

Gurukula Network

Newsletter of Neo-Humanist Schools and Research Institutes
affiliated with Ananda Marga Gurukula

Issue 13

October 2001

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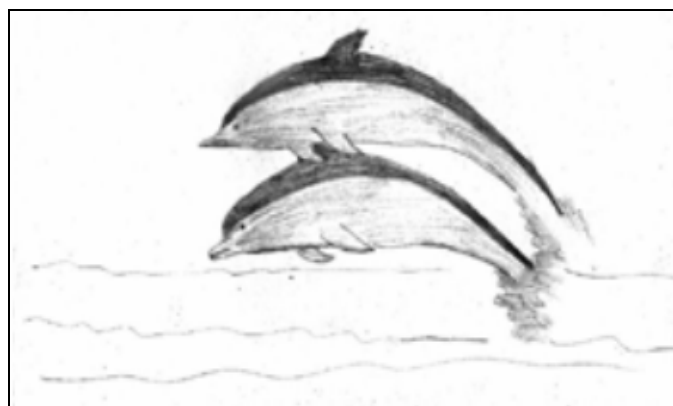
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Gurukula Network

Newsletter and Journal of
Neo-Humanist Schools and
Research Institutes
affiliated to
Ananda Marga Gurukula

Two yearly issues
published October and May
serve as a means of communication for Neo-
Humanist Schools and projects around the
world.

Please send us your news of schools and
projects, reports on research and publication
efforts, articles on Neo-Humanist Education,
stories, pictures, ETC notes, classroom
activities, etc. by **April 1st for the
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Gurukula Network c/o A. Brim
146 Honness Lane, Ithaca, NY 14850
USA
arati@igc.org

The articles in this newsletter represent an
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policy.

Editor in Chief:

Ac. Shambhushivananda Avt.

Associate Editors:

Avtk. Ananda Rama Ac.
A'rati

Headquarters of Ananda Marga Gurukula

Ananda Nagar
PO Baglata
Dist Purulia, West Bengal, India
e-mail: <kulapati@gurukul.edu>

AM Gurukula Global Liaison Office

c/o A. Brim
146 Honness Lane
Ithaca, New York 14850 USA
e-mail:
<amgk.glo@gurukul.edu>

WEB PAGES

Ananda Marga Gurukula

www.gurukul.edu

Neo-Humanist Education

www.gurukul.edu/nhe

Teacher Resources

www.gurukul.edu/nhe/resources.html

VISION OF ANANDA MARGA GURUKULA

Ananda Marga Gurukula is engaged in building an educational township at Ananda Nagar, West Bengal, India on a 525 square kilometer campus to bring about transformation of individuals and the society at large.

Ananda Marga Gurukula is engaged in creating an international network of Neo Humanist schools and Institutes to hasten the advent of a society in which there is love, peace, understanding, inspiration, justice and health for all beings.

Ananda Marga Gurukula is supporting the building of a global eco village network (Master Units) in over 120 countries. These projects range from 5 acres to 1000 acres.

OBJECTIVES OF ANANDA MARGA GURUKULA

- To provide a sound and conducive environment for students for their physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual well being.
- To promote ethical values in individuals and implement these values in the management of projects, schools and institutions.
- To establish and maintain schools and special academic institutions around the world as well as a cyber university.
- To initiate teacher education programs to improve and upgrade the quality of education on all academic levels.
- To promote Tantra, Neo-humanism and PROUT (Progressive Utilization Theory) as the foundation for building a universal society.
- To initiate intellectual dialogues and research for all around renaissance of the society.
- To facilitate the placement of volunteers across cultures to help build meaningful relationships and to support community and social change projects.
- To support the building of a global eco village network (Master Units) .
- To encourage the development of micro enterprises for sustainability of social service projects.

Chancellor of Ananda Marga Gurukula

Ac. Shambhushivananda Avt., Kulapati
<kulapati@gurukul.edu>

Executive Officer of the Cakradhrii of AMGK

Ac. Vishvadevananda Avt., Mahasachiv
<mahasachiv@gurukul.edu>

Secretary, Academic Council of AMGK

Ac. Sumitananda Avt., Sachiv
<sachiv@gurukul.edu>

Neo Humanist Schools and Projects that are featured in the Gurukula Network newsletter are managed by the ERAWS and WWD departments of Ananda Marga.

ERAWS(1) Global In-charge Ac. Keshavananda Avt.

ERAWS(2) Global In-charge Ac. Parmeshvarananda Avt.

Education Global In-charge Ac. Priyakrsnananda Avt.

WWD Global In-charge Avtk. Ananda Giita Ac.

WWD Global Education In-charge Avtk. Ananda Prajina Ac.

In the wake of tragedy

Neo Humanism: the hope for the future

*Light a candle in your heart for the lost,
Light a candle for those who grieve and
for the injured and maimed in mind and
body.*

*Fan the flame for all who feel cut off from
their love by a burning rage*

Fan the flame for those whose hearts and minds are numbed with grief and shock.

Take a hand in yours and feel its warmth, the power of life in it

Stand on the earth and feel its pulse and your place in its great tapestry

Fight against the fear and pain that seek to hem you in

Fight the tribal reflex that holds your heart in bonds of rage

Embrace your humanity made vulnerable

Embrace the shadow that pursues you, hungry for your soul

Commit yourself to the light of a day free from hatred and mistrust

Commit yourself to a world in which our humanity is reflected in our actions

Beyond time and place, caste and creed

Beyond pain and grief, anger and ignorance

Light a candle in your heart for life and love

This is the Neo-humanist way.

by Manorainjana, Australia



New York City Vigil

photo by C. Brim

*The young ascetic stands before the Master and asks:
"What is the secret of karma-yoga? my Lord."*

The Master smiles and softly answers:

Reach out with compassion and restraint

Hold with love and responsibility

Embrace with wisdom and virtue, and

Depart with freedom and goodwill

*And if anyone has ever a chance to look back,
let them be inspired by the memories of your
sincerity, courage, piety, affection, respect
and undying fragrance of ever-lasting love.*

*Verse 111 from Mystical Verses of Sanora
by Dada Shambhushivananda*

From Kulapati, Dada Shambhushivananda

Destruction is always a painful process. When many innocent people suffer in destruction, it is even more sad and painful. I send my sympathies to all affected directly or indirectly by the incident. I hope this will be the last such incident in the world and that we shall all wake up to the need to transform the world along the path of neo-humanism.

Let us all dedicate ourselves to build a world which is free from violence and exploitation of all kinds and which is built on genuine love, compassion and service. In this task, Gurukula has a tremendous role to play. As I travel all around the world, I see great many young persons longing to unite for this cause. Let us accelerate our efforts, setting aside our hesitations.

Neo-humanism seeks answers to the hard questions by exploring our conscious and unconscious minds through meditation, and showing us that we are all one humanity. It places us all on the equal footing of being children of a Divine and loving force that cherishes us all equally. This force has given us reason, a reflective and meditative consciousness, to explore its forms in the universe and to discover that to be whole we must love and walk in relationship with every single atom of existence.

Neo-humanism pledges us all to actions based on compassion and benevolence. It is free from the trials and fears that lead to hatred and revenge. It is strong to condemn the evils of social and economic exploitation and to place the onus on every one of us to live an ethical life based on well reasoned principles free from dogma.

Neo-humanism values life and the individual, it accepts suffering only in as much as it is a part of life's pattern. It is a spiritually dynamic path that will walk with us along the dusty roads of life as a compass and companion, solace and inspiration. Its purpose is to breathe love into action, wisdom into being, and service into life.

News from Anandanagar

Multidisciplinary Rural Medical College By Dr. Jitendra Singh

The Multidisciplinary Rural Medical College is being designed according to the vision of Shrii PR Sarkar. This vision is at the core of the project, and we have integrated various ideas that emerge from the observation of the current problems that permeate in the medical science, medical training and medical services. These problems are:

1. Medical science, like other modern sciences is totally matter based. The intuitive element has been gradually eroded from it and currently it has become dangerous to the overall welfare of the humanity. The conventional medical science has overshadowed all complimentary medical sciences that in some cases may be cheaper and more effective.

2. Medical training is largely urban based therefore their products are conditioned to urban living that is hard to overcome in order to work in rural areas.

3. Medical services are increasingly capital based, urban based and over-dependent on technology. They have become tools of the capitalists. In our approach training, research as well as the health services will be multidisciplinary where various disciplines co-ordinate and cooperate according to the needs of the patients.

It is a big task but as long as the vision is kept alive, it will eventuate. Currently we are in the infant stage trying (struggling) to establish the grounds for such an institution. This consists of a multi-centric approach. We are working on:

- upgrading the existing hospital
- improving the current training of the community health workers (CMS)
- establishing a women's health centre
- establishing a mobile medical unit to visit remote rural areas for providing medical services to those who cannot access them
- starting a health co-operative for sustainability of the project.



Hospital at Anandanagar

Once these different units are established we will embark upon the expansion and magnification into a broader medical institution. Our current training consists of three major components of the multidisciplinary philosophy; Modern Medicine, Acupuncture and Homeopathy. We hope to expand in other

areas such as Ayurveda and Naturopathy. The newly formed Psycho Spiritual Research Institute (PSRI) will become a part of this expanded institution.

On the practical side upgrading of the hospital and training is in progress. The construction of the women's centre has been completed. A new ambulance has been bought for the activities of the mobile medical unit. All this has happened in the last 12 months.

PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Psycho-Spiritual Research Institute (PSRI) has been newly formed at Anandanagar. PSRI is an academically inclined spiritual institution that aims to promote research in the psycho-spiritual field to achieve the following goals:

1. Experience spirituality in one's life
2. Quantification of spiritual experiences by scientific methods
3. Sublimation of art, science and literature
4. Dissemination of proven ideas into the collective consciousness

It has a four-member board of directors to oversee its activities. The Institute will sponsor a Spiritual Intensive January 7-13, 2002, at Anandanagar. This weeklong event will feature intensive spiritual practices, psycho-spiritual discussions and practical experience of selfless service.

For more information about the Institute or about the Spiritual Intensive, you may contact:
Dr. J. Singh in Melbourne, Australia,
Email: jaisin@bigpond.com
Ac. Bhaskarananda Avt., Anandanagar
Email: bhavicsh@vsnl.com

Highlights of Kulapati's Tour

Thailand



Staff of Mind Body Research Institute of Thailand



Seminar with University Students from Bangkok



Discussion on NHE with students at Thammasat University

Kulapati, Dada Shambhushivananda has been touring in Asia for the past 6 months giving lectures and classes on Neo Humanist Education and sharing Shrii PR Sarkar's vision for Gurukula University.

In this issue of Gurukula Network some highlights of his tour are shared through pictures.

"If human beings think seriously, they can perform small and big tasks unitedly in a beautiful manner. Work can be accomplished in a short time and with very little effort, the welfare of a maximum number of persons can be effected. To work in such a united way, we have prepared a plan for the establishment of a Gurukul for educational and research purposes. In this scheme, several responsible persons have been inducted. I (also) declare that Gurukul is not going to be established but rather it has already been established. May you all strengthen it and ensure its progress with collective efforts. Everyone's work is to establish it with collective support. You people know that when clothes are woven, the white ants and mice try to eat them. So the cloth has to be saved from the destructive activities of white ants and mice. So whenever you make something, establish a protective fence to protect it from the evil forces. In days of yore, when women folk used to prepare dried mango cakes, the young boys used to sit by the side to keep the crows away with a stick in his hand. Similarly, you should be careful and alert always. From this very auspicious moment, you should take a vow to progress individually and collectively and build a new society, to construct and to remain engaged in constructive works throughout our life. This would be the greatest mission of our life."

Translated from the original Bengali spoken by PR Sarkar on .Sept.29th,1990 in Madhu Korak, Calcutta

Penang, Malaysia



Talk given at Penang, In Search of an Ideal Education; Shaping the Futures through Spiritual Education

Sengai Pettani, Malaysia



200 persons attended a talk on NHE which was organized by Didi Ananda Devinistha in Sengai Pettani

Kualalampar



Public lecture in Kualalampar

Lampang



Seminar in Lampang

NHE presentation at the Sectorial Conference Qahira Sector

Summary of a talk given by Didi Anandarama

In the past 40 years we have made some progress in our educational services. There are now about 850 Ananda Marga kindergarten and primary schools, 150 children's homes where our education is very much present, 22 high schools and several higher education facilities at Ananda Nagar.

Even though at the present there are only 2 kindergartens in Qahira sector it is very encouraging to feel connected to the global network of our schools.

From the beginning, these schools have been established and managed by the ERAWS/WWD sections of Ananda Marga. Just before the end of his life, Shrii PR Sarkar introduced the idea of Ananda Marga Gurukula. AMGK has come to replace the previous Ananda Marga Board of Education and issues the standards for all schools, gives accreditation to all institutions and issues teacher certification. AMGK plays the role of ensuring the academic standard side by side with the management by ERAWS/WWD of the various institutions.

AMGK also represents the university, which Shrii Sarkar envisioned and for which He proposed over 50 faculties. One of these faculties is Neo-Humanist Education. Shrii Sarkar explained that the spirit of Neo-humanism should be inculcated into all other faculties.

To distinguish our education system we have come to call our education Neo-Humanist Education. These are some crystallized ideas to explain the underlying thought in NHE.

What is Neo-Humanist Education?

The Philosophical Base

NHE is based on Ananda Marga Philosophy which is comprised of:

- Ontology – having Brahma or infinite happiness as the goal of existence
- Metaphysics – the idea of Brahmachakra - the cycle of creation
- Epistemology – the idea of spiritual (para) and worldly (apara) knowledge. From this aspect comes the idea of our education

being a blending of the introversive Eastern philosophy and the extroversive Western thought.

- Psychology – this is a special addition along with Spiritual Practice to the general aspects of philosophy. This deals with bio-psychology, yoga –psychology and the development of the levels of mind
- Spiritual Practice – this includes Astaunga Yoga and the various Tantric practices

The Cultural Base

The ideas in Neo-Humanism form the cultural base in our education. These include:

- Universal Love
- Ecology
- Culturally sensitive pedagogy
- Universalism

The Educational Methodology

A few of the educational methodologies are:

- Awakening the thirst of knowledge or learning through inquiry
- Pinnaced intellect or proper methodical thought
- Interdisciplinary approach
- Applied learning

From our experience in our schools we have found that the expression of teaching and learning based in these deep concepts inspire a very distinct atmosphere of serenity, joy and peace. All of our schools are loved and respected having long waiting lists. NHE is fulfilling a valuable service in the society. It is linking our deep philosophy to the hard realities of the dusty earth and the general society. With 70% of illiteracy, 50% malnutrition, 80% living in substandard housings and so many more disparities and sufferings, there remains only the clear need to accelerate our efforts to reach more the masses of the world with the healing neo-humanistic touch.



Neo-Humanist Education

new logo for NHE

Moral Development and Discipline

Notes from a Workshop by Arun

ETC, NY Sector, June 2001

Introduction

You can only be as disciplined with your students as you are with yourself. You cannot ask students to do something you can't do yourself.

Essential points to keep in mind:

- a. Your example is paramount
- b. You cannot judge a child by appearances on the surface
- c. In the final analysis, children do what they want to do. You can guide them, but you cannot control the outcome.

Time Factor

The teacher must allow time for moral instruction, be it group or individual. A moral, issue, an emotional conflict, a behavioral dilemma that comes up during the school day must be given adequate time and attention in order to assure a productive, positive and lasting outcome. These often unpredictable events should take precedence over other academic learning. Too often nowadays they are pushed aside by teacher with a "this is not my domain" attitude.

Will Power

Much has been made of this issue. In different cultures, there is a huge disparity of opinion. Some cultures do not allow for any personal will in children. Other cultures cultivate individual will even at the expense of collective welfare. Some educators insist that the child must learn to obey their own will first, and should never have their will "broken", while others say that the child must be obedient above all to the Authority. An understanding of the starting point and the goal is what is needed to achieve the proper balance. The starting point is that the child does not know what is best and follows instinct in the absence of guidance. The goal is that the child will understand the difference between right and wrong, between selfish and selfless, and will chose the better behavior because they want to do what is right.

