the process. But I realized that I did not have many skills apart from reading, writing and thinking. So basing myself in Udaipur, with Shikshantar, I decided to use my learning fellowship to learn *about* 'learning', how it is related to personal peace and happiness, how true learning is a way of living in tune with nature and people, how the world, literally, is our classroom.

After returning home, I am exploring living and learning in many ways, whether it be lugging earth from a nursery and planting green people with my own hands in the little sunlit verandah of our flat, making them feel welcome, or trying out healthy oil-free dishes in the kitchen, or making jewellery out of some brilliantly beautiful red "beadseeds" a city-tree on my street graciously discarded. Life is deeper, more energy-giving and healing for me nowadays. After understanding the philosophy of 'learning communities', I learnt that the best things in life are free, that much learning can happen through relationships and not necessarily through money. So I set my heart on finding the right teacher near home. I approached a neighbourhood jeweler, who is teaching me, despite the demands of his business. I accept his lessons gratefully and he says he is happy to share his skills because he sees a spark of curiosity in me.

I had started out wanting to understand learning, but along the way, learning and living became inseparable. And I, who seemed to be ever confused, but ever seeking, have begun to glimpse the beginnings of a path for myself. Before a thousand windows were opened up for me through this fellowship exposure, I was feeling very disconnected from my subject as an academic discipline and was struggling. "How do people learn?" has become the first step of my journey. I am really investing time, passion and mindfulness in understanding this question in more depth.

The Fellowship was really a genuine, selfless act from the universe that gave me a chance to do something I wanted to, no tags attached. Please see the Pravah website <www.younginfluencers.com> or write at <ghazalajamil@gmail.com> for further details.

- Urbi Bhaduri
Kolkata, India

Please write to me at <urbibhaduri@yahoo.com> if you are interested in reading my fellowship blog.

from the brochure:



Learning Fellowships in Citizenship Education & Youth Volunteering

"The world is your classroom... learning fellowships" is a Pravah initiative that aims at providing opportunities for learner-led self-development among individuals working in the area of life skills, citizenship education and youth volunteering through exposures and exchanges.

The fellowships have been designed with the beliefs that: Learning is a life-giving force that supports the growth of every human being. People who co-create their own learning process and engage actively with it will be more committed to the outcomes of any intervention. Exchange and exposures which incorporate one-on-one interactions, hands-on activity and reflection help participants have a complete learning experience.

solitude - india

The last few years of my life in Canada were consumed by philosophical contemplations, and a growing collection of ideologies on how best to live one's life with minimal impact on the planet. An interest in my own spiritual existence introspectively led me to realize that my own actions, and those of all the consumers around me were one of the primary causes of the impending ecological crisis. Then came endless ideologies, philosophies, accusations, and yet a resounding absence of action in my own life. I was reminded of this while reading a book by Richard Bach, in which he writes "Any powerful idea is absolutely fascinating and absolutely useless until we choose to use it."

My philosophies eventually led me to India, seeking a lighter existence both physically and mentally. Still after months in the country, I found myself playing the same game of consumerism, albeit with a different cultural façade. My very existence still depended on an enormous and unsustainable economical network for all of my basic needs. The food I ate arrived on a diesel truck, likely smothered in factory-made chemicals. The electricity in my room was generated at a fossil fuel burning power plant. The list goes on. I was beginning to feel hopelessly disconnected from the Earth, from myself, and disempowered to do anything about it. I longed for a chance to live in harmony with the Earth, working with her (instead of against her) to supply my basic necessities.

I had always had dreams about this, but the impression of mainstream society about a self-sustaining lifestyle is that it is hard, filled with suffering, and leads to a miserable, early death. Solitude gave me a chance to find out for myself, living in a community growing nearly all its own food.



The first thing I noticed about Solitude was the warmth of the community. Everyone was genuinely happy to be there, happy to do whatever needed to be done. Work ceases to be a chore when you're happy to do it, not so much because you like to cut cow grass or wash dishes or water the fruit trees, but because it gives one a profound sense of belonging to be able to directly contribute to a community (not to mention the planet) in that way. If I water the fruit trees well, soon we will *all* have fruit to eat. I don't need to be thanked, the appreciation is implicit in the very community itself – we are all thankful to be there.

