



GURUKULA NETWORK

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

Issue 22

May 2006

Ananda Marga Gurukula

- 3** Ongoing Programmes, Updates, and Announcements
- 4** NHE Educators Summit
- 5** RU Speech by Kulapati at DMS Thailand
Moral Dilemmas in the Path of Dharma

Tertiary Education

- 7** Ananda Marga Polytechnic College, India
- 7** CNS Sweden
- 8** CNS Croatia
- 9** CNS Asheville
- 10** CNS Taiwan
- 11** Taiwan Conferences
- 12** CNS Haiti

Studies in Sustainable Development

- 15** Comprehensive Sustainability – The Path
of Progressive Balance
- 20** Ananda Vidyadharma Community Project,
Thailand
- 23** Positive Microvita in the Forests of
Ananda Vrati

NHE Schools in Focus

- 24** Sunrise Schools, Romania
- 27** Children's Home, Romania
- 28** Peace Day at the Lotus School, Mongolia
- 29** Sunrise Centre, Malta
- 31** NHE School, Korle Gonno, Ghana
- 32** NHE Schools and Projects, Porto Alegre,
Brasil

NHE Teacher Seminars

- 33** Love, Play and Unity
Teacher's Education, Holland
- 36** ETC Ananda Shiila, India

NHE Methods

- 37** Mediation
- 40** Learning By Imitation
- 42** Healing Stories
- 44** Theatre Arts for Teachers

NHE Programs

- 46** YES – Yoga Education in Schools
- 46** STUVOL – Student Volunteers

47 Other Global NHE News

50 *New* NHE Publications



Cooking up a storm in Romania. Full story on Page 24

Gurukula Network

Newsletter and Journal of
Neohumanist Schools
and Institutes
affiliated to
Ananda Marga Gurukula

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

Please send us news of your schools and projects, reports on research and publication efforts, articles on Neohumanist Education, stories, pictures, ETC notes, classroom activities, etc. by **September 1st for the October 2006 issue**

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The articles in this newsletter represent an evolving process and not necessarily official policy.

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Donations are welcome for AMGK Endowment Fund and Gurukula Network as well as schools and projects.

Please make checks payable to Ananda Marga Gurukula and send to AMGK Liaison Office.

Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar inspired the establishment of Ananda Marga Schools in 1963 out of which grew an international network of schools and the Neohumanist Education system. In 1990 he founded the Ananda Marga Gurukula University.

VISION OF ANANDA MARGA GURUKULA

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

OBJECTIVES OF ANANDA MARGA GURUKULA

- To serve humanity with neohumanist spirit and to acquire knowledge for that purpose.
- To establish a strong base in Anandanagar and around the world in order to carry on the legacy of it's founder for the benefit of future generations.
- 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, Neohumanism and PROUT (Progressive Utilization Theory) as the foundation for building a universal society.
- To initiate intellectual dialogues and research for all around renaissance of 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>

Ananda Marga Gurukula serves as the Board of Education for Neohumanist Schools and Institutes around the world. These Neohumanist Schools and projects, some of which are featured in Gurukula Network, are managed by the Education Relief and Welfare Section and Women's Welfare Department of Ananda Marga.

ERAWS - Global Education In-charge Ac. Priyaksnananda Avt.
WWD - Global Education In-charge Avtk. Ananda Sucita Ac.

NEOHUMANIST EDUCATION

Universal Love and Values
Holistic Development of the Child
Astaunga Yoga
Ecological and Social Consciousness
Academic, Practical and Personal Skills
Knowledge of Self and World Applied for Universal Welfare
Joyful Learning through the Arts
Culturally Sensitive Approach
Integrated Curriculum
Exemplary Role of the Educators



ANANDA MARGA GURUKULA GLOBAL LIAISON OFFICE ONGOING PROGRAMMES, UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ananda Marga Gurukula

<www.gurukul.edu>
amgk.glo@gurukul.edu

CNS – Centres for Neohumanist Studies

Croatia - cns.hr@gurukul.edu, <www.cns.hr>
Sweden – cns.se@gurukul.edu, <www.cns-se.org>
Taiwan – gkacademy.tw@gurukul.edu
USA – cns.us@gurukul.edu

Music College at Uma Nivas

<<http://www.gurukul.edu/~unmc>>

Acupuncture Institute at Ananda Nagar

<<http://acuindia.org/>>

AMGK Taiwan

<www.gurukula.org.tw>

Neohumanist Education

<www.nhe.gurukul.edu>

NHE Forum

NHE Forum is an on-line discussion group for those interested in or working in NHE schools and projects. To join, please write to <amgk.glo@gurukul.edu>

CNS Forum

CNS-Forum is a format for the exchange of ideas among Neohumanist educators who are qualified and interested in higher education, beyond K-12. CNS-Forum provides an opportunity to help to develop the various departments and faculties of Ananda Marga Gurukula. If interested write to <amgk.glo@gurukul.edu>

NHE Resources

NHE Resources is a set of web-based resources for those working in NHE schools. It contains articles, information and classroom aides. If you would like to access these pages, please visit <www.nhe.gurukul.edu/resources.html>, and sign up for a login name and password.