Bearing in mind the goal, I offer the following opinion on will power: The child must first learn to curb their physical and mental tendencies to the will of another (benevolent adult), before finally directing their faculties in the direction of their own volition. *My 28 years of practical observations have demonstrated to me that children who cannot conform to the will of a parent or teacher early in life, experience difficulty with self-discipline later in life even when they sincerely desire to practice it.* This opinion also fits nicely with the natural steps of moral development as observed by scientific analysis that we will discuss shortly. It must be mentioned that obedience to the will of one who seeks to harm the child can offer little hope for a good future. Therefore, the intention of the authority figure needs to be questioned. Once that intention has been established as being in the interest of the collective good, there should not be continuous questioning of every decision that authority makes.

Balance Between External Pressure and Internal Inspiration

The key to discipline is to apply a balance between External pressure and Internal inspiration for the overall growth of the child. Internal inspiration involves trying to change something within the child, to inspire them to change their behavior. External pressure is changing something in the environment which exerts some external pressure on the child and forces them to modify their behavior. If you only apply external pressure, you have temporary growth, and the child will repeat the behavior as soon as your head is turned. If you only apply internal pressure you give the child scope to make the same mistake again because there are no clear boundaries in the environment.

Examples:

Internal Pressure: Please don't do such and such, can't you see it is hurting so and so.

External Pressure: You will not be able to join the group until you do such and such. There is a tendency in certain cultures to lean too much on one or the other, and a balance needs to be found. As example, in the USA, the tendency, in general, is to lean too much on internal approaches. In Caribbean countries the tendency is to lean too much on external approaches.

Inner and Outer Child

It is important to consider the integrity of the child's actions. That is, does the perceived action of the child mirror who they really are on the inside? When determining an appropriate response or strategy for a child we need to determine what is really going on inside. If there is a great disparity between the inner and outer child then we need to apply methods appropriate to the action or problem but which consider the hidden motivations or forces acting on the child. Hence an important part of any developmental strategy for a child is help them find integrity between their inner and outer selves. Psychic illness sets in when the inside and outside are separated. There is also a moral regression if there is a separation between the inner and outer child. It is much easier for the teacher when the

child is straight forward. The teacher must however, learn to perceive the inner person. If the teacher can perceive the inner child and expose that child, while reassuring them, then this will avoid the separation in the child's psyche. It is best to assume you don't know the inner child and to look for the signs. Some ways to get at the inner child are:

- through their art
- through their writing
- through their conversations
- through their self expressions
- by playing with them
- by interacting with them outside of the academic arena
- just talking with them

The Four Stages of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg outlined six stages to moral development, but for our purposes we can condense them to four. (see page 12 for reference on all six stages). According to his studies, children all over the world display these stages of moral development irregardless of race or sex or culture. Children progress through different stages of behavioral development as they grow. Therefore how we apply discipline to a child should be determined by their current stage of development. It is important to note that although a person may have reached a certain stage it is normal for them to sometimes act from a different level. If a child is acting at stage 1 at an early age, it is normal and okay, but if the child is still at that stage at age 10 or as an adult, it can be extremely dangerous. It is the job of the teacher to help move the children from one stage of moral development to the next. A good teacher will be able to facilitate this happening at a quicker rate. The beauty of this approach is that the teacher can concentrate on moving the child forward along a path, and not worry so much about jumping straight to the goal of moral behavior all at once. As long as movement takes place, the goal is in sight. Two of the most important factors for moving through the stages are:

1. The company you keep
2. The internal values you are taught

Applying Discipline

The teacher needs to understand the nature of the situation or problem to be solved. The teacher needs to determine what level the child is acting at and take appropriate action or develop appropriate strategies. Each child and each circumstance must be carefully examined before action is taken. Sometimes the most appropriate action is no action. It is vital that the teacher be aware of their own state of mind before they try to understand what is happening with the child in each instance. The teacher must be aware of their own feelings and reactions to the situation, and not let these cloud their judgement.

The teacher needs to understand the child's mind and why they are doing what they are doing. This includes understanding how children choose a mistaken means to a desired goal and adopt behaviors habitually that gain them attention. The teacher needs to analyze the outcome of the child's behavior and ask the question - "what did they get?". As an example, a child with a reading problem may misbehave to set things up so that she is distracted and she doesn't have to read.

STAGE ONE - The Power Stage / Heteronomous Morality

Normally Finished at 4/5 years old.

Characteristics

- The child has few or no rules for itself.
- Not open for negotiation
- Persistent in their wants
- Defiant of authority
- Seeks extensions of power (pencils, rulers become weapon, voice)
- Out of control if you turn your back
- Very few rules of their own but they might follow yours if they are afraid enough
- If they want something they just take it
- Show little feeling for others

Techniques

External Approaches

- Environment needs to be set up to be:
 - Dependable !
 - Consistent !!
 - Predictable !!!
- Logical Consequences (find a natural consequence related to the behavior; be sure the child knows in advance what is coming, then enforce the consequence without emotion)
- Physical restraint if they are endangering others (corporeal punishment should be avoided as it leads to violence.)
- Time out (Time out should take place in the classroom with a given instruction such as "observe the classroom - think about what you can do differently)
- Give choices and time to consider them: eg. "either use a placemat, or do not join us for snack; it's up to you"
- Maximize attention they receive for positive behavior, and minimize attention they receive for negative behavior
- Set up your classroom like a micro- society
 - Everyone in the class has a job that rotates
 - There are meetings where rules are discussed
 - Logical consequences follow from this micro-society such as "You took 10 minutes from the class so you need to pay back the

class ". You might have the child do some service to the class as a pay back

Internal Approaches

- Sensitizing the children. Helping them to see how their behavior feels to and affects others through speaking with the child. "Other people's feelings are similar to yours."
- Plays and Stories can be used to inspire better behavior
- The teacher's example and the example of older children can inspire better behavior.
- Make children experts in an area where they are weak. eg. Have them be a monitor for putting away toys.
- Meditation and kiirtan

STAGE 2 The Reward and Punishment Stage / Individualistic Morality

up to ages 8 or 9; 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades

Characteristics

- Only motivated for reward or fear of punishment
- Tend to behave well when teacher is there but not for the substitute or in the halls
- Self centered
- Need constant supervision
- Little self discipline
- Younger children begin aspiring to be like the older children

Techniques

Many of the techniques used at stage one for external and internal approaches can be continued in stage two. In stage 2 you want to move them towards responsibility

Additional External Approaches

- Creating pressure with rules
- Catching them in the act techniques. eg.. position yourself in a place where you can secretly observe behaviors reported to you by others
- Have a student council
 1. good news is shared
 2. children are nominated for citizenship awards

- 3. children can share what problems they are having
- 4. children are given a noble task

Additional Internal Approaches

- Talking and reasoning
- Meetings eg. Meet with a victim of teasing to help him understand how others may find his behavior annoying and not know how to deal with it
- Electives (Choice activities such as a school newspaper or service project. Among other benefits, these activities build self esteem).
- Teaching alternative solutions ie. Teach a bullying child how to communicate
- Younger children aspiring to be like the older children

STAGE 3 Pleasing Others / Mutual Interpersonal Morality

up to age 12

Characteristics

- Conforming
- Please teacher
- No confrontation
- Meet expectations
- Care what people think of you
- Want to fit in

You may often find that children in transition between stage 2 and 3 give trouble in one class, but not in another

Approaches

- Need gentle reminders
- If you nurture them they will make quick progress
- Cooperative learning

Activities that help in Moving from Stage 3 to Stage 4

- Service projects
- Reading biographies
- Taking the opposite thought eg. practice giving away what you want
- Meditation

- Playing
- Aesthetic education supports empathy
- Report cards - self analysis
- Electives - When children do electives they are contributing to their community and it can take them to the next level.

STAGE 4 Social Order Stage / Selfless Morality

above age 12

- Welfare of the situation
- Feel for others
- Personal sacrifice
- Accepted morality
- Empathy
- I do it because I know it is right
- Bothered by injustice

Techniques

- Give them leadership
- Give them recognition (for the others to see)
- Give them freedom of choice

Persistent Behavioral Problems and Contacting the Parents

For persistent behavioral problems, as a last resort, the teacher may need to contact the parent. Parents may be in denial of the situation, so the teacher must provide them with lots of documentation of the child's behavior. If you can solicit the support of the parent, the parent can reward or give consequences at home. A reward should be something where the parent spends time with the child in a constructive manner, such as going to the library together.

For serious problems the teacher may have to suspend the child from school. There should be a policy in place in your school regarding suspensions. For example at the Progressive School of Long Island one behavior that results in immediate suspension is if the child curses at a teacher. First offense leads to one day suspension. Second offense leads to two days suspension. Third offense leads to three day suspension. Fourth offense leads to being expelled

Lawrence Kohlberg's Six Stage of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg was, for many years, a professor at Harvard University. He became famous for his work there beginning in the early 1970s. He started as a developmental psychologist and then moved to the field of moral education. He was particularly well known for his theory of moral development which he popularized through research studies conducted at Harvard's Center for Moral Education.

His theory of moral development was dependent on the thinking of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and the American philosopher John Dewey. He was also inspired by James Mark Baldwin. These men had emphasized that human beings develop philosophically and psychologically in a progressive fashion.

Kohlberg believed - and was able to demonstrate through studies - that people progressed in their moral reasoning (i.e., in their bases for ethical behavior) through a series of stages. He believed that there were six identifiable stages which could be more generally classified into three levels. Kohlberg's classification can be outlined in the following manner:

LEVEL	STAGE	SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Pre-conventional	1	Obedience and Punishment
	2	Individualism, Instrumentalism, and Exchange
Conventional	3	"Good boy/girl"
	4	Law and Order
Post-conventional	5	Social Contract
	6	Principled Conscience

The first level of moral thinking is that generally found at the elementary school level. In the first stage of this level, people behave according to socially acceptable norms because they are told to do so by some authority figure (e.g., parent or teacher). This obedience is compelled by the threat or application of punishment. The second stage of this level is characterized by a view that right behavior means acting in one's own best interests.

The second level of moral thinking is that generally found in society, hence the name "conventional." The first stage of this level (stage 3) is characterized by an attitude which seeks to do what will gain the approval of others. The second stage is one oriented to abiding by the law and responding to the obligations of duty.

The third level of moral thinking is one that Kohlberg felt is not reached by the majority of adults. Its first stage (stage 5) is an understanding of social mutuality and a genuine interest in the welfare of others. The last stage (stage 6) is based on respect for universal principles and the demands of individual conscience. While Kohlberg always believed in the existence of Stage 6 and had some nominees for it, he could never get enough subjects to define it, much less observe their longitudinal movement to it.

"In every sentence of juvenile literature there should be a wonderful attractive power - a crystalline simplicity and an open heartedness without any hesitation. The author of juvenile literature has to explain through language and thought how life should be lived with purity and straight forwardness. The child's mind is filled with fanciful imagery, and so the litterateurs will also have to soar in the sky of imagination with outstretched wings. However, they cannot afford to give indulgence to intricacies and complexities in this visionary ascent. The thirst for the distant, and the earnest zeal to know the unknown that abides in the child's mind must be fulfilled by drawing pictures of magical lands and relating colourful fairy tales. "Real" or "natural" is not so important here. What is more important is to carry the child's mind along in the current of joy, and in the process to acquaint the child with the world in an easy and simple manner. The harshness of reality should not be portrayed: the child will not want to read or listen to it. "The prince of the mind with his wings outspread in the azure sky soars to the kingdom of the old witch beyond the worlds of the moon and the sun; and, tying his Pegasus to the golden branches of the pearl tree, proceeds in quest of the sleeping princess in the soundless, serene palace. Being informed of the whereabouts of the magic-wands of life and death, and rousing the princess from her centuries-old sleep, he gathers all the information about the sleeping den of the demons, and seeks to establish himself in the world like a hero..." Picture after picture, colour after colour must accompany the words: this the children's minds crave. For those who are a little older than small children, that is boys and girls in their early teens, farces and satires are quite successful. In these the children can find the ideals that are conducive to the formation of their characters. But for those who are comparatively young, simplicity will be the guiding principle in whatever is written for them. P. R Sarkar

"What Did The Dragon Do Next?" Creating stories for and about your children

By Didi Ananda Jayati

You can do it!

I firmly believe that anyone who is fond of children, possesses a hint of creativity and an awakening love for this mysterious universe, can learn, through experimentation and practice, to weave, spin and juggle stories that will keep children of all ages spellbound and enraptured. The secret? Create a tale about those children who are sitting in front of you expectantly, and take them on a magical journey around the world, through the universe, or into the mysterious realms of sea, sky and the depths of the earth.

"But how?" I hear some of you saying, "I've never been good at making up stories, I can't even remember the plot to the simplest fairy tale..." Don't worry, you can make up the story as you go along if you are the improvisatory type, or or make a rough plan and embroider it as you tell it if you prefer some kind of structure as a base. You could also have some props on hand to jog your memory and stimulate your imagination, as well as adding focal emphasis to the story - especially useful if



*...the dragon looked hungrily at the children:
"Hallo breakfast!", he growled...*

language needs to be kept simple. For example, you could holdup something that could pass for a crystal - a real one if you have one, or even a glass jar filled with water could do if you're short of props. Say something like, "This is what the magic crystal looked like - but it was as big as a musk melon, and had a glowing light inside it that was all the colours of the rainbow..." or "The witch's hair was all rough like this pile of spiky branches, but it was purple, and there were seven long-legged spiders living in it!"

Recently I had a mixed group of youngsters aged one to twelve sitting around me on a lawn as dusk was falling and the sleepy sunflowers nodded, and they sat, completely absorbed in the story (except for the baby), with eager eyes and frequent peals of laughter, for something like forty minutes - because it was about *them*. Sometimes I asked the children to add their own details - "What colour was your cloak? What useful things did you bring in your bag?"

You can wrap the story more vividly around them by tying in elements which are part of the audience or their immediate environment: "Oh, Yui, watch out, Baby Fabian is crawling near the edge of the magic carpet; we don't want him to fall off!And when you were all tired and ready to come home from the end of the world, you said the magic words: "Baba... Nam... Kevalam!" But the carpet didn't move - do you know why? Because the baby didn't say the magic words!" After a number of funny attempts in which he keeps saying it wrong (he's too young to talk much, yet), he finally manages to get it right, and the carpet shivers, gently lifts up, then zooms the children home, right to this very lawn where the story started. We stretch and go in to have our dinner with the adults, wondering if we had been missed.

Starting out:

Storytelling needs practice, so it's easier to start with a small group, or even just one or two children at first, aiming for a short yet interesting tale involving the listeners as the protagonists - the heroes and heroines - the adventurers. Think about what those particular children like, are interested in, or what problems they may need help in working out. Then decide where you would like to stage the story - the only limit is the extent of your imagination! It's a bit like cooking - mix together the right ingredients, invoke a sprinkling of Grace and a deliciously original story can be the result. If you need more prompting at the beginning stages, you could make envelopes containing pieces of card with various components written on them or you could draw or cut out pictures to stick on the cards, then ideate for Cosmic inspiration and take some out from each envelope and put them together to make a story, or just spread them out and see what ideas attract you - discarding any ideas which don't seem to fit in with the rest.

Welcome the stories that come to you, however simple and rudimentary they may seem at first. Make them yours, manifesting them with all your love and the childlike wonder you thought you'd lost. Let the wisdom your life experiences have given you and the tales you have read and heard, be given a new birth through you.

Here are some suggestions, just add more of your own ideas; you may not choose to use all of these categories in any one story:

1. Main setting of the story (may shift from place to place) - underground cave, deep in the ocean, in the sky, at night with moon and stars, on a high mountain, in a volcano, in a desert, in a forest, in a jungle, through space, on another planet.

2. A wise figure - who could start off the children on their journey, guide them when in danger, and/or see them safely back - Baba, an old woman, old man, fairy, talking tree, Didi or Dada, could be you the storyteller, a magical being, extraterrestrial, etc.

3. A problem that needs to be solved - could be anything from a simple desire for exploration and adventure, to a rescue of children captured by a ferocious dragon, a fight with a sea monster, or a group of bullies; a cure for someone who is sick, or a lesson that needs to be learned - there are so many possibilities.