A total of six acres, located in Auroville, near Pondicherry, Solitude is forest, a cow shed, houses, paths, and, of course, farmland. Corn, squashes, beans, three kinds of millets, 15 kinds of tomatoes, five kinds of peppers, four kinds of okra, 16 varieties of fruit, two kinds of rice, are grown. Five permanent members live in the community; up to 10 more people are volunteering at any given time. They don't use any machinery, run on solar and cycle power when needed, and refuse to join the Tamil Nadu energy board, because it would destroy the simplicity of life. Contact Ing Marie to learn more: <solitude@auroville.org.in>

opportunities

I also noticed that the hardships expected by modern urban dwellers were relatively absent. It's not to say that we didn't work hard – we did – but there was no stress. Days were full but relaxed. Without the monotonous drudgery of routine, every day held the potential for new experiences. Sometimes we would work all day, other times just for a few hours in the morning. Free time was usually spent creatively: undertaking projects to improve the facilities of the community, or just trading skills and sharing ideas. Whether making jam, grinding peanut butter, learning how to make rope, fixing the roof in my coconut tree house, hand milling our own flour, weaving baskets, harvesting rice, or just talking with a friend, life at Solitude was a constant experience of growth and development, inside and out.

On a personal level, I noticed something dramatic about my own state of mind while on the farm. I found I was much less consumed by philosophies and ideologies. It's not that my philosophies had changed, they had just been released from my mind and put into practice. I was dwelling in a much more peaceful and quiet state. My days were so simple that I didn't need to think about them to make sense out of my purpose in life. 'Tomorrow I will do whatever needs to be done to help this part of the Earth feed us' I would think to myself. No need to concern myself with anything more complicated than that.

For me, Solitude was a place where life made sense. A place where fruit grows on trees, not on supermarket shelves, a place where vegetables have spots and blemishes instead of stickers and shiny wax coating – but taste much better, a place where washing your fruit isn't necessary because the earth didn't put poison on it and neither did we, a place where tomatoes taste best fresh off the plant at sunset the day after being watered, and explode in your mouth dripping juice down your chin. Solitude is a place where I got a taste of the simple life – and it was delicious!

- Dan Thorne, Canada
<mystictraveller@gmail.com>

living Nature's way: an interview with Krishna McKenzie

What was your first walk out experience?

Towards the end of my time in a Krishnamurti school in England, I started to wake up a bit. I was 18, doing lab work on genetic engineering, measuring mLs of DNA and RNA in test tubes. And then I looked outside and saw this massive, beautiful tree. Here I was, trying to study one DNA, separating life into compartments, rather than understanding nature holistically. I walked out of the lab that moment and went outside to plant flowers.

And how did you get to Auroville?

Around the same time, I had met Freddy (who currently works with me here at Solitude). His silent, diligent energy had a profound effect on me. It was so different from the Krishnamurti school style of talking. During long walks at night, Freddy shared with me the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother – whose inspiration brought me to India at age 19. I was meant to work at the Sri Aurobindo ashram, but when I came to Auroville, I felt sure this was the place I needed to be.

In the past 13 years, I have left a few times — once for two years to record a CD and to teach in my old school. While studying guitar in Spain, I realized that all I wanted to do was possible in Solitude: the need to be in a community, where I could have my music, do yoga and meditation and live on the land... basically, integrate all the things I loved, without any one thing being predominant. So I returned and was able to pick up the project where I had left it.

So how did Solitude begin?

Solitude began 10 years ago with a group of young Aurovillians, of whom I am the only remaining founder-member. It has gone through many epochs, growing slowly and organically, and never with big funds. For the last four years, I have focused the bulk of my energies on the farm. Since then, it has really picked up with a large and continuous stream of volunteers and five permanent members. Now we are a really cohesive group who has come together here.

The other main force has been Fukuoka. Several years ago, I heard he was giving a workshop in Dehradun — which was a shock because I had thought he was dead! But a friend lent me the money to go and I spent the entire week hanging out with him. Since then, I have been trying to implement his ideas in natural farming.

What is natural farming? How does it work?

What it comes down to is healthy soil. We have to return Nature's power to her own hands — which is what man has destroyed with all his inputs and interventions.