Distance Learning Programmes

The two distance learning programmes for NHE teachers are both progressing with many students. The Neohumanist Diploma Programme is a one year or more in depth tuition programme, certifying the student as an NHE early childhood teacher. The Neohumanist Introductory Programme is a three month or more programme, with the option for certification as an NHE early childhood associate teacher. For more details see the description of Distance Learning Programmes at: http://www.gurukul.edu/instit_distancelearning.php

Standards Available

Ananda Marga Gurukula Standards for kindergarten and primary schools are now available. You may write to <amgk.glo@gurukul.edu> for a copy or you may download a copy directly from NHE Resources.

NHE Introductory Program in Spanish

The NHE Introductory Programme is available in Spanish. To get an electronic copy either through e-mail or on a CD, please write to amgk.glo@gurukul.edu. Didi Ananda Anuradha is coordinating the translation of NHE material into Spanish. If you have any other NHE material already translated, or if you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Didi at: <wisdom@racsa.co.cr>

Volunteers for Your Project

Ananda Marga Gurukula offers a service to bring volunteers in contact with NHE schools and community projects, that are highlighted on the AMGK website. More info at the Gurukula website: www.gurukul.edu under the tab <helping us>. If you would like to take part with your project in the Gurukula Volunteer Program, then please write to mayadhiisa@gmail.com

Gurukula Network On Line

An electronic version of Gurukula Network is available on the Gurukula web site. Many past issues are also posted there.

NEW ! NHE Publications

We are happy to announce some new NHE publications. The YES Manual for Early Childhood Education
The Fairy's Flower – Book and CD for young children
The COL manual and songs in Portuguese.
Please see the publications page in this newsletter for details.

Publications In Process

The YES Manual is currently available as a CD for internal sale. Next phase is to produce it in hard copy and make it available to the public as well. Work on the elementary level YES Manual is also beginning. Please send material for this publication to: yes@guruklu.edu

A new book, *Neohumanist Education Futures - Pedagogy for Transformation* – is being edited by Sohail Inayatullah & Marcus Bussey and will be printed by Tamkang University Press. Neohumanist Educational Futures seeks to provide a framework for understanding the context and implications of neohumanism within education. It does so by providing a theoretical base for the neohumanist educational agenda. This book should be available before the end of the year.



Don't miss the

NHE Educators Summit

"Sharing NHE Methods and Materials"

July 18-25, 2006 in Ydrefors, Sweden
(arrival date is July 17)

Objectives

- Practical training in NHE for new and old teachers and directors.
- Exchange of NHE practices in the classroom between directors and teachers in NHE schools.
- Training of NHE Diploma Programme students.
- Graduation of students who have completed the NHE Diploma Programme.

What the Conference Offers

- Sharing of tested NHE classroom practices by senior directors and teachers of NHE schools from around the world, including valuable practical knowledge and skills in various subjects for early childhood, junior high and high school aged children.
- Building confidence and creativity in developing further research and educational material.
- Guidance for NHE Diploma distance learning course students.
- Inspiration and assistance for those interested in starting new NHE schools.
- Exchange on YES, STUVOL, ELF, SPROUT programs and publications
- Certificate of attendance by AMGK (accepted as Staff Development Credits for NHE Teachers)

IMPORTANT - What to Bring

Please bring printed, published material about your school or project to display, such as curriculum, policies, brochures, books, flyers, posters, leaflets, school newsletter, photos, videos, etc. etc. You will be able to set up an exhibition table/corner with your school's information. Please also bring the same material on a CD, so that we can add it to the NHE Resource Pages and share it with each other.

*"NHE Educators Summit is an opportunity for all those who are interested in the NHE Education system to come together and share their practical wisdom. I encourage all our concerned workers and teachers to avail of this opportunity of sharing and learning."
Ac. Shambhushivananda Avadhuta, Kulapati, AMGK*

"This Educators Summit for sharing practical material has been requested from many corners. This is now the opportunity for everyone to bring their multimedia presentations on their school and material to present in workshops with others. We will be contacting individuals who are requested to bring their experiences but everyone please feel free to contribute the things that really work with children that you have been applying. We are looking forward to accommodating everyone's needs and gifts in this conference."

Avtk. Ananda Rama Ac., Avtk. Ananda Bhadra Ac., Programme Incharges

For the presenters, please bring a summary of your presentation on CD as well.

Please bring art works and activities from your school. We will set up an Art Room with all kinds of arts and crafts activities and displays. The Art Room will always be open during the conference for experimenting and sharing art activities. You can also bring material for display.

Please bring children's songs to share, in any language, on a CD or cassette along with written lyrics. If possible, please send these in advance to Didi Ananda Krpa <anandakrpa@hotmail.com> so that she can compile them beforehand.

Please bring something to share at our Opening Circle. We will assign a number to your present and everyone will draw a number and receive an exchanged gift.

Registration

Please write to amgk.glo@gurukul.edu to register.

Costs

Euro 200 per person for accommodation, food and programme materials, due upon arrival. Arrival date is July 17th.

Organised by

Ananda Marga Gurukula in coordination with ERAWS and WWD Berlin Sector

Details and confirmed participants list at:
<www.gurukul.edu/conf2006/index.html>

Moral Dilemmas in the Path of Dharma

*A Summary of the
Renaissance Universal Presidential Speech
Delivered by Kulapati, Dada Shambhushivananda
on December 3, 2005 at Rayong DMS, Thailand*



Human existence is an ideological flow. It is a movement from crudity to subtlety, from imperfection towards perfection, from limited to unlimited, from unit to cosmic, from animality unto divinity. An endeavour to control our instinctual tendencies and goad our mental faculties through reason, intellect and intuition towards universal welfare is the path of dharma. In this long spiritual journey from human-minimitis to human-maximitis we may encounter many challenges or difficult choices that are called moral dilemmas.