4. Use descriptive words and don't be afraid to exaggerate in order to bring the story alive - use plenty of colours, textures, tastes, smells, sights and sounds. e.g. The dragon was as long as three express trains, with purple and green scales and golden knobbly bits all along his back. His breath smelled like burnt toast and fireworks and he looked hungrily at the children. "Hallo, breakfast!" he growled, but Adam and Sarah quickly drank a little of the sweet and spicy jujube juice the wise woman



had given them to make themselves invisible in case of danger, and fearlessly jumped on his back... Depending on your listeners' level of English, you can make the descriptions simple or more elaborate.

5. Modes of transport - flying carpets, friendly creatures (see next section), clouds, homemade rockets, self-steering boats, hot air balloons, parachutes, jet-powered rollerskates, alien spaceships, time machines, flying tram cars, umbrellas, catapults, winged shoes, you name it...

6. New and old friends - elves, dolphins, whales, all kinds of creatures, birds, insects, etc., humans from different countries, different ages, temperaments, lifestyles; trees and plants, the earth, sky and ocean can also whisper secrets and guidance.

7. Protective gear, weapons, tools and tricks of the magical trade - invisible cloaks, spells that make one tiny or huge, sneezing powder, ten-league boots, mind reading helmets, magic toffee that can stick a monster's mouth shut, bubbles that make your pursuer fall asleep, swords (in our school I allow sword-play, but no gun games), shields, magic seeds that can grow a forest between you and whatever is chasing you, white powder that turns into a snow storm when thrown in the air, to slow down your enemy, herbal brews that can bring one back to life, et al.

8. Virtues learned during the adventure - non-harming, healthy self-defense, benevolent truthfulness, non-stealing, sharing, loving and respecting all, seeing the divine in even the most lowly beings, purity and cleanliness, contentment versus greediness and envy, courage, determination, sacrifice, devotion, understanding the instructions of wise beings and books, meditation, remembering Baba as a way out of even the most dangerous situation, love.

9. Often refer to the children present - what they do and say. e.g. One day, Leo, Izumi and Koyori were at the park together. Suddenly, Izumi said, "Look! What's that?" They all turned to look and saw a tiny figure dressed in a stripy tunic, laughing and waving from the top of the slide, jumping up and down excitedly. "I've been waiting for you!" he said. "Would you like to become very small like me and fly up into that tree to visit the birds and play in their nest?" Both together, Leo and Koyori ran towards the slide. "Yes, please, they said, "Come on, Izumi!"...



All illustrations by Didi Ananda Jayati

10. Objectives achieved through storytelling. One could teach the children how to protect and defend themselves against abusive situations, to defuse conflicts that come up between children, life crises like death in the family or the challenge of a new brother or sister, as well as using stories to remove prejudices. While working in Cyprus, running a small Kindergarten, one day a charming two-year old Irish-Pakistani boy was enrolled. The next morning I was dismayed to hear one of the older girls say that she didn't want to sit next to him because of his dark skin. From that afternoon I started telling appropriate stories, weaving racial origins, skin colour, climate, etc. into the tales and making a character like him, the hero. By the third morning, I was delighted to see the same girl seating herself on a chair next to the boy, saying, I want to sit next to him, he's my *friend*.

Going deeper into the mystery and mastery of storytelling.

One important way to stretch your imagination and hone your skills, is to immerse yourself in the mystery and magic of this genre by reading and rereading the best children's fantasy stories you can find; and actually to *live* those stories and make them part of you. The Golden Lotus of the Blue Sea, and the Land of Hattamala, two books by Shrii PR Sarkar, are wonderfully rich examples. In fact, they warrant at least a separate article each to analyse them properly, which I would like to do in future. You can really benefit from studying these books - I think perhaps he would like us to write more in the same vein...

The following quotes are from "In The Land of Hattamala" Part 2.

Shrii Sarkar's writing is so descriptive, you feel the story happening around you:

"(Aparna) could hear the sound of falling leaves, the wind blowing through the branches and twigs, the movement of wild forest animals and the squeaking of her shoes. All this made a wonderful symphony of sound."

Notice how he intertwines useful facts along with the storyline :

"The antelopes, like many deer, are gradually becoming extinct from the face of the earth.' Seeing such beautiful deer reminded Aparna of these words, and she felt great pain."

Shrii Sarkar uses fantastic, exaggerated descriptions to thrill any child, young or old, and champions the courage and resourcefulness of children, as well as inculcating good English usage.

After being threatened by a tiger, Aparna responds from the safety of her tree:

*"Halum hulum, halum hulum
If you climb the tree I'll chew you up,
Chew you up".*

"The tiger was shocked by these words. His whole body shook. His chest heaved. His bones rattled. His temples throbbed. His veins and arteries palpitated. His brain spun round at high speed. He was so frightened that his entire body, from his mane to the tip of his tail became drenched with sweat."

Wonderful!

Next are some short excerpts from Shrii Sarkar's fantasy-clad social tale for older children (including adults) -

Under the Fathomless Depths of the Blue Sea. There is no way I can do justice to this wonderful story; the best I can do is to encourage those of you who have never read it, to do so as soon as possible, and for those who already know it, to read it again!

The book begins...

"It was the same blue sea which is made of dreams and surrounded by memories....."

That evening Tarun Kumar was sitting alone on its sandy shores.

... he was wondering if he could drink all the water in a single gulp, like the sage Augustya. If he could, it would be easier for him to catch a glimpse of the vast mysteries under the sea.

But is such a thing possible?

The sun was slowly setting.....

.....People say that this side of the blue sea is haunted by ghosts.

I will leave the story for your personal enjoyment, and will just quote the ending lines. After a series of incredible adventures in the land of ghosts under the Blue Sea, Tarun suddenly finds himself with his friend Barun back on the same beach where he had been watching the setting sun, though now it is sunrise...

"I wasn't merely sleeping" said Tarun. "I went to a dark kingdom in my dreams."...

...Tarun looked at the eastern sky flooded with crimson light and said, "Victory to the Kingdom of Light."

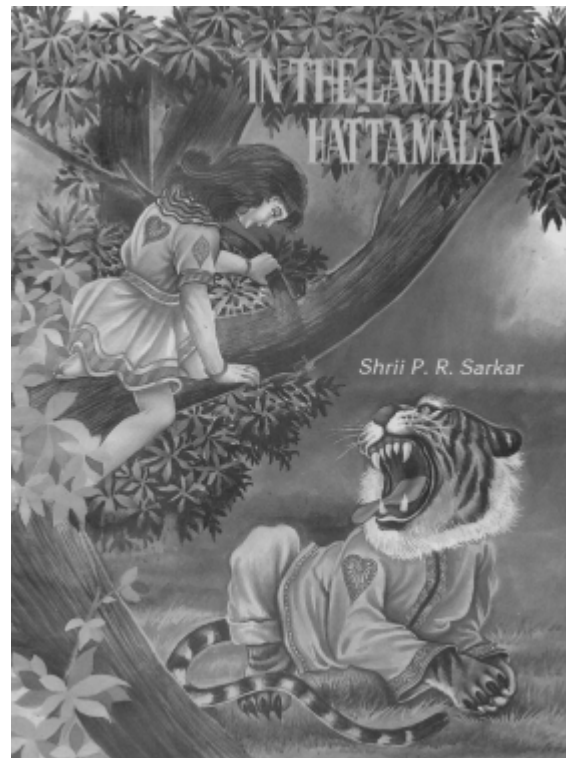


Illustration from the cover of the book "In Hattamala" published by Ananda Marga publications

Culture and Gender Bias

Notes from a workshop by Kalyan

June 2001 ETC, NY Sector

To start this workshop we looked at the goal of Neo-humanist education. It was agreed that the goal was:

- To help children to develop to their full potential physically, mentally and spiritually.
- Empower children to believe in themselves and be courageous in acting upon their convictions and values
- Enable children to render service to the society

We then explored our own cultural orientation and biases, and how they effect our teaching and our ability to meet our goals as neo humanist educators. As an exercise we examined the culture of Ananda Marga by imagining that an invisible space alien observed our culture by observing our sectorial seminar. This served to get us thinking about what culture is and what we would like it to be. It also got us thinking critically about our own cultural orientations.

We then considered one aspect of human culture, the imbalanced and unhealthy relationship between men and women in most societies today. We considered the difference between men and women and how society and education systems support that dichotomy. Boys and girls are treated differently in schools. Art and advertising generally depict women as passive objects and men as doers. Women are forced to be dualistic in that not only who they are is important but also how they, or their actions, will be perceived by others. Parents hold different expectations for their children, depending on their gender and the culture that they are born into. All of this serves to perpetuate a particular norm that is difficult to change once it becomes established. In the case of gender relations in the classroom setting, it is imperative that we model and teach equality at an early age.

A few of the main points that were outlined by the group for teaching equality at an early age were:

- Teachers are critically important as role models. They need to be aware that their actions speak much more loudly than their words. If a teacher dresses or acts in a certain way, it will reinforce the wrong messages for the children.

- Even seemingly innocuous acts such as complimenting girls on their clothes or looks can reinforce the wrong idea.
- Care must be taken to give girls an equal opportunity to participate even if they are less pushy, demanding or as disruptive as the boys.
- Emphasis can be given not just to empowering girls but also to educating boys.
- Jobs that children perform in the classroom can be given in an egalitarian manner, regardless of gender.

An important note of caution was raised that we don't want to devalue important traditional female roles, such as mothering and nurturing, but instead we need to seek to give them their rightful value in society as well as empowering girls to pursue their own individual talents in other areas.

The participants were invited to talk about what happens in their schools. All of the participants noted that reaching the parents was an important aspect of creating meaningful change. This can effectively be done by using cultural programs that exemplify desired values and depicting positive role models and ideas. The programs will be more effective if they use traditions and stories from the culture that the students live in. Care must be taken to not use traditions, such as perhaps some folk dances, that may have been warped by materialism or sexism.

Literature, biographies of women and legends from the culture can also be used to raise the consciousness of the students and their parents. Also living role models of exemplary women from the community can be found.

In seeking equality between the sexes, we are in many instances trying to change cultural traditions that have existed for a long time in many places in the world. This change will necessarily be slow, but understanding and using the positive aspects of the culture that one is operating in as a means to make that change, will make it more relevant, more meaningful and more possible and the change will be deeper and longer lasting.

Classroom Management Strategies

Offered by Vistara Primary School - Lismore, Australia

ORGANISATION

The teaching Strategies for Organisation can be:

- * try to have a regular, predictable, structured routine.
- * display class timetable and send a copy home
- * ask for parental help in encouraging organisation
- * establish procedures for dealing with transitions
- * establish routines for dismissal
- * assist student in setting short-term goals
- * have students keep completed work/books in specific locations
- * direct frequent straightening up of belonging s and work area
- * regularly check books and desk for neatness
- * emphasise quality rather than quantity of work
- * encourage neatness rather than penalise sloppiness
- * do not penalise poor handwriting if visual motor deficits are present
- * give assignments one at a time
- * if routine is to be changed, notify student in advance
- * give assignments one at a time
- * insist upon use of homework diary
- * have students write notes for reminders (reinforces note taking strategies)
- * write assignments on board for students to copy or hand out on coloured paper
- * supervise writing down of homework assignments
- * send daily/weekly progress reports home

LOSING THINGS/FORGETTING BELONGINGS

- * allow student to have an extra set of books at home
- * supervise (un) packing of homework, books, equipment, lunches, notes, etc
- * use of homework diary to inform parents of changes in routine or equipment

IGNORES TEACHER

- * combine sight, sound and signals to cue student
- * seat student near teacher
- * establish eye contact and close proximity
- * acknowledge positive behaviour management system

FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

- * vary voice tones and inflection to emphasise important part of instruction
- * try to keep format as consistent as possible

- * use written, picture or diagrammatic instructions
- * teach attention to key words and signs
- * assign learning partners (buddies)
- * provide immediate feedback
- * praise compliant behaviour when it does occur
- * use teacher attention to reinforce positive behaviour
- * supervise student closely
- * use prudent reprimands for misbehaviour (avoid criticism, lecturing, sarcasm)
- * supervise student during transitions
- * instruct student in self monitoring

RUDENESS

- * ignore minor infringements
 - * divorce the student from the behaviour
 - * refer to class rules and consequences
- Class Rules:** First get students to brainstorm some class rules and consequences. Have some ideas of what you want and offer them as suggestions relating to their needs. Draw up a poster "Rules and Consequences" and get all the kids to sign it. When a child breaks a rule, stop the class, so the attention is focussed on you and ask the child to refer to the poster and ask the child which rule was broken. If the child cannot answer, ask the class "if someone acted in this manner, which rule would be broken?" "What are the consequences?" Have the child carry out the consequence. If defensive stipulate this is a whole class agreement, you broke that agreement, You and every person has the right to learn and I have the right to teach, that is why there are rules in this classroom". With the rules you can have goals that when the whole class is established in this rule or which ever goal is set, a privilege is given. It could be early recess, an activity of your choice within the classroom, free drawing, etc.

CONCENTRATION

- * seat within easy access by teacher
- * seat away from visual and auditory distractions
- * seat near a "study buddy"
- * increase distance between desks
- * wait until student is attending before giving instructions
- * use visual, auditory and or motor cues to attract attention

TASK COMPLETION

- * assist student in setting short term goals
- * cue/ signal student to stay on task
- * give assignments one at a time to avoid overload
- * pair oral and written instructions
- * allow extra time to complete assigned work
- * shorten assignments or independent work periods to coincide with attention span
- * praise completion and effort involved
- * use a time - "how quickly can you start?"
" how many can you do in 2 minutes?"
- * instruct in self-monitoring (using cueing)
- * use charts to monitor tasks completed, homework, latency
- * break long assignments into smaller parts
- * give clear concise instructions
- * involve student in lesson presentation
- * require fewer responses
- * provide peer assistance in notetaking
- * use previewing strategies
- * select text with less on a page
- * shorten amount of required reading
- * avoid oral reading in front of peers
- * use preferred activities to reinforce completion

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS

- * teach all students re individual strengths and weaknesses and the importance of tolerance and assistance
- * teach/prompt verbal and physical courtesy
- * actively teach body language and facial expressions
- * do not tolerate put-downs in any form, from any student
- * avoid embarrassment in front of peers
- * allow student to play with/assist with younger children if they desire
- * provide small group social skills training
- * set up social behaviour goals with students and implement reward system

TAKING TURNS

- * set up co-operative learning tasks with other students
- * assign responsibilities/leadership roles to student to encourage more positive interactions

POOR LOSER

- * assign responsibilities/leadership roles to student to encourage more positive interactions
- * praise appropriate behaviour (frequently and honor virtues displayed in the student e.g. honesty, courage, responsibility, discipline, respect)

TAKES OVER GAMES

- * promote activities which are non-competitive or only mildly competitive
- * revise rules of a game before embarking

EASILY PROVOKED

- * keep in mind that some students are easily frustrated, stress, pressure and fatigue can break down self control and lead to poor behaviour
- * look for signs of stress build up and provide encouragement or reduce workload to alleviate pressure and avoid temper outbursts
- * establish appropriate outlets for frustration
- * teach 'I' messages as a way of responding to the behaviour of others
- * allow reparations to be made
- * talk to student alone once they have calmed down
- * speak softly, in a non-threatening manner

SOMETIMES AGGRESSIVE

- * speak softly in a non-threatening manner
- * use classroom or individual behaviour management program
- * for dangerous behaviour - immediately implement school welfare/discipline strategies
- * set up behavioural contract with student, teacher, supervisor and parent if necessary

Websites that you might look up for ideas, lesson plans etc. The search engine used was MSN but I don't think there will be any problem which one you use. You can just type in lesson plans and hey presto!

www.proteacher.net (excellent link to other sites. All key learning areas, printables and K-12 American)

www.k-6educatorsca.about.com (will send regular email, units of work)

www.creativeclassroom.org

www.learningpage.com (downloads and printables)

www.gigglepotz.com (phonics worksheets)

www.childfun.com (themes, really good, has songs, poems etc)

www.cfc-eff.ca/docs This is Child and Family matters (Canada) *An excellent magazines which you can look up on the web, It has all the issues children and teachers/parents go through.*

www.community.nsw.gov.au Parenting - gives you tips on being a parent, building self esteem and managing grief

NHE Distance Learning Program Began in September

Neo Humanist Education Early Childhood Diploma Programme

The NHE Early Childhood Diploma Distance Learning Programme began this September with over 30 students. This course of study has been designed to develop the personal qualities of the teacher, give the teacher a solid base in educational theory and provide practical skills for teaching. The Programme features an action research approach to learning and the portfolio method of documenting one's competency.