When the soil is healthy, then we can practice no-till farming, or natural farming. This means we do not need to plow the land, but rather that we can throw seeds, protected in a clay ball covering, on to the land and let nature do her work. I am trying to develop a no-tilled, three 3-month crop field system (pre-monsoon, monsoon, post-monsoon), with the remainder as a ground cover crop ('green manure') to regenerate the soil further.

So I am trying to make the soil as healthy as possible. In many places, I have left so-called 'weeds', since I believe that everything does something. But I am also trying to make Solitude 100% self-sufficient in its food production, which means I must be pragmatic. So some fields are going natural, while others are compromised. But it is a gentle compromise: there are no tractors and no chemicals, only some light weeding and watering. I mulch heavily; that is, I gather biomass (leaves, grasses, dry plants) on the fields or at the base of plants and trees. We also experiment with different local millets, peanuts, clay balls... I still re-read Fukuoka all the time. We are doing a lot but we have more to go.

What does Solitude mean for you?

It is a meeting point for people around the world. The community here is not because of me, but I am trying to make it a place that is right for the people who show up. My capacity to facilitate this space depends on feeling someone's heart and being open. For me, it is where I try to express my ideals in my own life. I am not interested in 'saving the world'; I am struggling and learning to catch up with my own mistakes. We live in contradiction, no doubt, and we know our beliefs and opinions are not Truth. Yet, I try to be clear with my intentions, express them, and things happen.

I feel this life is a chance to understand my self, to learn through my relationships, eat delicious food and have a sense of joy in doing something good. I feel gratitude to live on this land, in nature all the time, with plants and soil and local people. And being well and happy is a prerequisite to anything else!

Krishna is also known as Duncan; both names refer to a 'dark-skinned warrior' – an irony given his sunburn and gentleness! He speaks five languages, and his charismatic nature guarantees that he is rarely alone at Solitude. While not in the fields, you can find him jamming with his eclectic band in Auroville. Contact him at <krishnamckenzie@auroville.org.in>



An old Cherokee was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them, "A fight is going on inside me. It's a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves.

"One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.

"The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

"This same fight is going on inside you and inside every other person too."

They thought about it for a minute, and then one child asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old man simply replied, "The one you feed."

- printed in *Vibrational Healing through the Chakras* by Joy Gardner

an invitation

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. We print both English and Hindi editions. 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

thanks! thanks. thanks & thanks ^ thanks...

Photos: Brett Ramey (cover, p.2), Mukesh Jat (p.4), Vishal (p.11), Shilpa (p.15)

Artwork: Vishal (p.2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14), Atreyee (p.7), Urbi (p.13)

learning webs: natural and organic farming

Rishi Krishi

www.rishi-krishi.com

Read Aryakrishak Shree Mohan Shankar Deshpande's story and see how he came to understand that cosmic energy is vital to healthy farming. The website offers techniques for preparing *angara* (holy ash) and *amrutpani* (nectar water). Deshpande believes that nothing should be bought from the market, neither manures, fertilizers, earthworms or seeds, and is working with farmers around India to heal their land and have bountiful harvests. Find farm sites you can visit to learn more.

Fukuoka Style Farming

<http://fukuokafarmingol.info/index.html>

Masanobu Fukuoka was a Japanese farmer who developed what many consider to be a revolutionary method of sustainable agriculture. He is also the author of "The One-Straw Revolution". This website was created as a place where people interested in Fukuoka's method can network and share resources and experiences. You'll find many articles on Fukuoka, his own original writings, as well as stories and contact information of those inspired by him and applying his ideas.

Primal Seeds

www.primalseeds.org

This network is actively engaged in protecting biodiversity and creating local food security. It is a response to industrial biopiracy, control of the global seed supply and of our food. Learn about the 'monocult' and find ways to dis-entangle yourself from it. Get ideas for healthy soil, sprouting, seed-saving and guerilla gardening.

Journey to Forever

<http://journeytoforever.org>

Young people from Hong Kong are traveling across Asia towards Africa. They are seeking to share stories, examples and ideas for challenging myths around poverty and hunger, and promoting social and environmental healing with children and families. The website includes insights into edible cities, small farms, composting, biofuels, solar cookers and more.

Organic Farming Association of India

www.ofai.org

OFAI is a grassroots network of organic farmers. Get a better sense of the challenges of certification and how you can support local farmers in your community. Find issues of their magazine "Living Fields". Connect with potential volunteering opportunities for farming and related research around India.