Moral dilemmas abound in our personal or collective social lives, irrespective of our area of work or profession. All of us, as a parent, business women, community leader or whatever role we are in, are faced with common daily decisions that have some moral component. Should I do it or shouldn't I? Should I act now or wait? Should I go ahead or defer? Should I support or oppose? We all face such questions in our minds.

Some of our conscious choices affect largely our own-selves or our near ones while others may affect a million others. The gravity of a moral decision varies with the nature of impact of the decision and where we stand on the evolutionary ladder. For a cat, to catch a mouse is an instinctual behaviour and not a moral choice but for a man, to kill a chicken may involve a moral choice. (Yes, in these days of bird flu & ecological disasters, we are being forced to recognize the invisible link and interconnectedness of all life.)

When we begin to make decisions based on the intrinsic impact of our decisions on 'our' and 'others' physical, mental and spiritual well being, it may be surmised that we have begun to tread the path of dharma. The path of dharma is the path of righteousness and if we choose to recognize and follow it, the 'immediate' reward is likely to be transcendence into an evolutionary elevated mental status and the ultimate reward, at the least, is an untainted experience of life divine endowed with all its perks like deep inner peace and enjoyment of goodwill and friendship of all fellow creatures who are benefited by our 'wise choices'.

Looking back, about 8000 million years ago (mya), this earth was only a blazing ball of fire; 4000 mya, it consisted of molten lava and volcanoes; 340 mya life existed only in water; 223 mya earth appeared as Gondwanaland; 70 mya birds and mammals appeared; 1 mya human beings appeared on the scene...we should not assume that we have come to an end of this evolutionary ladder. Through physical metamorphosis and psychic transmutations, we seem to continue to move on. The last 15,000 years have seen the emergence of a human civilization. Numerous thought currents have marked our history. It has been an impressive history punctuated both by great discoveries and inventions and marred by ugly wars and bloodshed. In just the past few hundred years, we saw the Copernican revolution that established that earth was not at the centre of this solar system; then we had the Freudian revolution that brought our preoccupation with the unconscious; then came the Darwinian revolution that told us that we are not angels but hairless apes; and among others, in the last twenty years, neuro scientists claim that we are in the midst of another frontier of knowledge about greater understanding of our own brains, the organ which may have caused the earlier revolutions to occur and which also gave birth to all ideas including colonialism, imperialism, war etc. So our journey continues....

Not long ago, Shri Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar launched another revolution in thought that might well be called 'Sarkarian revolution'. He proclaimed that our collective attainments and existence itself lie on the brink of

perishing if we fail to create 'one human society' on the strong fundamentals of spiritual-humanism and practical guidelines of "PROUT" and Neohumanism.

The idea of Shri P.R.Sarkar was no doubt simple and plain common-sense but is imbued with the power that none of us dare to ignore, unless at our own peril. The Message of Dharma as enunciated by Shri P.R. Sarkar is loud and clear:

- we need to return to connectedness with our common spiritual roots which will drive away the menace of group or religious intolerance;
- we need to take our inner and outer ecology seriously so that we may continue to protect and preserve all bio-diversity of the planet;
- we need to reverse the trends of pseudo-culture and profit maximization that fuel consumerism, violence, addiction and apathy to our own welfare;
- we need to choose our leadership so that we may establish the primacy of service over self-interest whether in politics, economy, religion, education, culture, science or the arts;
- we need to spread the call to remould the socio-economic-political framework so that sustainability initiatives of the minority (like this master unit) can begin to bear fruits and multiply.

In a nutshell, we need to make a moral choice to accept those ideals which will nourish the interest of all rather than a select few. This alone is the cornerstone of moral dilemmas of the modern times. Are we ready to confront our own greed, our own drive for power and control, our own jealousies and temptations, our ignorance and doubts? This moral dilemma is all-pervasive and speaks not only to the leaders of society but to each one of us who willingly or unwillingly 'choose' our lifestyles and our leaders. The call of our consciousness is to reflect and act with a "refined moral conscience" in mind.

If we succeed in doing so, we may be laying the foundation of a new world for another first time. This gathering in a glorious setting in Thailand seems an august beginning in this endeavour. It appears to me that our task is three fold:

1. Choose, Follow and Propagate ideas that are in harmony with Dharma.
2. Continue to empower individuals who wish to follow these ideas in their personal life.
3. Build institutions which are open to making dharmic strategic alliances for the establishment of nurturing progressive one human society based on prema (universal love) and prama (dynamic collective equipoise).

Dharma gives inspiration to people in every sphere of their lives. Human life is all-comprehensive. It is not a single flower, but a bouquet. There are various flowers having different colours, shapes, sizes and fragrances; different kinds of sweetness as well. They spread their sweetness, their fragrance, their colour, in all directions. And therein lies their fulfilment, and the meaning of their existence.

If a person is dharmic, that person will leave a trace of his or her dharmic nature at every step. In his or her personal life he or she will never perpetrate injustice against anyone, nor tolerate anyone's perpetrating injustice; and in their collective life they will not allow any social group to perpetrate injustice, nor allow that social group to tolerate its being perpetrated. They will see that everyone is on the right path in their crude-physical, subtle and causal existences; and that arrangements are made for everyone's food, clothing, education and medical care. Moreover, they will give special attention to see that social life is well-knit.