This one year program is focused on Early Childhood Education for children ages 0-6. The student will receive a NHE diploma in Early Childhood Education approved by AMGK after successful completion of the program and will be able to teach in NHE kindergartens. This course is intended for teachers with a local teaching diploma or persons who have a bachelor's degree in any liberal arts discipline or who have a documentation of experience working with children. It is especially designed for teachers who are working in NHE schools and would like to receive a diploma in NHE. The certification in Early Childhood will be a prerequisite for taking the certification program in Primary Education and Administration, which will be offered in successive years.

Programme Overview

The first three modules deal with the teacher's personal development on the spiritual, intellectual and creative levels.

From this foundation of personal development, the student is engaged in thinking about the "big picture" of education; the philosophical dimension of educational theory and practice. Neo-Humanist educational theory is situated within the context of other eastern and western approaches to education. As part of this "big picture", the study of culture is introduced as a crucial area of study for Neo-Humanist educators. The study of child development and learning theory is next introduced. Here too, Neo-Humanist ideas are compared with other streams of thought.

Next, the practical dimension is considered. Here, the important applied areas of curriculum development, teaching methods, assessment, and the design of learning environments are studied. Then, the child within a social context is covered, studying important ideas about the family and community, the impact of poverty on learning, the impact of pseudo culture on learning, working with children with special needs, etc.

Finally, there is a module on Administrative, Leadership and Communication Skills. This will include gaining skills in administering a school, as well as leadership and communication skills for interacting with colleagues and the community

At the end of the theoretical part of the study there will be a three weeks practical training.

For more information on this Programme you may contact AMGK at <amgk.glo@gurukul.edu>

NHE Mini Self Study Program Available in November

Neo-Humanist Education Introductory Certificate Program

The NHE Introductory Certificate Program has been developed to provide a mini educational training opportunity to staff working in neo humanist schools around the world. This is in contrast to the Diploma Programme, which is a much more in depth program. It is our hope that this program will assist those who seek to improve their quality of professionalism, to expand existing understanding, and to establish a firmer foundation in early childhood neo humanist education. This Program is comprised of a 100 page book of practical guidance and information in Early Childhood Education, and is available free of charge. The mini course comes with optional assignments

which may be completed for introductory certification. The teacher would then be recognized as a certified NHE associate teacher. Suggested time for completion of this program is 3 months.

The Course is divided into three sections. The first deals with the role of the teacher and their personal development of the teacher.

Continued on page 22

Report from New York Sectorial Education Training Camp June 26- 28, 2001



The New York Sectorial Education Training Camp took place June 26 - June 28th at Ananda Kanan. It was organized by Dada Dharmapremananda, NY ERAWS Secretary, and attended by about 20 people. Below is a short synopsis of the workshops. Details of some of these workshops are included in separate articles in this newsletter.

The first workshop was on **Culture** and was led by Kalyan, a teacher at the Progressive School of Long Island. We started by thinking critically about our own cultural orientations. We then considered one aspect of human culture, the imbalanced relationship between men and women in most societies today. We explored how one can work to understand the culture one is in and when seeking to transform traditional habits, how to look for role models and stories from within that culture rather than importing stories and role models from outside.

Mahajyoti, Director of Morning Star Preschool, led two workshops, one on **Rhyme, Music, and Movement**, and one on **Teaching Asanas to Children**. In the first workshop we learned about the benefits of music for the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development of the child, and what kinds of music might best be used for younger children. We then learned some songs that can be

used in the classroom. In the second workshop Mahajyoti shared how asana postures can be taught to very young children and demonstrated appropriate ones.

Arun, Director of the Progressive School of Long Island, led a double workshop on the **Developmental Stages of Moral Development in Children** and the associated appropriate

discipline practices. This interactive workshop expanded on the knowledge of Kohlberg by incorporating PR Sarkar's teachings on the Inner and Outer person.

Mayajit, a public school Service Learning Professional, gave a workshop on **Transforming Education and Communities Together**. In this workshop we explored service learning, where children learn their curriculum through action projects which benefit their community. We learned about successful projects that have been done and how we can begin to develop learning communities and design service learning projects.

A'rati, Mahajyoti and Kalyan shared about **New Projects in Neo Humanist Education** including Standards for our schools, the NHE Introductory Certificate Program, and the NHE Early Childhood Diploma Program. As an extension to this Kalyan led a short workshop on **Action Learning and the Portfolio Method** which will be used in the NHE Early Childhood Teacher Diploma Program.

In our first **Evening Program**, we heard from two of our schools, Didi Ananda Ragamaya's school in Jamaica and Didi Prema's school in Nicaragua. They both painted a rich picture of life in their schools and we were all inspired by their tremendous dedication and work under challenging circumstances, and the positive transformation that is taking place in their schools.

The second two evening programs were shared with the UTC (PROUT Camp) that was taking place simultaneously at Ananda Kanan. In the first program we explored what NHE Education has to offer PROUT and what PROUT has to offer NHE. It was an inspiring sharing.

The second evening, through performances and audience participation, we explored how the Arts can



be used as a vehicle both in the teaching of NHE and in the spread of PROUTistic ideas.

Our ETC culminated with an open discussion group among the participants. We shared ideas for the next ETC, shared stories and played some games together. Everyone expressed how much they enjoyed this year's ETC.



Teacher Training in Jamaica

By Didi Ananda Ragamaya

In August, we had a very intensive two days training with the teachers from both Dada's and my school. There were 9 teachers in all. Normally I have just been working with my three teachers, a short workshop once a month. It was my first time to combine with both schools and it was a very positive experience.

There was some serious icebreaking to do at the beginning and a lot of resistance from some of the teachers, who were used to their own way. One of the main objectives was to create a good team spirit, and some basic understanding of Neo Humanism and some simple practices that can be implemented not only in their own lives but at school too. For many in Jamaica Neo Humanism is a distant thing from what people are accustomed to.

The ETC we had in NY sector helped me a lot to prepare for the workshops. I really don't have a lot of experience giving teachers training but from the shining faces and camaraderie that evolved I could see that it was tremendously beneficial for all.

Here is a little over view of what I did for any out there who may find it helpful. It was good to remember constantly the importance of being a role model, so I was very conscious of this throughout.

I tried to make the program interesting bringing in stories and drama as well as dance, games and songs. Each day we started with Kiirtan meditation and asanas . We covered basic philosophy ie Dharma, Yama and Niyama and Neo Humanism. We also covered the role of the teacher and discipline, practical things for circle time, teambuilding and creating our own vision. A lot of sharing went on and

positive encouragement through games and different exercises, and we rounded up with a quiz, which was great fun. The teachers knew that they would be evaluated on their participation etc for the two days (we have had some serious problems in the past and needed to be quite strict with attendance and attentiveness). There was a written test at the end which helped to encourage the teachers to be focused in the workshops. Almost everyone participated fully and sincerely.

All in all it was really good for them and me and gave me more confidence in the future for this kind of thing. We really are just beginning here with making our schools more progressive. I guess we have to start somewhere!

Continued from Page 20 NHE Introductory Program

The second section focuses on the child. Topics include: Fostering Spiritual Development, Facilitating Physical Well-Being, Nourishing Mental Growth and Enhancing Social Relationships.

The third section deals with administration. This includes improving relationships with parents, evaluating staff, students and programs, and upholding professionalism.

This program should be available beginning November 2001. To receive a copy please contact: **Mahajyoti** at <mjyoga@go.com> or **Ananda Marga Gurukula Liaison Office** <amgk.glo@gurukul.edu>

Newcastle, South Africa

Project Update of the Preschool Teacher Training Program - by Aryama

January 2001 I flew from my home in the USA to work for 6 months as a preschool teacher trainer in rural South Africa. I was Director of a program I named the Preschool Teacher Training Program (PTTP), an initiative to introduce and train teachers in Neo Humanist Education and basic areas like lesson planning and classroom management. This project was amazing for everyone involved: the Ananda Marga organizers, Didi Ananda Japasiddha and Didi Shanta; the preschool teachers who were trained; the preschoolers who benefited from the teachers' training; and myself. The PTTP was a huge success and deserves recognition for all those who worked hard to make it possible and to serve as a model for others trying to initiate teacher training courses, particularly in "developing" countries. Several areas of the PTTP are outlined, including its first planning and preparation, the program's structure, difficulties faced and participants' insights.

Planning and Preparation

Before outlining all the months of planning and preparation for the PTTP, I think it beneficial to have an understanding as to the current situation of South Africa. Though the South African government is taking serious measures in early childhood education, there is much to be done in meeting its goals of training preschool teachers, building schools and providing supplies. Because the government support provided is insufficient to meet the Children's Rights goals as listed in the New Constitution- the "right to proper care and security and to basic nutrition, health services and education"- early childhood development is dominated by non-governmental sectors. South Africa is in educational crisis as it pulls away from the apartheid system where the amount of funding for whites and blacks was equal, but the lower population of whites meant that the actual amount per white child was about 44 times that allotted for a black child! This lack of national funds for blacks has not been the only difficulty facing rural preschool educators, but many other insufficient or nonexistent systems, namely that of infrastructure like running water, sanitation, transportation and telecommunication. All these issues were considered when planning the PTTP.



Making Puppets

In planning for the PTTP, I corresponded via e-mail with the AM area coordinator, Didi Ananda Japasiddha, to get an idea of the schools' conditions and the scope of the PTTP and what areas should be covered. Though I had taught before, I decided that I would need more training to be a teacher trainer. I wanted to be sure to understand the developmental needs of young children so I took two graduate classes, one on preschool curriculum and the other on play and human development. Both helped me immensely with both theory and methodology and with practical knowledge gained from talking with other students in the classes, all of whom were preschool teachers.

Learning the issues of early childhood development would not be enough. I knew from my experience teaching in Ghana and from the area coordinator's e-mails that I would also need to bring materials with me. I imagined starting a resource centre like the one I helped to create in Ghana where teachers could check out children's books and teaching books. I asked for book donations from students in my graduate classes and posted flyers around campus. Unfortunately, the total amount was far less than I was hoping and so I spent my weekends searching for used books at the Salvation Army, Kiwanis Sales, and library book sales. By December, I had collected and packaged 8 boxes and shipped them in UPS M-bags (\$.77 a pound), which would arrive a couple weeks after I arrived in Newcastle, SA.

While looking for used books, I came across wonderful toys and play manipulatives like small plastic animal figures, wooden blocks, plastic stacking blocks, puzzles, and other materials. I even brought some "junk" like

countertop card samples and corks which would prove to be quite useful. Other supplies I had to purchase new like felt for making felt boards and blank cassettes for recording children's songs.

In addition to collecting materials and preparing myself to teach the teachers, I also made connections with kindergarten and first grade classes. I visited a nearby margii's class to interest first graders in the possibility of corresponding with children in rural South African preschools, or creches. They were very eager and inquisitive as to the South African lifestyle. Though this connection was successful and very rewarding, I had tried to organize letter correspondence with other AM NH schools around the world via the NHE e-mail forum that were not successful. I do not know if their school directors and teachers became uninterested or found other schools with which to correspond, but I found that, though correspondence had initially seemed a reality, communication between our South African schools and theirs was never made. I would hope that in future, such contacts will bring together schools from other countries to introduce children to multiculturalism and appreciation and tolerance for a diverse human population.

The PTTP Structure- a Winning Combination

Classes ran about five and a half months and were every other Saturday in Newcastle at my rented outbuilding. Teachers took public transport to Newcastle from the outlying oSizweni and township areas where they lived to arrive by 10.00. A total of 16 teachers attended the course, five of whom were from AM subsidized schools with the other 11 being from other non-AM preschools. Another five or so teachers came for a few classes here and there but for one reason or another did not complete the course. Due to limited space and resources and the amount of material covered, latecomers were not allowed. Teachers signed in at each class and I kept an attendance log as to who attended which sessions. Classes were taught in English, though Zulu is the mother tongue (and culture) of the black people living in the Kwa-Zulu Natal region, so the classes had to be stopped periodically for translation.

The PTTP was an exceptional opportunity for these teachers, as it was free. None of the government or non-profit TREE (Training and Resources in Early Education) courses is offered for free. Rather, to attend TREE courses, teachers have to pay exorbitant fees for each course, from Rand 500 (\$80) upwards, or better understood as a half year's wages, which was barely enough to survive, let alone save for a training course. Because the PTTP was not a certified NHE course with the government, it would have been difficult to charge teachers, even if they would have had money to pay.

In addition to being free, other incentives for teachers to attend the PTTP were free lunches and the promise of learning to make classroom materials for their schools.



Group Work with the Teachers

Didi Shanta prepared delicious vegetarian lunches each session, which were provided at no charge. Teachers thoroughly enjoyed the minced soy and cabbage over rice and other wonderful foods, which were celebrated, as most teachers were unable to afford vegetable diets but rather carbohydrate loaded foods like mealie meal (corn) and rice. As for learning to make materials for their schools, TREE and other programs included some classroom materials in the price of the course, but never

empowered the teachers to really make their own materials, save for utilizing cardboard boxes in making doll houses, play house furniture, and other toys. Using cardboard boxes was a good initiative, but in visiting TREE trained teachers' preschools, I realized that this novel idea was not as practical as I had originally thought. First of all, the cardboard boxes took up plenty of space and had to be stored inside. In one extreme case, the stored boxes took up half of one small room of a preschool, denying the 40 or so children that space that could have been better used as a play area. Another issue was that the children quickly tired of the boxes. Teaching only about making materials from cardboard boxes severely limited the industrious and creative potential of these teachers and made them dependent on purchasing TREE made materials like wooden matching cards, plastic animal and family cut outs and human body figures, which were made solely by TREE. Most teachers did not have the supplies to make their own materials like those made by TREE but if trained, I believe they could have found a way to

make them by organizing their local communities. Hence, TREE has a monopoly on the early education of teachers and the production of classroom materials in the rural areas and though seeming to be an organization empowering teachers, it cannot do so completely for fear of putting itself out of business.

As to the PTPP course curriculum, it was balanced between theory classes and practical workshops where teachers were able to make classroom materials. Over the course of my studies in the States and after arriving in SA and discussing my direction with Didi, I drew up a course list outlining the class dates, session theory topics to be covered, and resources needed. We wanted to introduce NH principles and ideas without making it into a complicated theory or a religious issue conflicting with their beliefs. We presented NH as a system of life as shown on the cover of The Circle of Love and the benefits and importance of meditation in tri-lateral child development. Most everyone in the course was very religious and accepted the principles of NH because they did not conflict with their own religious beliefs. The practical knowledge taught to the teachers was *kiirtan* and meditation.

The first several sessions were theory based to provide teachers with exposure to such practices as lesson planning and knowledge in early childhood play and development. After a few months of theory in these and other topics like classroom management and the importance of art and creative expression, the workshops were introduced as afternoon supplements to the morning theory topics. Those sessions in the second half of the course covered storytelling and making felt storyboard pieces, dramatization and puppet making, and numeracy and doll house making. The Circle of Love book was used throughout the course and supplemented with course packs and worksheets of information organized from the Internet. A review class was necessary after every 5-6 sessions to better internalize all that was covered.

Between the Saturday sessions, I traveled out to visit one preschool each day to observe the teachers in their school teaching environments to verify that they were using techniques taught and to assist them in applying what they had learned. Observation was a crucial part of this program because it validated the teachers' coursework and helped them bridge the oftentimes confusing and uncertainty of applying new theories to actual everyday work. But the observations not only helped the teachers, but also helped me to understand the real life situation of these teachers and their school conditions. Some taught in one-room schools and others in one preschool room connected to a primary school. Some served breakfast and lunch, others only

lunch and some no meals at all, depending on school fees. Some school lunches were supplemented by school vegetable gardens and others did not due to insufficient space or no parent involvement. Some had solely one teacher and others two to a classroom. The materials at each preschool varied immensely, depending on its location as either township or rural and the teacher's success in mobilizing the local community to make classroom materials. Because of all these varied conditions and many, many more, I realized that observation sheets would be necessary if I were to keep everything straight.