Shrii P. R. Sarkar

Ananda Marga Polytechnic College, India

Veerappa Nagar, Kudiyanur Post, Malur Taluk, Kolar District 563130

The Ananda Marga Polytechnic College was established in 1986. It is recognized by the Government of Karnataka and approved by AICTE, New Delhi. It is located near Bangalore. The College offers three year Diploma Courses in: computer science, mechanical engineering, electronics and communication and civil engineering. The requirements for admission are passing of the 10th class with 40% marks in science and mathematics.

The College offers expert teaching staff and well equipped mechanical, electronics, and computer labs. The teaching medium is English. Hostel facilities offer 24 hour water supply and home-like vegetarian food. The college is located in a pollution free environment with a peaceful atmosphere for study. The semester system is followed with sessions beginning in July-August.

CNS Around the World Centres for Neohumanist Studies

The purpose of CNS is to engage in educational activities and social actions in order to liberate the intellect and further individual and collective welfare. These activities include public seminars and retreats, community research and development projects, personal growth services, and the dissemination of related publications and materials. All CNS programs and activities support its core values of spiritual progress, social and economic justice, respect for all living and non-living beings, and community empowerment.

CNS Sweden

Children in Crisis and How to Respond

A workshop led by Linda Baker on January 3, 2006.

"Meditation and Psychology"

A three-day workshop led by Dada Prankrsnananda, January 3-5th, 2006

"Homeopathy"

A seminar given by Tony Carlyle, Jan 21-22nd, 2006

"Tantra - Its History and Evolution"

A lecture by Jinanendra

"Aromatherapy"

A lecture by Sarvajina



"Rajadhiira Yoga"

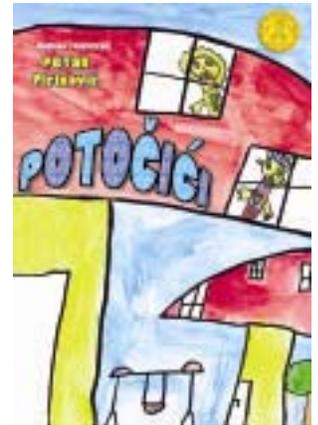
A lecture given to social welfare office staff in Stockholm, by Dada Shambhushivananda.



"My First Book" Contest in Croatia By Didi Anandarama

In this second round of the national contest we have received over 200 books from 35 places from all over Croatia. Some of last years contestants wrote again and made lots of improvement. Hemavati did a great job in fundraising for this project. We have received some funds from the Ministry of Education. The city of Karlovac also received a special recognition on a national level for this contest. The following are the winners and their stories:

1st Prize: 'Potocici' - Petar Pirizovic, an 8 year old writes about little people who live near a creek in mushrooms. When their king goes out of the country two giants invade their land and start to destroy their forest. The people feel helpless without their king. But the queen courageously steps forward and leads them to defeat the giants. When the king returns he is proud of the queen and all the Potocici and they have a great reason to celebrate. Petar used wonderful bold illustrations with lively colours and black outline which is very attractive.



2nd Prize: This prize is shared by two 10 year old twin sisters who each wrote a different story but with equally good story line and wonderful illustrations. We managed to combine the two stories into one book. Their parents were especially delighted about this.

'Pothvat Slonice Ruzice' - Aplolonija Lucic wrote a funny story how the elephants had small ears and the monkeys big ears and how the Pink Elephant with a bit of good luck achieved that now the elephants have big ears and the monkeys small ones. Aplolonija's illustrations are beautifully fresh with nice colours. A very delightful book.

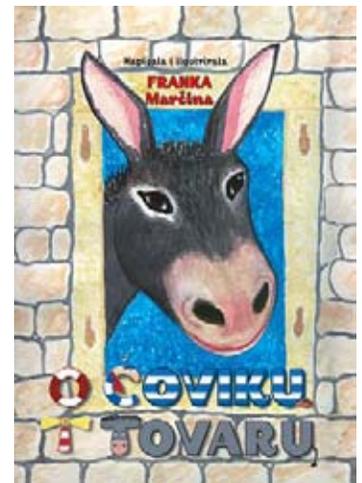


'Kaoko slatkisi postali slanisi i kiselisi' - This story by Agata Lucic is also very funny but at the same time educative. She tells the story of a dentist lady who gives a big lesson to children so that they learn to brush their teeth and not have caries any more. Her illustrations are vivid and detailed in beautiful colours.

3rd Prize: 'O coviku i tovaru' Is a humorous story by Franka Marcina a 12 year old girl. The setting is the Dalmatian coast and an island in the Adria. A city boy is on holidays with his grandfather who is a retired captain. The boy brings with him attitudes of the city and learns the hard way to respect the simple life and the love of his grandfather for his donkey. The illustrations are graphically daring and go well with the story.



As an extra edition we are publishing **'Vilinski cvjetovi' (Fairy's Flowers)** in Croatian which has the beautiful illustrations of Masa Lenuzzi who was one of the winners in last year's contest.



CNS Asheville, NC USA

By Ac Vishvamitra

Ananda Marga Gurukula (AMGK) held a CNS Conference (Centres of Neohumanist Studies) November 11- 13 at the Asheville Master Unit, Ananda Girisuta. The conference focused on the development of CNS globally and locally, long range plans for a Gurukula University in the USA and the expansion of sustainable communities studies. Ananda Girisuta's expanded land purchase of an additional 100 acres gave scope for attendees to conduct a planning conference on how the Gurukula education agenda can be integrated with sustainable community planning. The talents of those attending helped develop a vision of how a growing AMGK faculty can focus on education concerning sustainable communities, especially as this agenda relates to our potential world wide campus on Master Units in Ananda Marga. In answering Shrii P.R. Sarkar's call to work with many "like minded" individuals, attendees considered how we might join with the global movement to establish eco-villages which support local economies and bio-regionalism. Attendees at this CNS conference included Ac. Shambhushivananda Avt., Arati, Ac. Vishvamitra, Dhyanes, Satyaki, Hiranmaya, Anasuya and couples, Ramesh and Mayadevi, Bhavesh and Koaverii, Pavitra and Hari Priya and Viirendra and Hari Priya.



While CNS developments, locally and globally, including establishing a Gurukula University, was our beginning focus, we devoted time to designing our local CNS and sustainable community on the Asheville MU. The meeting began on Friday PM with dinner, introductions and collectively detailing our agenda. On Saturday morning we began with Dada Shambhushivananda acquainting everyone with the administrative structure and functions of Gurukula and plans for a Gurukula University. Vishvamitra focused on the definition of Gurukula's CNS as representing our "higher education" (universities, distance learning, seminars, workshops and conferences) efforts in contrast to NHE's focus on children. Vishvamitra then shared the plans for the development of the CNS seminar centre on the Asheville MU. A business plan in being developed for the CNS seminar centre with plans to be operational in the fall of 2006. This expanded centre, currently under construction, entails two domes covering 6,000 square feet of sleeping quarters, commercial kitchen, dining and classrooms which can accommodate approximately 50 guests for conferences and workshops. Utilizing neighbouring facilities and houses larger retreats can be held.



The afternoon session was devoted to a walking tour of Ananda Girisuta, the Atlanta Region MU, as Dhyanes, community designer and Satyaki, agricultural consultant, helped us envision the potential uses of various parts of the 150 acre MU. The tour was followed by a community design conference led by Dhyanes that contributed greatly to defining the role of our master units in developing a sustainable community. We considered a comprehensive plan that integrates the goals for a Master Unit and cooperative life styles for families and single margiis utilizing cluster homes and co housing on land adjacent to the MU. In the evening after Dharma



Chakra, Mayadevi, a documentary film maker, showed us an inspiring slide show she made on a visit to Didi Anandamitra's master unit in Brazil a couple of years ago.

...Continued on page 11

CNS Taiwan

Taiwan Gurukula's Work for year 2006 is divided into four parts:

I. Teacher training

1. Study group : Introduction to Human Dharma (every other week)
2. Study group: Yoga Psychology (third Sunday of the month)
3. Lectures by Dada Rasabuddhananda :
 - a. Master Unit
 - b. Natural Herb
 - c. Study on Birds. (third Sunday of the month)
4. Seminar: Neohumanist Education (every 6 months, in cooperation with Ananda Marga Preschool and Sarkar School)
5. Long meditation (every other month, in cooperation with Taipei Jagriti)
6. Nature exploration (once per month, in cooperation with Taipei Jagriti.) See report below.
7. Prabha't Sam'giita choir (practice before every study group begins)

II. Service- volunteers are supporting:

1. Ananda Marga Kindergarten
2. Kids yoga class

III. Publications

1. Website
2. Newsletter online (seasonal)

IV. Administration

1. General work: contact lists - Jagritis, margiis, participants in our activities; and personal caring of participants
2. Building Resource Library: books by Ananda Marga, other related books, free publications, resources used by study groups, lectures and seminars

Trip to Shan-Tain Lake, March 2006, by Sulekha

The trip to Shan-Tain Lake was our first outdoor activity this year. With no exceptions, every one had the "slipping" experience. When "slipping" is viewed as an integral part of the hike, the fear disappears, and you can face the experience with a balance mind. Later on, it actually became a helping force. At first, we thought we would get hurt from it, but on the contrary, it became one of best ways to go down the hill. It felt as if we going down on a sled, or skating, or water surfing. It became a fun activity. Sometimes, we were afraid of slipping because there seemed to be no way to stop. But in reality, we will always stop at some point. This is part of nature's way. There is no non-stop slipping. At some point and some place, it will let you know when you need to stop; then you can stop. It is just like other experiences in life; when we walk downward, our mind will tell us when to stop and go forward. Nature provides us a great mechanism which brings peace and harmony into our mind. And it provides us with formless energy. It is great nature's service to us. What we can payback is to protect and care for it in good ways, and keep it in an organic and harmonious state. Hiking is always a tiring thing for the physical body, but on the other hand, it is also training. It can also nourish our mind. Therefore, it's perfectly suitable as part of Gurukula's teacher training course, which includes all three parts: training of the body, mind and spirit.