These sheets helped me prioritize the most critical aspects of the preschool program and focus on what should be required health and safety standards. Prior to the creation of these sheets, I had been overwhelmed by the physical conditions and had difficulty critiquing teachers' techniques and practices. Without the sheets, my visits were lacking direction and focus. For instance, I would notice that one school didn't have toilets, but would forget to note that at another school. Or I would ask to see one teacher's lesson plans and neglect to look over another's. By developing an observation standard, I able to compare the physical conditions at each of the schools and the teachers' skills as well as track the progress made at each preschool.

The observation sheets addressed two areas: Classroom Design for the physical environment of the class and school and Teacher Observations for reviewing the teacher's practices and techniques. In the Classroom Design section, for instance, I noted whether there was sufficient light, fresh air, drinking water, soap, space, materials, and other physical conditions. The Teacher Observation section used a 1-5 rating with 1 being the poorest and 5 being excellent. Of the ten measurables, the first five rated the teacher's characteristics: enthusiasm, love, patience, organization and attentiveness. The last five rated the practice and methods she used in teaching: good classroom management skills, positive more than negative, and the balance of activities between teacher and child directed, the use of multi-sensory activities for varied learning styles, and maintaining all these things while staying focused on a planned daily topic.

The last section on the observation sheet was for comments supporting my ratings with actual classroom scenarios I had observed. For example, if I rated a 2 for classroom management, I would support my rating with points I observed like that the teacher spoke negatively to a child rather than positively or humiliated slower children or other such inappropriate disciplinary practices. I filled two observation sheets, one to leave with the teacher to review and give her

goals to improve upon by my next visit and the other for me so that I could return the next time and identify improvements and create a record for each school. Though the 1-5 rating was subjective, no matter how objective I tried to design it, I believe that by systematizing the whole process, I was able to identify areas where teachers were struggling to implement certain teaching methods in their classrooms and appropriate or inappropriate teaching practice patterns both over time at each school and collectively as a group of schools. Such analysis helped me in adjusting the course sessions to be covered and in topics needed to review a second or third time. Another advantage to observing the teachers in their own environments was that I was aware of the teachers' realities and how they faced the daily challenges of teaching in a rural, "developing" area.

At the end of my five months directing the PTTP, we held a review for the final exam.

Concerned that short answer and essay questions would be difficult for them to answer thoroughly in English and for me to grade fairly, the exam format was three equal parts of true/false, multiple choice and matching. All my notes for each session were

printed out and available for copying. The class was split into two equal groups with consecutive exam dates in a local library so there was more space and a more formal environment. I believe that the final exam helped them stay focused throughout the course and assisted me in determining which areas of study, ie creative expression or lesson planning, were most difficult or still unclear for them.

Difficulties Faced and Future Improvements

As with all grassroots social projects- and particularly new initiatives- the greatest challenge faced in starting the PTTP was funding. Prior to my arrival, no project proposals had been approved to cover minimal expenses like the PTTP lunches, photo copied worksheets, materials for the workshops, transportation for teachers to attend the Saturday sessions, or any other seemingly small necessities. So much more could have been achieved if a project proposal written and funding collected. However, I knew that to bemoan and dwell on the lack of funds was not going to help in teaching the course. In fact, this daunting situation of

not having a budget had, in one way helped by forcing me to venture out into the community and make connections. For instance, once the course was started and we decided that we would need fabric scraps, thread, needles, buttons, scissors and other supplies, we asked shop owners, seamstresses and others for the supplies, which doubled as a public relations campaign.

Another difficulty linked closely with lacking funds was that the PTTP was not publicized to mobilize the local Newcastle community. A city of 400,000 inhabitants and a much higher standard of living than the surrounding townships, organizing Newcastle collaboration could have funded the entire course if not through money donations, then certainly through gifts and donated services. To a certain extent, these

connections were forged over the course as supplies were collected for materials, but so much more could have been arranged if AM were more connected to the community. The advantage to community organization is that even if money was not raised, the community itself could have supported much of the expenses we had had to struggle to arrange. Community connections could have helped with food donations by local

supermarkets, a bigger hall for the sessions, and donations of services and supplies.

Along the same lines as community involvement, I would highly recommend publicizing the course a couple months before it is to begin. Once advertised, teachers could send in registration sheets describing their educational background and preschool particulars along with their goals for the course and areas of interest. Though I collected such information over the course of the first few sessions, I could have come better equipped with materials and an understanding of their goals for the course. I think that the course would have been seen as more professional by the local community and more anticipated by teachers if it were advertised. Two articles about the PTTP course were published in the local Newcastle Times, outlining the program and its objectives. Both articles were well received by community members, particularly teachers zealous for training. Publishing project initiatives is necessary nowadays since programs sent to press seem to have



Learning to Make Finger Puppets

more validity; people tend to believe what is written in newspapers.

For those interested in initiating NHE training courses, I would also like to recommend that you first invest in equipment like a sewing machine, an electric saw and other machines to be used in making school materials. If we had had our own equipment, the materials output probably would have quadrupled because we would not have been relying on local carpenters and seamstresses to cut blocks and sew puppets or storyboard pieces.

Participants' Insights

So how did our grassroots PTTP compare with nationally recognized TREE and other teacher training courses? The power driving the PTTP was the combination of classroom theory and real life preschool observations so that the teachers were more aware of their actions and their effects on the children they were teaching. Teachers shared issues they were facing like students with learning disabilities and classroom disciplinary troubles so that their colleagues could provide insight and advice. Though each classroom dynamic is unique, sharing teaching experiences openly proved to be a unifying experience for all. Collaborating as teachers seemed to be a new phenomenon as most teachers are isolated and if they did come together, it was usually not more than two or three at a time. Hence, team spirit helped them to learn to think more critically and creatively when dealing with their own experiences. Rather than feeling isolated and relying on traditional teaching methods and practices, which tended not to be child appropriate, they began to rethink outside these limiting restrictions and apply the techniques from the PTTP sessions.

The most revealing testament to our success is not any statistical information but what the teachers had to say. When asked in a course evaluation how the PTTP compared with other courses they had taken, answers were that the PTTP was better, that it covered new areas like puppet making and storyboards, and that it made them more open to new ideas as teachers. The PTTP course was the first training experience for five or so of the teachers, one of whom explained how the PTTP had revolutionized her as a teacher and through her teaching, as a person. Others may have also agreed with her when she said that before the training, she had not realized that she could make things herself. Only with the encouragement and self-help dynamism of the PTTP did she come to see that she could make toys and classroom materials. "I can make toys for myself and I had that idea before, but there was nobody to encourage me to do that. But I have encouragement now because I must not stay and wait for somebody to do things for

me. I must on my own do that thing." This new sense of self as an empowered being may seem very basic, but for those who have not had the opportunity to learn or to be encouraged, self empowerment is the first step in becoming a strong person and resourceful teacher.

The comments about how to improve this course were that it should be much longer than five months, but several years. Other comments included that the government should know about it. In fact, I spoke with a government preschool education worker who was visiting one of our preschools and was interested in the PTTP. Apparently, the government does not offer much training for its education social work employees, who like the rural preschool teachers, are eager to study. Other teacher comments of ways to improve the course were that a teacher training school and resource centre should be built. These ideas have been hopes of the AM team in South Africa and hearing them echoed in the teachers' comments was encouraging.

I am so proud of these teachers' work; they have so little and yet are able to pull together the few resources they have to transform their schools. Seeing them working to improve South African preschools, made me dig deeper and work harder to help in whatever way I could. These women had taken it upon themselves to teach the small ones and to grow the roots of society for a strong future. These teachers learned knowledge to become better teachers, to improve their classrooms, to come together and help one another and to listen to their children. The PTTP was the first step of many for South Africa in countering its educational crisis; it was also the first step for future generations.

When asked what they would like to tell the world about South Africa and how they thought preschool education would change in the next 10-15 years, none of the teachers interviewed would commit to an answer of leaving or sinking further into the educational crisis. Rather, they said that they need funding and that this depends on the government. Responses ranged from a fatalist, defeated view as to the government's involvement to a more optimistic one of opportunity and hope. One teacher with a more optimistic view described the South African experience for outsiders, saying, "I would tell them South Africa is struggling, but we keep hope. We always stay in hope that tomorrow will be better, tomorrow will be better. We always think that tomorrow will be better."

For those readers interested in receiving e-mailed copies of the PTTP course outline, Saturday session notes, observation sheets, and final exam, please e-mail me at <erinpeterson@hotmail.com> To read more about the PTTP, visit <<http://homepage.mac.com/erinpeterson>>.

Sunrise Playschool, Fukuoka, Japan

Dragonfly Dream

By Didi Ananda Jayati

If you were in town, walking down the street leading to our little Playschool, the chances are that you would find yourself in a throng of people heading towards the nearby Fukuoka Dome to see a baseball game. Many turn their heads in curiosity as they pass our yard, never quite knowing what colourful scenes they might see.



The school was started in this eighty-year old traditional Japanese house about eleven years ago, which at that time was situated in a quiet cul-de-sac with a field opposite. Since then the landscape has changed tremendously, with the Dome being built a couple of minutes walk away, by the sea front, as well as a large, busy road with continuous traffic roaring past. The building was originally a summer house situated right on the beach, until many years ago a large tract of land was reclaimed from the sea. When I pass and nod to old-timers who live on our street, I wonder how it must be for them, when almost every month or so, it seems, another old, beautiful wooden house is pulled down and a parking lot or apartment building soon takes its place. Life has changed so much, and some seem bewildered by all the aggressive modernity around them.

Behind the house is a small but wonderful jungly garden, which belongs to our plant-and- people-loving landlady. In her seventies, still sprightly and ever active, wisely busying herself with her beloved plants which overflow from her garden into our yard and out onto the street, she radiates affectionate benevolence. Indeed, she is the grandma of our school, and often pops in and out to rearrange some washing, deposit some freshly picked leaves and vegetables from the garden on the doorstep, or to deliver some piping hot baked sweet potatoes as a surprise gift for our snack time.

In this growing metropolis I try in vain to imagine that my small corner is actually in a village, our school and its little yard increasingly incongruous with the growing sophistication and westernized development all around. But it is a special place where children weave their own fantasies and games. You may see

them searching under flower pots for 'dango mushi' - one of Japanese children's favourite insects, which rolls itself into a ball when faced by playful giants; or busily rustling up some food with the pots and pans in the sandpit. They could be in a multicoloured tent constructed on top of the play slide and its ramparts, or this time of year, splashing happily in a couple of paddling pools and spraying each other (and often me, narrowly missing pedestrians) with water. The fragrance of children's joy and exuberance wafts through the flimsy lattice gate, tugging at the hearts of all but the most sombre passers-by, attracting them inexplicably to this whimsical enclave in spite of themselves.

It's a small school with just one big main room, floored with tatami mats long-surrendered to the rule of children. Countless dancings, jumpings, stampings, (not to mention my own bumpy practicing of Aikido rolls after school), have created their own terrain, which is somehow endearing and homely in a well-worn sort of way. The first time I entered this building just over three years ago, I felt, "Ah, this is my home", as it is for most of the day, to about 13 - 15 students aged between two and six.

Out of the back windows we can glimpse orange dragonflies, giant butterflies, and the occasional excitingly huge, but harmless spider peering back or sometimes visiting, necessitating a rescue by me, to be safely deposited across the road, where there is still a small patch of green. Once a preying mantis arrived unexpectedly, and after it was regally ensconced in a big open box, the children gathered around, replying delightedly to its "Namaskar"! The most illustrious visitor so far, though, was a gorgeous lizard who lived among the potted plants in the yard last summer,

emerging and disappearing in a sleek, tantalizing flash of colour like a living jewel...



After digging up organic sweet potatoes

There is plenty of room for improvement, but the loving and playful spirit of the school is its strong point. We specialize in accommodating children with severe food allergies, something which is increasing at an alarming rate in Japan. Most of the children are Japanese, some from Japanese-American marriages, and a few from other countries; two of our present students are German. The children develop social skills and are usually very caring of each other, especially the older ones of the younger, but also vice-versa, with children of different ages often playing happily together in creating a new world to share for a few hours.

Three of the walls are mostly sliding glass panels, and the room is designed in a unique way which facilitates the designing and creating of numerous types of houses and hide-aways, some with semi-transparent curtains, and others with colourful Indonesian wraps and large clips to secure things in place. The children are very creative, and love to invent.

We are blessed with a wonderful group of parents, some of whom help in the school, including Riwa san, a remarkable woman who is bringing up her children in a wholesome and creative way without television and other pseudo-cultural drains. She is wonderful at mime, and when she shows off her talent, we *really are* in the jungle, *taste* that delicious fruit, and *hear* that crocodile snapping his jaws... Hayato, a progressive father who excels in "boys' stuff", rough-and-tumble and fatherly care, often makes time in his busy

schedule to drop by once a week or so to share his expertise.

Akiko, his wife, and Yoshiko, another mother, also give a lot of sisterly support and use their abundant creativity to suggest and put into practice new things - a 'Oneness Bazaar' with homemade vegetarian food, crafts, and a traditional Japanese children's entertainer to attract people was a really fun event - this was a fund raiser for charity; specially invented snacks, interesting outings, and many more ideas flow from their original minds. Michiko san is our dear 'auntie' figure, who is peaceful, friendly and reliable; children feel comfortable in her care, especially new children who are still missing their parents. Miho san is our gracious Music teacher, who comes once a week to play the piano and sing Japanese songs and musical games with the kids, also teaching some of the girls after school - they're doing very well, and often practice during free moments during the day as well.

Pepe san is a local musician who comes to sing and play his delightful songs on the guitar. Recently we recorded a CD single at his cafe, with our own special 'Sunrise Song' - "We are the Sunrise Family, with joyful, open hearts...", featuring him, and our parents and children, singing the words both in English and Japanese.

Maniis'a, our most senior margii, is a dancer who organizes and produces yearly charity dance programs with a large number of people, including mothers (and a couple of fathers) and children, as well as babies. She choreographs the dances, designs the costumes, teaches the classes and generally works like a human whirlwind to create a fantastic, unforgettable experience by her inner warmth, dynamism, determination and love.

Sister Taranii faithfully helped and sometimes almost single-handedly ran the school last year, during difficult months. She contributed a lot of hard work, positive energy and useful ideas; we remember her and appreciate having her with us.

Re-reading all this, the school sounds great, but there is, as I mentioned, a lot more that can be done to give the children a richer and more fulfilling experience. In a few weeks I will start studying and working on the NHE correspondence course, which is something invaluable, a vital and long awaited tool to get myself and the school moving and developing to our fuller

expression and creative development - what a wonderful chance!

The future of our Sunrise Playschool is another story - that will emerge to be told another time, for now all is unformed and nebulous, nestling in the Cosmic Mind.

My deepest thanks to all those who put their energy and care into the running of this school, as well as the

Gurukul coordinators, and those who work in all the other schools and projects around the world. Those labours will now or in future bring forth their fruits - whether those are just our growthful struggle, or the wonderful reward of children, teenagers and adults carrying the love and spiritual essence we share together out into the world, each one's heart a garden with graceful dragonflies...

A glimpse of our day...

Peeping through the window at our school day - that would be the best way to catch our full spontaneity and joy without any shyness on our part.

The children arrive from 10am with a cheery bustle and morning greetings, untangling bags, hats and tea bottles, putting away their shoes and scrambling eagerly up the two steps and into their beloved domain.

Until about 10.40, we have free play, which could be anything from drawing, practicing the piano for some, playing with blocks, puzzles and other games, to making origami figures. When the air tingles with mischievous microvita and the spirit moves us, we play-wrestle or sometimes dance in abandon to Okinawan or Irish music, with the fortunate few early children taking turns to be spun around by me until we are all laughing and out of breath and have to lie down on the long-suffering tatami to rest. When the next few parents arrive, sometimes while I'm in mid swirl or encrusted by clinging kids, I often hurriedly switch from my orange-whirling-kangaroo or friendly-growly-wrestling dragon personas to the more sedate welcoming didi, so as not to overwhelm folks who live in the 'real' world.