AMGK Represented at Taiwan Conferences

In November 2005 Dada Shambhushivananda, Sohail Inayatullah and Marcus Bussey participated in two conferences held in Taipei, Taiwan. The theme of the first conference hosted by the Academia Sinica and sponsored by the local members of Ananda Marga, under the leadership of Dada Krsnasevananda, was Introducing Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar. This was a day long conference which aimed specifically at historians at this academy. Dada offered an overview of microvita, Sohail dealt with macrohistory and Marcus looked at Sarkar's theory of consciousness and its historical dimensions.

There were up to 60 people in attendance and a number of other colleagues of Sohail spoke on Sarkar's political theory (PROUT), neohumanist education, yoga and health, and social change.

The second and larger conference was held at Tamkang University where Sohail is a professor. The theme of the conference was "From Survival to Thrival: Global Soul, Global Mind & Global Action." He was a central organiser and chaired numerous sessions as well as discussing neohumanist futures. Dada Shambhushivananda spoke on the layers of mind and how the future is not part of a linear unfolding but exists in us now as a dimension of the superconscious mind. He also challenged the pervasive belief that well-being was a personal goal and reframed this concept within the social as a challenge to improve social conditions. Marcus spoke on critical spirituality as a central feature of any neohumanist future, stating that the conference themes of global soul, global mind and global action can best be activated when we adopt a critically spiritual stance that connects personal and social growth.

There was a lot of opportunity to meet students and staff and many warm connections were made. A highlight was the student organised dinner at which traditional and modern Taiwanese music was performed. After this, members of the conference were invited to share music from their own cultures. At this point Dada and Marcus performed Shrii P. R. Sarkar's song, *Tiny Green Island*, as Sarkar's gift to the people of Taiwan.



Kulapati greets President of Taiwan and Founder of Tamkang University in Presidents Hall in Taipei on November 8, 2005



Continued from page 9 - CNS Asheville

The session on Sunday morning focused on Gurukula's educational mission regarding MU's and sustainable communities on a global level (see our section in the Gurukula Network on Sustainable Communities). We also acknowledged that we must explore many of the successful models of eco-villages around the world to benefit from what "green life style" groups have done that could be an integral part of our Neohumanist and Proutist ideas applied in our sustainable community projects. The morning session ended with an enthusiastically received interactive workshop on Green Architecture, presented by Anasuya, that integrated Feng Shui and Sacred Geometry with green design and building approaches.

This landmark conference marks the beginning of our educational conferences and workshops on AMGK/CNS higher education and sustainable communities. We invite all interested margiis and citizens to contact us concerning your interest in planning, writing, and working on these efforts to educate and develop sustainable master units and communities in the general society. <vishvamitra@gurukul.edu>. In developing sustainable communities that support our spiritual growth let each of us come to realize and participate in what P.R. Sarkar referred to as "*that vigorous capability which fuses the hard reality of existence with the ultimate reach of the visionary world*" (Human Society Part I).

Yon Sel Dwet Pa Ka Manje Kalalou “One Cannot Eat Okra with One Finger” Purport - Work Together (from a Creole proverb) By Demeter Russafov/Dharma



For decades Haiti has been torn by internal conflicts, social instability, natural and man-made disasters, and a severe and self-perpetuating cycle of economic stagnation. The prolonged crisis has affected the national education system, rendering it incapable of meeting the increased scholastic demand in the country. The government’s ability to support education has been consistently shrinking – today’s public schools in Haiti can accept only 32% of the total student-age population (2002 Report, Ministry of Education). The rest, at least those who can afford it, are absorbed by usually small and unregulated private schools. While the national education policies in theory have set the framework of a fairly innovative and progressive model of education, the reality in most schools is staggering. Learning is mostly linear, repetitious, and devoid of creativity, play, and experiential learning. Instruction in art, science, environment, or sports is rudimentary at best. The quality of instruction suffers from a lack of teacher training, supplies and materials, and from substandard school conditions. Most rural schools consist of nothing more than a few wooden poles and sheets of rusty corrugated steel panels assembled on top of compacted dirt. Kids sit a few too many on old rickety desks, in spaces sizzling with heat and noise.

Haiti is not alone in the swelling club of countries where school clocks seem to have stopped ticking. From Latin America to Africa and Asia; millions of school-age children have no access to high-quality progressive education. At a time when many educational systems are heading to a dead end even in the more wealthy neighbouring countries, Neohumanist Education (referred to in this article as NHE) has arrived vibrant with inherent optimism and full of potential for educational innovation. The odd kid on the block, it stands out with its unique integration of introspection and expansiveness, even when compared to other non-conformist educational philosophies like Waldorf and Montessori. As one high-ranking official of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) commented upon visiting the two NHE projects in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, “Everything I have seen I’m impressed with and touched by. I just don’t understand why you have not been more successful in spreading your ideas out there”.



Now that is a very good question, not just for NHE, but also for its “umbrella” organization. Maybe the answer is not apparent to an outsider, for answering tough questions like this is left to those who have committed their lives to establishing a common vision despite all challenges. I heard such an insider once comparing the current state of NHE to a beautiful flower which has not come to full bloom yet. In the process of defining its identity it will inevitably have to shake loose of its fragility and insecurity. As the systems of administration and management gain structure and experience they will also have to increase the efficiency and efficacy of curriculum creation, central coordination, teacher training, and program support. It is very difficult for educational projects to spread wings in the less economically developed parts of the world because they often have to reinvent the wheels, replicating steps that could be standardized. It will be of extreme importance for all NHE educators to put their heads together, join their energy, and create a coordinated, innovative, and integrated system of standardization of training, materials, and management structures. When (NOT if) we succeed in this endeavour NHE will

spread around the world, playing its modest part in planting the seeds for a brighter tomorrow.

The sad state of Haitian schools brings to mind the topic of marginalization, or social isolation. In the context of Haiti it describes the state of helpless desperation and lack of any sort of cohesive vision upon which educators can bring their students up. Self-marginalization is one of the greatest threats to the success of most organizations. Lack of synergies with other partners, and disconnection from the real issues plaguing the surrounding communities usually can cause it. The resulting structures are in-bred, with a limited social exposure, scope, and ability to influence the society at large. Common solutions to the inevitable challenges are harder to spot and integrate within the existing programs. Innovative and dynamic at first, the vision loses speed and creativity. Marginalization usually is the direct result of lack of proper leadership, management structures, and cohesive flow. It is often not noticeable to insiders, who might need help from outsiders like the CIDA coordinator mentioned earlier. Is NHE in danger of marginalizing itself, joining a long line of under-achievers? Or is it at the threshold of a new phase, one characterized by coordination, dynamism and systematic consistency reinforcing its projects world-wide and helping it fulfil its tremendous potential.



The Haiti story is unravelling along with many other stories from all over the world in the spinning of a colourful and optimistic NHE vision. The story doesn't end with the image of bullet-ridden Port-au-Prince school walls, the hungry and searching eyes of Gonaives street kids, and the sadness pervading the silence at dawn. Over the last decade the Ananda Marga projects here have struggled to overcome their marginalization, gradually picking up speed and dynamism. Over the last year alone AMURT's projects in Haiti have drawn more than a million and a half dollars of direct grants for various community activities – investing in schools and feeding programs, rehabilitating water systems and salt

basins, strengthening local committees, growing and planting thousands of trees, and building new roads, reservoirs, latrines and water filtration systems. The diversity of partners sponsoring these initiatives speaks of the broad alliances the organization is developing. The list of sponsors includes the IDA's (International Development Agencies) of Lichtenstein, Canada, US, Sweden and Spain, and the UN WFP and FAO. An integrated education project with a committed CIDA grant of half a million dollars has already drawn the strong interest and support of the Ministry of Education and Youth, and has brought about numerous learning and growth opportunities for those involved. AMURT, and consequently the NHE projects it helps run, seem to have won a victory over the threat of marginalization through a unique combination of integrated programs, community orientation and support, and very systematic development and nurturing of diverse and long-lasting partnerships.

If this is happening in Haiti why is it not in other more stable and structured places? Perhaps the answer lies exactly in the lack of stability – when everything is obviously falling apart humans and institutions seem more willing to embrace new and progressive ideas which challenge the status quo systems. The crisis of Haiti clearly demands innovative solutions, and AMURT's integrated approach for community development stands out in the pool of conventional linear development paradigms. The organization rehabilitates salt mines yet also seeks to reverse the destruction of mangroves along the coastal villages. Its programs build water systems and also plant community forests to prevent the dropping of the water table. Its volunteer and professional staff resolve inter-village conflicts which have destroyed water supply to neighbouring communities by restarting the abandoned local school, building a swimming pool, beginning a solar ovens program managed by women, and offering teenagers a daily karate course. They start an innovative community radio station / solar power micro-credit program using scrap PV material from the Czech Republic to decrease



the isolation of the region and its dependence on fossil fuel and charcoal. As one volunteer from Italy comments, “What inspires me to work with AMURT is the optimism with which it integrates all of its community projects, always starting from the bottom up, always focusing on those whom it serves.”

In countries like Haiti where AMURT and NHE go hand in hand, the influx of development aid inevitably affects the educational initiatives of Ananda Marga. However, the integration of programs and management structures of NHE is inherently present in its holistic philosophy even without the extra relief its “big brother” agency can offer. Here are a few simple tips to take your vision for a well-financed and integrated NHE project from an idea to reality:

❖ Define Vision and Identity

Create opportunities for debates. Involve diverse groups of participants. Interactive and team-building visioning exercises encourage people to develop a keen interest in and identity with the project. Use the small cards method, guiding the participants to put ideas and issues on little pieces of paper, one per piece, then splitting the ideas in groups and drawing together a comprehensive and concise vision. Use this visioning process together with the SWOT method to assess the organization’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

❖ Get the system in place

It was probably OK not to balance your family check book when you were on your own; however running an organization requires very careful administrative procedures. Probably the most important step is to create an organizational Manual for Administrative Procedures. The document outlines the detailed steps for every single financial and procedural transaction of the organization. It is crucial in obtaining the trust of the donors, and more importantly it will help create a project management structure which will address issues such as purchasing of materials, payroll, accounting, and administration.

❖ Think Out of the Box

Be creative; Experiment, Push the Limit, Take risks, Don’t miss on any opportunity out there.

In Haiti a school rooftop accommodated a garden started with a few used tires, the experience helped create a wide school-to-home organic gardening concept now funded by CIDA and studied by the Ministry of Education.

❖ Professional Conduct

Define a modest but independent office space. Decorate it, bring colour and plants, and organize the files and documents. Create business cards, brochures, T-shirts, stickers and logos. Print the vision of the organization, design a website, post regular e-mail updates of program activities. One of AMURT’s education partners in Haiti is DEFI, a French NGO consisting of 4 young people working from an attic space with walls covered with children’s drawings and crafts, reminder whiteboards, and inspirational quotes next to shelves of neatly organized folders. Don’t judge the scope of their work by the casual simplicity of their office environment. They have started from scratch an applied science education program and spread it to more than 800 schools, with the ambitious but realistic goal of covering the entire country.