Next is Circle Time, with songs, games and stories. After noticing that several of the more kinesthetically oriented children tended to squirm and get bored by sitting down for too long when still full of morning energy, I extended the simple 'Love everybody, help everybody' song, to include 'Jump everybody, hop everybody'. It proved so popular that it is growing into an amazingly large repertoire, filling the room with all sorts of occasionally colliding prowling beasts, flying birds, jumping kangaroos, dolphins, frogs, rabbits, you name it. For variety they 'walk like a giant, run like a robot, become balloons, fireworks, snakes; climb imaginary ropes and ladders - we invent more each day, with the children giving their



suggestions. When even the most energetic child starts to lag, the words change to 'Lie down and have a rest.' The children 'sleep', 'snore', 'wake up' and then sit in a circle again, this time ready to focus on more sedentary topics. It works like magic, and quieter children enjoy just sitting and singing the words, watching the hilarious antics around them. After that we do some work on English, pre reading, pre maths, art or music, though the structured lessons in language arts and maths need more development.

At about noon we do our meditation circle with subtler songs, especially the children's favourite: 'I Love This Tiny Green Island', then kiirtan, with most of the children spontaneously dancing lalita. After that we sit in a circle and meditate around a candle. People often give us candles for Circle Time.

Then comes lunch and the children pull out their simple but often exquisitely arranged bentos and eat together after singing "Thank you for the food we eat..." Sometimes in cooler weather we designate a day when each child may bring a vegetable to school, to be

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Ananda Marga School, Nicaragua

By Didi Prema

It is difficult to express in words how fortunate the children in Nicaragua are to learn Baba Nam Kevalam.

For the past 2 years I am in Managua and since it is my first posting as an Acarya, it has been an odyssey trying to make this place grow creatively. I say this because when I arrived here in the middle of 1999, there were big problems, primarily financial in the school, that almost caused the school to close down. At that time the school had grades up to 4th grade primary. I thought that the coming year it would not be possible for me to pay so many salaries without help. That is why I decided to finish the school year and for the coming year 2000 to close the primary school and continue only with kindergarten. It was a great sadness for many of the children to leave the school. Most of these children went to public school near our school. The director of that school came to congratulate us for the good job we had done with these children. There was a clear difference between them and the rest of the children in regards to respectfulness, sensibility and good manners with others. This was inspiration for me to give myself new targets.

After the year 2000 I felt more prepared and adjusted to the culture, idiosyncrasies, the heavy heat, food, the people and the disorder of the society that had suffered many wars and is worn out by its extreme poverty and fear of delinquency. I felt there was so much more I could do to help! With the desire to be able to do more deep and significant work, we decided to open the complete primary school in a way that is rarely seen in Nicaragua. It became a semi-boarding school which means the children spend the whole day from early morning until 5 PM in the school. We provide lunch and pick up the children, who live further away, by car. With a lot of sacrifice we acquired a mini van that I fill-



up with children every morning and then I take them back home every day after school.

As the school building has only 3 classrooms, and there is no playground, I asked myself how is this going to work out. The solution, which is very common here in Nicaragua, was to combine different grades. For example 1st and 2nd grades together, 3rd and 4th grade together and 5th and 6th grade together. As the children stay longer hours in the school, we increased various extracurricular activities such as doing homework, arts and crafts, dance lessons and flute and computer. Once a week we take them to big swimming pool to learn swimming which most of them did not know before but now even the small ones can swim. I give English classes and different game activities. Next year we will have drawing classes.



Each morning we have one hour of 'Morning circle' of many songs in different languages, story telling, meditation and relaxation. It is the time to share ideas, problems and school and pupil announcements. Almost every day, we discuss with the children how to take care of plants, how to keep cleanliness, how to respect the teachers, and classmates and how to take care of school materials. We talk about ecology and how to take care of the environment and how not to say bad words. They share their experiences about the different subjects as well. All this in the beginning was very hard. For example to use the garbage bin - here in Nicaragua the people are not educated in these things. It is very common to see them throw garbage in any place. There are now some significant changes in the children.

Since we don't have a playground, we go to a park nearby; there the children get their sports classes and spend their free time. Once a month we have outings to different places. This year we went to the zoo, to historic places, to the ice-cream factory where the best thing was the delicious ice cream they ate, to museums, to the national ecological conservation area and to tourist places. Ninety percent of the children this year are new and they are not accustomed to the vegetarian food we serve; this too was not easy in the beginning.

Education in general in Nicaragua is very limited. The normal monthly salary of a teacher is \$70 for half day and \$140 for full day. This obviously is not enough for their families to eat. This creates many social problems and general dissatisfaction and consequently teachers may direct such emotions to the children and the children are beaten with rulers and punished harshly while being shouted at. Due to the conditions in which they live, almost 100% of them have very unstable families. It is a great challenge to bring some happiness and consciousness to such souls.

William is a child that was abandoned by his mother, whom he never saw again. His aunts and grandmother brought him up. His father seldom visited him. His family works in the market and cannot take proper care of him, that's why he got involved in a gang stealing and selling drugs. Now that he is in the school most of the time and after lots of coaching, he is helping his uncle to sell lottery. With this he is paying for his school materials. He was 3 years behind but slowly he is becoming more responsible and caring for his classmates.

Another child is Evert; he came to the school highly unmotivated, having an inferiority complex and a lot of problems. His family is very poor, living in a wooden-galvanized iron room at the edge of a small river near the school. His mother worked selling food at nights but was attacked by a gang and so now she has to work washing and ironing clothes. Evert helps her to be able to buy his school uniform and materials. Now he is one of the best students in the school and his personality is totally changed.

Uriel was illiterate at 8 years of age; his family were farmers from the countryside. Due to the war they had

to move to the city. Here they had no alternative but to sell water and candies at the traffic lights in the street. At the time of harvesting coffee they go to work to get money for their food but to think of buying clothes or for Uriel to go to school was far away from their small minds. We came to know about them and now Uriel and his brother study in our school. Now they know how to write and read.

I am not telling something more terrible than what we see in the news. Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in the world and one can see the suffering in the people. At the same time their sacrifice, spirit, longing for improvement and simplicity teach us a lot.

Expectations and goals

There is a great opportunity to expand our project, where more children could have the opportunity for something special. This year my hope is that we may find good land to buy for the possibility to establish a firm base for an exemplary future school with space to do everything necessary for children. There is no doubt that when this would be established, educators and families would look at it with eyes of wonder. To be able to provide such a significant influence is not out of reach; on the contrary, we need to prepare ourselves and work hard to revolutionize the minds of those who couldn't get the opportunity yet to see something different.

Service Activities also are in our plans. We want to visit children's hospitals and old people's homes and sing songs and Baba Nam Kevalam. We want to talk with them and bring them tasty food. The solidarity the poor give to the poor is something very clear in this culture.



Theatre

There is a nice project in planning that is to bring theatre to other schools. A group of Margis and sympathetic professional actors is forming a neo-humanist theatre group to bring creative teaching in ecology and morality to the children. The access to art in Nicaragua is rare and expensive and seldom focused on the moral values for the masses. This project still demands a lot of work.

My heart overflows with feeling and ideas for bringing altruistic feelings to the children and inspiring them to experience the neo-humanistic philosophy in all its holistic aspects.

It's a pity that I have to be so worried to make this school survive before I can take care of its standard. Due to this reason permanent help would be welcome. Next year we will have more children and we will have to change the furniture for more appropriate ones. And the main goal for next year is the construction of a new school. Any help is necessary and would be well received.

Any questions can be sent to this address
<dprema@bw.com.ni>

Last, with sincere effort and love for our work, sufficient positive energy this will become a reality and it will bring to those involved a reason for living – a true mission of life.

Here are the lyrics to the song that the children sing after school, for all those who can read Spanish

No cabe mas decir que con sincero esfuerzo y amor por lo que uno hace,
suficiente energía positiva llevara las cosas a una realidad,
en que haran es las vidas de los involucrados una base para una razon de vivir,
una verdadera misión de vida



Continued from Page 30 **Sunrise Playskool Japan**

diligently and painstakingly scrubbed, chopped and added to the pot for a delicious home made soup! After cleaning up, it's time to go to one of the nearby parks, or in the hottest summer we rig up some shade and set out the paddling pools, dragging the big slide over to increase the fun.



Once we had an adventure... I wanted to take the children walking along a river close to our school and play on its bank a fair way up . The rest of the river was enclosed by concrete surrounds, so was inaccessible. I was with about eight children and a new mother who had recently enrolled her two-year old at the school. We

walked and walked... and walked, but the place I had in mind was just to far away! We had diligently equipped glass jars with covers and string handles to temporarily catch small fish or any other diminutive water creatures we might find, and I really didn't want to disappoint the kids. Finally, we stopped so that everyone could catch their breath and have a refreshing drink.

We were on a narrow road next to the river, with an apartment building to our right. Suddenly Leo, our oldest boy, gave a shout, "Hey, Didi, come here! Crabs!" Miraculously, the day was saved. There in a little square drain beside a wall, was a veritable colony of tiny crabs! Delightedly, the children carefully caught one each, with the bigger children helping the smaller ones, and we bore them back to the school in triumph, riding in two hastily hailed taxis, having run out of both time and leg power. The children were absolutely fascinated and were allowed to take their treasure home, with strict instructions to free each crab in a suitable place near the river that evening.

Getting back to our normal schedule, at around 2.45 on most days we share a snack, usually of fresh fruit. The school officially closes at 3pm, but parents are welcome to stay and socialise until 3.30 as long as they keep an eye on their children, and often helpfully assist in cleaning up. Then the children go home, until the next day of exploration dawns

Sunrise Kindergarten, Finland

by Avkt. Ananda
Anudhyana' A'c.

Sunrise Kindergaten – Olari was started in August 1996 in Espoo City in the Olari district, Finland. It is actually the second and also larger of the two kindergatens we have in Finland. Each school is managed by a Didi.

Surrounded by a typical Finnish forest of pine and birch trees our Sunrise Kindergarten opens into nature through

its big wide glass windows, as squirrels ramble outside in the flowery spring or as the soft hues of the winter snow stand silent against the pale dreamy sky. It may be hot, it may be cold, but inside are 20 busy and happy children discovering the world with new friends. The children have spacious physical environment of 240 sq. m. with 9 rooms including entrance hall, office, kitchen, dining room, nap room and four classrooms. The daily outdoor activities take them, a short walk away, to one park near the center and another one beside the forest. The environment motivates the

children to explore nature, to find different forest creatures and plants, to get familiar with natural and seasonal cycles.

Our school environment uses learning centers for different activities, including some Montessori apparatus, computer, sports, puzzles, books, keyboard and *kantele* (traditional Finnish instrument), arts and crafts, etc. Each learning corner is fairly equipped so the children have a lot of choices and are motivated to seek and learn themselves. The atmosphere is positive, accepting, full of genuine fondness and caring. The children get feedback on their thoughts (when they share them), on their doings and behavior from an adult every day. Since the ratio in Finland is one adult to every seven children, each child or group get a one-to-one interaction. Our staff this year also come from abroad - England, Canada and Philippines. Sunrise Kindergarten is run as a private English language school for a multi-cultural and multi-lingual mix of young children.

This brings about the opportunity for children of

various nationalities to lower barriers of differences of color or appearance. In the kindergarten's chat time the children's stories and experiences from far away countries are discussed. We bring about the attitude "I am good, you are good, he is good, she is good". Everything and everyone are important. This help shapes attitudes in families too.

Since the English language is the second or third language to most of the children, developing language skills requires time and planning. To guide our English program a curriculum has been designed together with a staff of native English speakers. In order to ensure that everyone dares to speak as much English as possible creating a good atmosphere is important. We support the development of the English language by reading children's literature, songs and rhymes; the children tell stories in English and do puppet theatre performances. Picture cards, conversation



pictures, books and the like develop language and communication skills. We also teach the basics of reading and writing. Those children who are interested in and capable of learning to read and write get support in these skills.



The starting activity of the day is the Morning Circle where these tiny tots sing through the English vocabulary, greetings, calendar, nature care and Silent Time with Baba Nam Kevalam song and guided visualization. The singular educational goal is a child's balanced emotional, moral, social, intellectual and intuitional growth as it forms a safe building ground for life. This is achieved with love, equality, respect and responsibility for nature and people.

We try to make the cooperation between families and the preschool open and trusting. In order to maintain teaching, rearing, the children's happiness, and the parents' trust, we organize parents' nights every other month. In addition, we arrange individually half-hour long discussions with parents at least once a term. The parents help us with their verbal feedback and annual written evaluation of our child-care to direct child-rearing to become a shared and conscious effort. Children too are interviewed at home once a year to find out what is fun or boring, what they learned or want to learn. When the situation arises the community consultative services for children with special needs are solicited.

The local library is visited every

month for story telling and computer services. Older children of six years also visit the local primary school to get to know their future environment. This promotes cooperation between schools and teachers. We seek help from other international kindergartens in their assessment practices of the child development.

The personal curriculum checked twice a year is still in its evolving stages; and its aim is to ensure that each child makes normal progress in their developmental stages, not on the measure of their knowledge. Our kindergarten curriculum based on Neo-humanistic principles was accepted by the Espoo City in the year 2000. The neo-humanistic principles follow the benevolence to all creatures, so lacto-vegetarian delicious meals cooked in the school are one of the features that differentiate us from most schools. The complementary activities all through the year may include visit to the elderly home, figure skating show, police show, puppet theater, trips to the museum, zoo, beach and circus, and our vegetarian dinner events. To celebrate the season's festivities, we stage regularly a colorful Christmas Play and Spring Play with the presentation of graduating students, to the delight of the families and relatives. At these times, we discover how wonderfully each child handles himself or herself on stage despite seemingly disastrous rehearsals. Then, we go home with smiles and memories of the wonder of childhood.



Quiet Time: An environment for school success

Teaching Children Meditation in the Public Schools

Research and Curriculum Framework

Vishala, from Connecticut, USA, was invited by the Yale New Haven Teachers' Institute to develop a curriculum unit for using meditation in the public schools. The unit she developed is based on both current scientific research and an exploration of successful pilot programs, with particular emphasis on the one used in the NHE School, Progressive School of Long Island. Her paper, which combines both the research and practical curriculum framework, is available through the Yale New Haven Teachers' Institute or directly from:

Vishala <vish2vish@aol.com>.

Below is the Introduction to the paper, which provides an Overview of the material that is covered and an Overview of the program. The program can be adopted for any school..

Goal

The goal of this unit is to develop a "Quiet Time" curriculum that can be used as a tool to better connect students' inner selves and experiences to their outer learning process, while reducing situational stresses. "Quiet Time" can increase the students' school and life success.

Objective I is to provide a technique that students can use to "quiet" their inner selves and reduce their individual situational stresses, thereby reducing the effect of those stresses on their academic learning potential.

Objective II is to use the class which takes place right after "quiet time" to have students reflect on their selves and to interact in a positive way with the outside environment while practicing reading and writing skills.

Objective III is to provide students with an optimum mental state for creative activity and higher order thinking skills that can be applied to reading, discussion, and art activity extensions.

Introduction

Today's world can be overly stimulating, stressful, and chaotic for children. The value of quiet reflective time in which children can calm their inner selves, reduce stress, integrate their experiences and start their school learning with an ideal "mental palate" is

now being explored. Music and body exercises (stretching, yoga, Tai Chi) are being used to bring children, through their different senses, to a state of mind where they can be in touch with more of themselves. "Quiet Time" can be defined as a time when children can approach their inner selves through guided imagery, meditation, and reflective reading and writing.

So many of our children come to school with extensive external stresses and traumas. Activating their brains and inner motivation, so that they can receive the most from learning experiences, is very difficult. The Rationale for this unit will start with a brief survey of the research that has been done on the negative elements in the environment of some of our most "at risk" children and how these elements affect the children's intelligence, testing, and school performance. A short overview of current research on intelligence will follow. Aspects of newer thinking concerning intelligence will be discussed, especially Gardner's multiple intelligence model and Sternberg's Triarchic intelligence model. New Western models of intelligence will be compared with Eastern models of the mind, and how these two models together might lead to a broader understanding of how a child develops will be explored. If these two models are connected and used to help students access their "inner selves," we might create a better environment for all kinds of learning. For example, enhancing Gardner's intra-personal intelligence in children through "Quiet Time" techniques, and reading and writing extension activities, might give children a better internal environment for learning in more traditional arenas such as reading, decoding, and comprehension. Finally, the current research on how meditation affects brain integration and function will be discussed.

Current model programs in schools that employ inner disciplines, such as meditation, music, guided imagery, yoga, and reflective reading and writing, will be explored. These models have been used successfully and their effect on learning and intelligence is promising. Several different pilot projects in private and public schools will be discussed.

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Ananda Marga Sunrise School Melbourne, Australia

By Rita'

These are extracts from our weekly reflections. We share them with parents at the school as a way to demonstrate how we translate the philosophy of Neo Humanist Education in daily practice.

05.02.01

"We had a very important discussion this week.. As part of our philosophy we aim to teach the children ethical values such as sharing something they own with someone else. The Ananda Marga organization is in the process of setting up a school in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and they need donations of materials and equipment. We explained this to the children and suggested that they could help the new school by donating one of their own toys. We stressed the importance of sharing something of your own with others you don't know and who have less than yourself.

At first we had a mixed reaction to the proposal. Some were eager to give a toy away whilst other thought it wasn't such a good idea, but after a few days the children who were hesitant to give, had already something in mind to give away"

We wish to ask parents/guardians to help the children choose a toy to donate next week and reinforce the concept of sharing without expecting anything in return and to foster a global love and unity towards all people in our world."

05.03.01

"On Monday we sang songs with Didi playing the guitar. These songs are about universal love and environmental messages such as looking after and respecting plant and animal life. The children's favorite is Baba Nam, Kevalam, Love is all there is. Our new friends are learning all these new songs".

"We had a frangipani tree planted inside the tyre and unfortunately some branches were knocked down so we had a discussion about how to avoid it happening again. We explained to the children that the tree was just a baby tree and needed to be treated with care just like a real baby. It was decided that children should not walk around the tyre until the tree was much bigger."



26.03.01

"As part of our philosophy we aim to teach the children to respect animal and plant life. Every day the children enjoy giving our food scraps after morning and afternoon tea to our rabbit and guinea pigs and water our flowers and trees."

"The benefits of cooking experiences are such as learning about healthy food; scientific concepts such as the change from solid object to liquid forms; social skills such as cooperation and sharing a meal; self-help skills; completing a task; extending self esteem and confidence."

21.05.01

"This week we taught the children how to say Hello in several languages.

We stuck the words on the glass doors with our handprints waving Hello. The children were very interested in the different ways of saying Hello. This experience is one way of fostering universal unity and acceptance of different cultures/languages."

18.06.01

"Children at this age group (3-5) have already established in their intellect the characteristics that make people look different from each other e.g. skin colour.

Tess, Kara, Genevieve were in book corner when the conversation turned to mention Krishna (work experience student from Indian background who spent time with us this week).

Tess said to her peers, "Your skin is brown like Krishna & mine is white, but it gets brown in summer."

When children accept different skin colours without prejudice, we are building a better society for the future and that is a job for teachers and parents alike."



02.07.01

"By the age of 5, both girls and boys think that the female role is less valued and valuable than the male role. Many boys prefer to behave in ways associated traditionally with the male role and reject qualities they have learnt to associate with the female role. Girls will easily behave in ways associated with both roles but see the male role as more interesting and exiting. Gender is a public rather than a private category and children recognise that they are not as free as individuals to vary the way gender is taken up.

Sexism restricts life choices for both girls and boys and reduces the possibility of children developing to their full potentials. As teachers we need to teach the children a series of beliefs, attitudes and practices based on the belief that gender does not determine an individual's capabilities and that the actions of one gender are not more valuable than those of the other."

09.07.01

"Tess and Kara were playing inside the cubby house when some of the boys stuck their heads in and made growling noises at them. The girls did not appreciate that and protested I don't like that!

Most of our children are able to communicate their feelings assertively which is a useful skill to have. Our philosophy teaches children non-harming attitudes. By discussing our feelings through role modeling, we show the children this is an acceptable way of dealing with aggressive behaviour."

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN PRACTICING YOGA / MEDITATION

PHYSICAL flexibility coordination muscle tone
balance
spatial awareness

SOCIAL / EMOTIONAL

confidence
cooperation
self esteem
well-being
calmness, balanced
fosters empathy
self control

INTELLECTUAL

concentration
awareness of control of own body and mind
clarity of mind, alertness
more responsive to needs of any situation

SPIRITUAL

sense of oneness with all of creation & our innermost Self
experience deep happiness and joy within

Continued from Page 36 Teaching Meditation in Public Schools

The concrete Curriculum Unit Plan will involve formulating a developmentally appropriate practice that can be taught with K-12 students and used in public schools, specifically a 4/5-grade curriculum. This unit can be used and modified according to the developmental needs of each child. The unit will be based on a combination of different methods and techniques, with an emphasis on the groundbreaking work of the Progressive School of Long Island, a private school in New York. Their approach will be modified to make it appropriate for a public school setting. The unit can be piloted with a small, diverse group of students; or a grade level, and expanded later. This unit will include character building, literature-based activities, high order thinking activities, and subtle aesthetic comprehensive arts activities.

Education on all levels, in all directions, for all people

NHE Efforts in Venezuela

By Didi Ananda Sadhana

In December 1999, Venezuela suffered a big natural disaster of floods and landslides. We watched with horror on television how in some places mudslides were sweeping away houses, cars and people. Rivers of mud and boulders had come down from the mountains destroying everything it found in their path. In some places mud had reached up to four stories high.

I had just arrived in Venezuela a few months before, and together with two other workers (Didi Ananada Amegha and Dada Atmapranananda) we started to look for a place where we could help. About two hours from Caracas we found an area that had suffered from floods due to the heavy rain and the breaking of a dam (lack of maintenance). We started to bring drinking water, food and other basic items. AMURT and AMURTEL from different countries came to offer support in our relief efforts.

During the 6 months of distribution we got to know the area and its people. The majority of the people of this area, called Barlovento, are from African descent and were brought as slaves. They have their own culture and are very well known for their music. Throughout the decades (or centuries) they have suffered neglect and discrimination. Observing the needs of the people, AMURTEL decided to stay with a long-term project. We got a piece of land and started the construction of a Center that will attend to the all-round needs of the people, especially those of women and children.

Our focus has been one small and very poor community called La Guairita. The people in that



village were living in deplorable conditions. Their houses made of mud were falling apart due to several floods they had suffered over the years. After the most recent flood the government finally moved in and built new housing for most of the families. Beside the distribution of relief items in this village, AMURT/EL gave special attention to the children through extra baby food, school material, celebrating Children's Day etc. This had a very positive effect on our relationship with the people.

At this moment we have a group of 15 adolescents from this community with whom we are doing an agricultural project. They grow a certain crop, which they themselves will harvest and sell. They learn about group work, they learn moral principles, they learn about financial management and many other things. But sometimes I think that the most important thing they learn is that they are important, that they count.

This school year AMURTEL will give special attention to the school. Teachers and parents in this community are having a horrible relationship, many kids go to school only when they want and teenagers finish their primary school at the age of 14 without knowing how to read properly or how to do divisions. And everybody is complaining about everybody.

Last Sunday we finished a sewing course with 20 women. The goal is to start a small business with several of the women who successfully finished the course. They have already started to sew aprons with a design of cacao (chocolate, their local crop) and it looks they are selling. We are now getting ready for Christmas. We want to create a group of women and teach them to work in cooperative spirit, which for many will be a very new experience.

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Ulan Batar Schools, Mongolia - photos from Kulapati's Tour



Cultural performance by children of Ananda Marga school



One of several Ananda Marga schools in Ulan Batar; this one has 30 children



With children of Didi Ananda Kalita's children's home



Summer School at Ulan Batar

Ulan Batan, Mongolia NHE Primary School in the Planning Stages for the children of Lotus Center

Primary School Volunteers needed

This article by Didi Ananda Kaomudi gives a view into life at the Lotus Center where the new school is being planned.

Didi burst in the door, with an excited twinkle in her large blue eyes. "I've just done something impulsively, on the spur of the moment. I don't know if I should have." I hold my breath and wait. After a month and a half of working with Didi Ananda Kalika in the Lotus Children's Center in Mongolia, I've come to know that anything surprising can occur in a moment and its best to be prepared for the unexpected. "I've brought home eight new children!" She exclaimed, with as much of a shock in her voice, as that force which struck my mind. "Eight more children?" I mused out loud. It was a bit difficult to grasp, given that the day before we were discussing how to fit in the 25 children who will soon return from the Summer Camp in the country side, now that the babies house is totally full with small infants, and the toddlers will need to move into the gers and small sheds which the older children and teenagers are occupying. So, suddenly another eight are to join the family. Didi smiles at me; "I just couldn't help myself, I took them out of emotion. Because they were hungry and crying to get into the car, I just couldn't leave them behind."

That morning, Didi had gotten up early, as she had been invited to go into the countryside for the day, to visit a hospital, which housed mostly patients with mental disabilities. She was requested to see a three-year-old girl, whose parents had left her, but had no apparent disorders. The hospital staff was concerned that she needed to be moved to a more suitable environment for normal development. So Didi had left, with the idea that she may be returning with one new girl for the Lotus Center. But upon arrival to the hospital, she found that there were rooms full of up to 20 children, who were suffering, as there was not enough money to feed them all. Some had slight physical disabilities, and some were also slow in their mental development, but many were able to talk to her, and to ask to be taken out. The staff in the hospital also were troubled for their charges. They also reported to Didi that the situation for these children was very difficult. There was not enough room for

them all, and on saying so, a nurse led Didi out of the children's wards, and into the adult section, where younger children were forced to live amongst adults with mental disabilities. In that ward Didi met a woman who is slightly retarded. She was taking care of a two-year-old child that had been abandoned, but was otherwise normal in all respects of development. The woman asked Didi with great feeling, to please take this little girl, for if she grew up in the hospital, she would have no future at all. Didi agreed, and immediately, the staff began to also make requests on behalf of other children, explaining that they did not have enough resources to clothe or educate these children, and were at times concerned that they were not getting enough to eat, so that they could grow up healthily. Within a few moments, while Didi was explaining that she could perhaps manage five children, the nurses had the children already lined up, and were writing their names onto pieces of paper and stuffing these down their shirts. Didi was shocked, as she was expecting that the director would prepare five children for a future time, and that there would be more chance for her to prepare her staff back in the Lotus Center. But no, it all happened so quickly, as the children themselves understood that there was a chance to go to another home, so many began to join the line, asking that Didi please take them. She couldn't refuse their appeals, and so, finally, eight were loaded into the jeep, sitting on the laps and between the seating to all fit in. Then the long journey home, during which time, Didi tried to reconcile her feelings, with concerns for her overworked staff, the space problems all ready apparent in the home, and the fact that some of these children were of special needs, and would require especially trained staff to help them.

Despite all of that, she maintained that something felt right; for she was extending the resources she had, for the benefit of some of the most unfortunate people. These children have been completely discarded. There is a stigma in Mongolia, which is often attached to children who are seen as not normal, and this attitude was reflected in the names of two children Didi spoke to. "What's your name?" she asked two of the older boys. "Don't know" one replied "Don't care," Answered the other. Didi, finding these answers strange, reached into their shirts to see what the staff had written. Sure enough, there was printed "Don't know" and "Don't care" on the papers that bore their names.

At the Lotus Children's Centre, we now have 58 Children, living between a babies home, that can house up to 15, two sheds, with one room and two rooms between them, and two family size gers, which usually house 5 - 8 people. (A ger is a traditional Mongolian round tent, made of felt with a fire inside.).

The children often sleep two to a bed, or lie together in a long row, sharing their futons, sometimes 3 or 4 under one cover. There is such a need in Mongolia, still for these children to be in Didi's care, for if not, some would have to return to the streets, or be locked up in detention centers if picked up by the police, or be fed into institutions like the hospital that Didi visited, which have insufficient resources to keep them.

In the past weeks, Didi has been working on a design for a new building, a two floor home, where all the children can live comfortably together, with rooms enough for bedding, study, recreation and eating. While we sit in her office, a small room that's furnished like a family living room, two toddlers pry open the door. Totally nonplussed, as one plunks herself down in Didi's lap, she continues to talk house designs. Then she suddenly switches conversation and holds up the small girl for me to see. "Doesn't she look better now?" Didi remarks with all the pride of a mother. "You see how much fatter she is, since her fever stopped last week?" The previous week, Didi had been up most nights, nursing and fretting over this particular child, who had suddenly taken ill, and was deteriorating dangerously. No one could be more of a concerned parent, than I have seen with Didi, whenever any of her children becomes ill. She will sleep the night in the hospital, keep them in her own bed, stay up monitoring temperatures or drips for nights on end, to keep a small baby alive. Her actions are totally selfless.

So is the plan for the new home. She talks of how to develop their minds, provide a library and study and computer areas for the eldest, and space enough that the smaller children can play happily indoors, during the long winter, so that their bodies have room to stretch and develop fully. As she talks about all the details of each room, I have to remind her that she also needs a room to live and work in. I think if not reminded she would just as likely end up curled together with a group of these tiny tots, snuggling under her arms.

In the center of this new building will be a space for the children's theater, to enable them to sing and express themselves. There a number of children between the ages of 4 and 7, whose minds still remain in fantasy and magic, and love to act and sing and dress up like fairies. The older children also enjoy theatre, and now the center is looking to employ a trainer in circus and theatre skill, to develop the children's self confidence and abilities. For they have many songs to sing and stories to tell about their lives from before, and since they came to belong to this large yet unique family. These children know that they are also unique. It shows on the smiles on their faces, and as they grow older, in their expectations that life always gets better.

Today, there was a meeting with the oldest teenagers, those between 15 and 18 years, who were discussing their futures.. What studies they wanted to pursue and what jobs and careers they hoped to follow into. We talked about how much they have changed since entering the home 6 years ago, and how much Mongolia is changing, as capitalist systems take over from communism. And the children reminded me of how much the Lotus Children's Centre had also changed and grown in the past years. What had begun as a daily program for street children quickly grew into a home for destitute children, with all living together with Didi, and a few volunteers, in a small two-roomed house. During that time, the older children spent their time caring for their younger brothers and sisters. Until Didi helped them to go to the local schools, and eventually built a new kindergarten for the younger children of the home and locals. As the numbers swelled, Didi looked for more ways to house them, and built a new infant center, where new born babies are looked after, by Mongolian staff and overseas volunteer nurses, who help with staff training. As more requests for help continued to arrive on the doorstep each day, Didi began to look for other ways to help the families who were too poor to keep their children. And so the soup kitchen started more than a year ago, to provide a hot lunch each day to local families who cannot afford to eat regularly. With the mothers and children being fed, it became possible in some cases for children to remain at home with their families, a situation that is far better than a child losing its parents. Didi also found that many people in the area could not clothe themselves sufficiently for the long winter, nor afford medicines that the hospitals had prescribed. There is a lot of illness amongst the underprivileged families, resulting in tragic deaths, especially of the children, who haven't the strength needed to fight for their lives in such harsh winter conditions of minus 30 centigrade. Many of the houses have insufficient heating and cannot afford coal. So Didi also distributes medicine and clothes to people around the area, often making home visits to see people who cannot come to the center themselves. Her work is glorious. She is continually saving and improving the lives of hundreds of people around her, each day. And, as I come to know her more, through the daily interactions and working together, I find that this life of total service is full of the unexpected. And that Didi Ananda Kalika is herself full of the most wonderful of surprises.

If anyone has interest to help Didi to develop the next phase of education, she would like to go onto the higher classes and start a primary school. The center is also interested in finding any margii trained in working with children of Special needs, both physical and mental. Please contact Didi if you are interested Lotuschild@magicnet.mn Thankyou.

Global News

Georgetown Sector

Belem, Brazil

Land has been donated in a needy area of the northern Brazilian city where a new school is being planned under the supervision of Dada Nirvedananda.

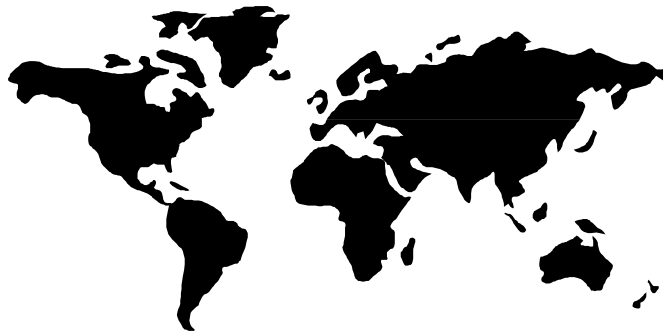
Sao Paulo, Brazil

The Ananda Marga school in Guarapiranga has been registered with the Municipality and will now apply for official funding.

Porto Alegre, Brazil

Under the supervision of Didi Ananda Vandana Ananda Marga is running 5 kindergartens and one Primary school in several areas of Porto Alegre serving a total of 540 children. In the Primary school there has now been constructed a new room for Meditation where once a week the children from all classrooms have collective meditation with all the teachers and tell spiritual stories. The Neo-Humanist School has now up to 4th grade, the parents of the children are requesting to expand it up to 9th grade. Two teachers from the kindergartens were invited to lecture in the University about the methods of Neo-Humanist Education, and to give a workshop on the subject to the education officials of the Municipality. Anandamayii, the Director, has developed a teachers training course on Neo Humanist Education which is given to all the teachers. Many teachers in the whole of Brazil want to take the course. The public is paying more and more attention to our schools. Construction is beginning on facilities for 5th to 8th grade

In the Didi's compound in the neighborhood of Belem Novo the project "Human Ecology" is employing local teenagers and training them in planting and harvesting Medicinal Herbs. Now 60 plants are being cultivated in the Mandala-Garden and the Laboratory started making different products from the extracts of the herbs that are being very well received in the community. Regular classes for the community are now being given on Natural Health and consultation by psychologists and many volunteers on alternative therapies. A set of Bach Flowers has been donated by the Bach Institution from the project. Representatives of the Municipality of Viamao visited the project in Belem Novo.



Asuncion, Paraguay

The construction of the new school building in Asuncion has been completed. It is now being furnished to be in full swing for the start of class in 2002.

Venezuela (see article in this issue)

In La Guairita the papaya project with 20 adolescence, is continuing. We are organising between 10 to 15 men and women (16 to 30 years old) who want to get their high school diploma. The construction of the Center is going on and we are almost finished with the flat-roof.

Delhi Sector

ETC Planned at Ananda Nagar

Delhi Sector Education Training Camp will take place from 15th to 19th December for the first time in Ananda Nagar. A large gathering is expected as there are over 150 teaching staff from Ananda Nagar alone, that will be in attendance.

New Delhi, India

Plans are underway for a Neo Humanist kindergarten in New Delhi. The kindergarten is going to be built on a plot of land which is 1000 square metres and about forty kilometres from New Delhi. It is situated in a prime location of an upcoming industrial town. The cost of construction runs into lakhs. We are trying to organize funds for it. We need besides the curriculum a director for the school who will be able to run the school according to the neo humanist curriculum. Anybody interested in offering her services would be most welcome. We will keep you informed about the progress through the newsletter.

Anyone interested in the project can get details from Tishya --<tishya mathur@hotmail.com>

Rajasthan

The school in Rajnagar of Udaipur diocese in Rajasthan has 252 students. In the last 8th Board exam 18 got first division out of 19 who appeared in the exam. This has added to the reputation of the school.

Qahira Sector

Albania

The school in Albania is entering its second year of operation. 75 youngsters between the ages of 4 and 6 are registered for the kindergarten. The KG follows the Circle of Love curriculum and is much appreciated by the local residents, as it is situated in an area where there is only one government school serving a population of 25,000 people. In the afternoon, following the last kindergarten session, Dada Vedaprajinananda also teaches English to school pupils and young adults. Some of the school pupils attending our classes have stood first in their English classes in local primary and secondary schools.

Berlin Sector

Italy

A book of the conference 'Seeking the freedom to educate towards freedom' in Bologna, Italy January 2000 has just been published containing a presentation of the Verona Neo-humanist school by Supriya and Didi Ananda Nirmila. It is published by Pensa Multimedia, Viale Lo Re, 109 - 73100 Lecce - tel. 0832-243656 Fax 0832-252792.

Suva Sector

Melany, Australia

At the AM River School here we planted 25 fruit trees to become an edible landscape permaculture garden. They are in swales around our sports oval--berry trees, citrus, mangos...yum! All the kids participated in planting them and it was a beautiful sight (we have 105 children now.). The trees were from a grant from our local credit union. It was all filmed and shown on local TV .
By-Kamala

New York Sector

Jamaica

This year our school has flourished with up to 75 students. We have three classes, three full time teachers and one part-time. Plus our motherly cook Mrs. Yvonne.

Twenty-five of our students graduated this summer. Despite the technical challenges, the program went very

well and we were blessed with a special performance from the well-known and loved Ashe , song and dance team. Other items included a drama on Yama and Niyama, songs, dance and an asana demonstration. The school sports day was successful as was the school outing to Wynters Park, where the kids had a lot of fun playing and exploring together. Thanks to all who worked so hard to make it a success.

The teachers are continuing to give wholeheartedly of themselves to make the school a loving and conducive learning place. They are always open and ready to learn new things which is a great asset for the school and both children and teachers are benefiting from this. Naturally the meditation is proving vitally important and it is so good to see how improvements are coming along so nicely.

We had the good fortune to have a volunteer from Holland, Thea, join our team for a few weeks. She had a very positive time and the teachers were glad for her support.

Parents, teachers and students are still gathering their bottles for our recycling program. Elly, one of our yoga students had fun with the kids explaining about recycling, which gave them a lot of inspiration to take more care of their environment.

The electricity is in and we are enjoying the fans more than anything at this time, it relieves somewhat the excruciating heat. This was in part due to a generous donation from AMGK. Someone donated a refrigerator so we are starting to make headway with funds to pay the bills. There are few other final things to work on at the school before we put energy into looking for land and or property in the area to start a new school for older children.

Hong Kong Sector

Russia

A conference " Festival of New Schools" was held in Russia from August 6-16, 2001. This was the second conference of alternative schools in Russia that took place after 10 years; the first was just after the collapse of communism. The conference took place on the boat 'Slavjanov' which took a route starting in Moscow along the river Oka and Volga touching 12 cities: Konstantinovo, Raisan, Kasimov, Muron, Nizni Novgorod, Makarevo, Ples, Kasimov, Jaroslav, Plibinsk, Uglich and Tver. There were 200 persons attending from East and West, they were leading figures in

alternative education from Russia, Ukraine, Byeloruss, Siberia and delegates from Germany, Holland, England and USA.

Ac. Devavratana Avt. and Avtk. Ananda Rama Ac. attended the conference and gave two presentations on Neo-Humanist Education and Meditation for children of all ages.

The main organizer is the editor of the largest weekly education newspaper which has a circulation of 250,000 as opposed to the government newspaper on education which has a circulation of 30,000.

From the first evening Baba Nam Kevalam was introduced and several people joined us every early morning in the Asana and meditation class. With the teenagers coming from different corners of Russia a yoga club was formed and daily asana and meditation classes were held which the young people eagerly

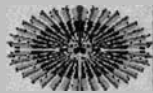
attended. At the cultural program in the evening, Prabhat Samgiit song and dance was well received and several times there were requests from young and old to sing the songs again.

In the 12 cities visits to the local schools and universities were set up where local teachers and government officials gathered and met the participants of the conference from the boat. There were presentations of local education institutions as well as from the participants of the conference. The book on NHE and RU magazines were distributed in the cities.

The movement in education in Russia has been concentrated on material and intellectual achievement and our presence gave a challenge to extend the vision to address the soul in education. At the closing ceremony, quotations on education from Shrii PR Sarkar were warmly received.

From this experience, in close contact with Russian culture and history, we observed the intellectual and cultural depth of the Russian people. It was easy to see from this how they have been a powerful force in the world. The downfall of communism has not been the downfall of Russian spirit unlike some other post communist countries who have rushed to surrender their culture to the West. The Russians have a deep dignity and strength of culture with a vast spiritual potential

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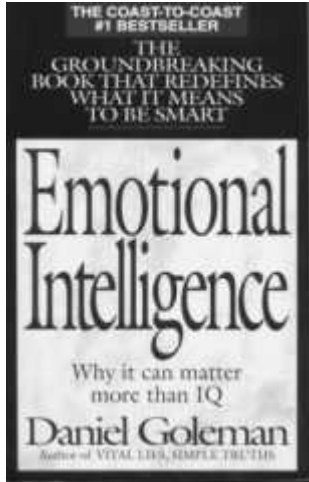
email: newren@ru.org.

Nairobi Sector

Kangemi, Nairobi

Last year, we opened the Ananda Marga Academy High School Department in Kangemi, Nairobi and also before the close of the year 2000, I managed to secure the provisional registration of our institution with the Ministry of Education. This means that we are licensed to give instruction in the nursery, primary and secondary levels. Presently, we have 260 pupils in the primary and 83 students in the high school. However, we have only first year and second year in the high school due to lack of classrooms. We expect that our donors will build the additional buildings soon as final negotiations had been done already. We are getting by nicely in spite of our very limited resources. I am the manager of this institution and principal of the high school department. I work in the school everyday. I teach English, French and Social Ethics, wherein Neo-humanism has been integrated. Brotherly, Dada Vratadhiirananda.

Book Reviews



Emotional Intelligence - By Daniel Goleman, Bantam Books, 1995 **Reviewed by Supriiya**

This is a well-written book about an important subject. It follows on from Howard Gardner's work on 'multiple intelligences', and its expansion by psychologists such as Sternberg and Sallowey, which take a wider view of intelligence than that of standard IQ. Goleman writes in detail about

'emotional intelligence' which includes factors such as self-awareness, self-control, empathy, listening skill, conflict resolution and cooperation. These abilities Goleman shows are crucial for how we get on in life. The book's subtitle is in fact EI: Why it can matter more than IQ.

Included in the book are reports on interesting research on the brain and behaviour. Goleman illustrates each of his themes of how emotions work with anecdotal accounts which are easy for us all to relate to, at work, in the family, at school etc. There are many examples of emotional intelligence factors operating in a variety of situations, when people of high IQ are in difficulty

whereas those of modest IQ but with good emotional intelligence skills do surprisingly well.

There are two important aspects of this book for our work as educators. On the one hand we learn how to nurture and strengthen our emotional intelligence as adults. On the other hand, we learn how children can be encouraged to develop emotional intelligence in the critical early years. In both cases the benefits to health, relationships and work are considerable.

The book is divided into 5 parts:

Part 1 describes new discoveries about the brain's emotional architecture which help to explain the moments in our lives when feeling overwhelms rationality.

Part 2 looks at the neurological patterns behind for example how we check emotional impulse, how we read another person's feelings, how to handle relationships smoothly.

Part 3 considers the application of emotional intelligence to maintaining personal and work relationships and to our health and well-being.

Part 4 focuses on how children learn essential emotional lessons at home and at school.

Finally **Part 5** discusses the cost of emotional illiteracy and how some pioneering schools are teaching children positive emotional and social skills.

Beyond Discipline by Alfie Kohn

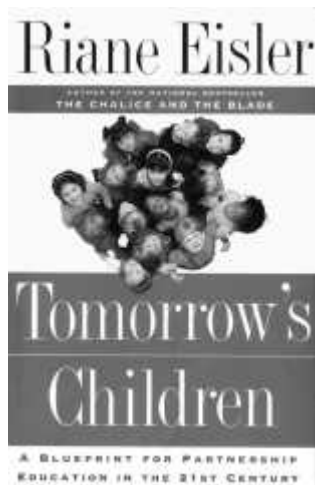
reviewed by Didi Anandarama

At the last meeting in NY, Kalyan gave a short presentation on discipline and recommended the book 'Beyond Discipline' by Alfie Kohn. On my travels I read it and I would like to recommend it to others to read it as well.

It has brought something very interesting to my awareness. That is the question of the validity of 'wanting to be in control as a main objective' in opposition to wanting to have caring community where teacher and students create together a learning environment that is promoting this. The controller mentality is so much present in our life. It has been found that it simply stifles creativity, happiness, dynamism. In many cultures it is imparted in the classroom by those who got it ingrained from their own upbringing. To have power over others is the message that is transmitted and perpetuated. The small child learns to aspire to have power in the same way as the authoritarian parents and controlling teachers constantly demonstrate.

But what parents and teachers want their children to be is not conformists, docile followers of rules but to be able to make decisions, to have intrinsic values, to be happy. These objectives are more often lost sight in the classroom where domination, absolute control with reward, punishment and other forms and methods are practiced in the name of creative discipline, assertive discipline, conservative discipline etc.

This book does not give 'ready made' tips which we so often want rather it gives examples of observed classrooms where there was no question of discipline problem, or where the problems became valuable processes of learning to solve them collectively.



Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century, by Riane Eisler, Westview, 2000 Reviewed by Supriya

Tomorrow's Children is a truly excellent book for those wanting to look at progressive education and explore multiculturalism, gender equality, ecology, nonviolent conflict resolution, ethics and caring seriously. Eisler describes how she has built on the work of Montessori, Pestalozzi, Dewey and Freire, who called for an education that prepares us for democracy and fosters ethical and caring relations, to create an expanded approach to educational reform.

Her approach is called *partnership education*. It is an equitable way of teaching and learning which allows all aspects of the child to flourish, teaching emotional as well as cognitive skills.

Eisler analyses schools, society and cultural evolution in terms of a *partnership model*, which values difference and actively works to form relationships that enrich individual lives and strengthen communities, versus a *dominator model* which views difference in terms of superiority and inferiority.

The book discusses three components to partnership education:

partnership process about how we learn and teach (Are students and teachers partners in the adventure of learning?);

partnership content about what we learn and teach (Does the curriculum include life-skills that children need to be competent and caring citizens, workers, parents and community members?);

partnership structure about where learning and teaching take place (Is the classroom structure democratic and empowering?).

There is a wealth of practical curriculum suggestions and examples, and references, for restructuring particularly primary and secondary education. Practical and theoretical, sciences and humanities are integrated. Science is placed in the

larger content of the history of the planet and our species and our day to day lives. Much emphasis is given to gender-balance and multiculturalism and environmental education as an integral part of the curriculum. Partnership education is an important tool to help young people form visions of what our world can be and to acquire the understanding and skills to make these visions come true.

Tim Seldin, comments on the book's cover: "As the world responds in shock and horror to the violence that seems to be infecting our schools, Riane Eisler offers a practical approach to creating schools that teach partnership, respect, and global understanding."

Eisler has a new book coming called 'Partnership Education in Action' and there is a website: www.partnershipway.org

Continued from Page 39 NHE Efforts in Venezuela

From the same community we organized about 15 people between 16 and 35 years old who want to go back to school and get a high school diploma (some will first have to finish primary school). There is an existing program in a nearby town. There are still some financial obstacles to be overcome but I have faith that somehow we will find the solution. For somebody to say they want to study but they can't because they don't have the \$30 inscription fee is simply not acceptable. It is a good opportunity for them to learn that if you really want something, don't give up just because you run into an obstacle. Insist, be ready to struggle. This unfortunately is not a very well known attitude in Venezuela.

The last few months I could really see how this project is moving towards education: education on all levels, in all directions, for all people. There is a tremendous lack of quality education in Barlovento and in Venezuela in general. But then, isn't that the problem we are facing all over the world nowadays? The western education of mere facts without educating the inner being has become a very dangerous situation on this planet. Combine that with religious indoctrination and a variety of other dogmas in different parts of the world and as a result it looks we are heading for the Third World War. And we! have the sacred duty to show that there is a way out of the madness. My heart feels heavy when I think of all the destruction it may still take before people will be able to understand that it is possible to do it differently. But when I look at the tremendous beauty and subtlety of children, I know that through right education it is possible.

Neo Humanism

- Service to humanity
- Spiritual rationality
- Humble activity
- Benevolent action
- Reverence for all things
- Relationship and responsibility
- Grace and courtesy
- Reason over dogma
- Fearlessness in the face of adversity
- Non-compromising strictness
- Magic over method
- Hope and trust
- Dignity and strength
- Humour and resolve
- Beauty and expansion
- Spirit and body in balance
- Expansion over contraction



Children's Art from Chumpon, Thailand

Gurukula Network
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Ithaca, New York 14850