❖ Create Synergies

Network, form collaborative relationships, create contacts with potential partners such as community groups, GOs, NGOs, UN, and IDAs. Do not even for a second allow a sense of inferiority to prevent you from knocking on any door. Keep your new contacts updated with e-mail reports, photos, e-letters, and regular invitations to cultural events. Try to think of these partnerships as friendships, even if they represent a financial contract. Your objective is not merely to find finances for your projects, but also to learn from others’ experiences, and facilitate a process of coordination and cooperation among others with similar vision. Your sincerity and idealism are your greatest allies, and already put you in a leadership position. A dynamic and community oriented approach can often break an impasse, and open doors to rewarding and mutually beneficial partnerships. In Haiti the national karate association became one of AMURT’s most active allies, and this synergy ensured the popularity and participation of the youth in an otherwise controversial community initiative.

❖ Think BIG

Increase your operational scope. Set high goals and standards. Seek broad alliances. Maybe your project can add a community outreach extension such as a women’s program, a youth after-school activity, an Internet center, a special interests club, or an urban tree nursery and reforestation initiative. Feel the pulse of the local community, and tailor all your programs accordingly. Pay attention to particularly harsh problems such as AIDS, sexual exploitation, violence, and prostitution. The community focus of your projects will allow you to access a wider and more diverse pool of grants and contacts. The universal aspect of your ideology will inherently serve as a uniting forum for diverse groups and ideas.

Continued on Page 19

*In the last edition of Gurukula Network, sustainability was presented as an important concept for developing global and local systems that benefit individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Two articles discussed sustainability in relation to Sarkar's socio-economic theory (Prout) and his model rural projects for local development (Master Units). This article takes a deeper look at the conceptual problems of sustainable development and suggests a more comprehensive notion of sustainability, using Sarkar's idea of progressive balance, or **prama**.*

Comprehensive Sustainability The Path of Progressive Balance By Howard Nemon



The arrival of the *Gaia*, a proto-type of a Viking ship, on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro in 1992, symbolically announced the beginning of the U.N.'s Earth Summit. The ship was appropriately named after James Lovelock's hypothesis that the entire earth constitutes one living organism. Under the banner of UNICEF, the vessel carried thousands of messages of concern and hope from children around the world—messages for a better world. The Summit, officially known as the UN's Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), hosted over 120 heads of state who gathered in Brazil to formulate a global agenda for sustainable development. After decades of development efforts, the U.N. realized that unless

the world adopted a more sustainable way of utilizing its resources, there would be no better world for our children. The result of the conference was the **Agenda 21**, a comprehensive action plan that addressed all major environmental problems. However, a progress report written by the U.N. in 2001 recognized that *"...despite initiatives by Governments, international organizations, business, civil society groups and individuals to achieve sustainable development, progress towards the goals established at UNCED has been slower than anticipated, and in some respects conditions are actually worse than they were 10 years ago."*

What went wrong? Certainly, the usual challenges were evident—lack of funding and political will to carry out the recommendations. However, there are also some fundamental difficulties in defining sustainable development and implementing it. A brief history of its evolution will be helpful. The first efforts in modern times to engage in what we now call "development" took place after World War II, when the U.S. pumped billions of dollars into the devastated economies of Europe and Japan. The idea behind this development model was that through the right infusion of capital and know-how, you could jumpstart a lagging economy. Although this was effective for the industrialized nations, it did not work for the emerging developing countries in the 1950-60s. One reason was that the countries of the North used their strength in the free market system to exploit weaknesses in the South. Additionally, the economic development model failed not only to improve material conditions in these countries, but it did little to address other major development problems, such as lack of political involvement, social chaos and violence, violations of human rights, and environmental destruction. Social development advocates in the 1970s tried to fuse economic programs with social causes, including greater civic participation and the building of local institutions. Instead of judging progress by increases in per capita income or GNP, this social development model would measure improvements in standards of living that reflected an array of social, political, cultural, and economic indexes. Yet by the 1980s, there was little to show in terms of real progress across all these indicators. When

sustainable development was officially adopted by the UN later in that decade, it added the dimension of environmental stewardship to the long list of social and economic challenges. Unfortunately, since then, efforts to achieve sustainable development have run into a formidable wall.

Challenge of Comprehensiveness

At the core of this development dilemma lies the idea of comprehensiveness, that is, a strategy capable of addressing all of these dimensions simultaneously. In reality, the concept of sustainability did not just add on environmental concerns; rather it established the importance of multiple, interdependent systems. The U.N.'s Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (aka the Brundtland Report) explained that:

...[t]he pursuit of sustainable development requires:

- A political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making
- An economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis
- A social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development
- A production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development
- A technological system that can search continuously for new solutions
- An international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance
- An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self correction (p. 74)

These conditions would imply significant systemic changes at the international and national levels and hence were never universally adopted by the development community. Instead, they focused on the methodological challenges of integrating social, economic, and environmental development. Figure 1 illustrates these three spheres operating independently. The aim of sustainable development efforts was to somehow create strategies that would fulfill the objectives of all three (see Figure 2).

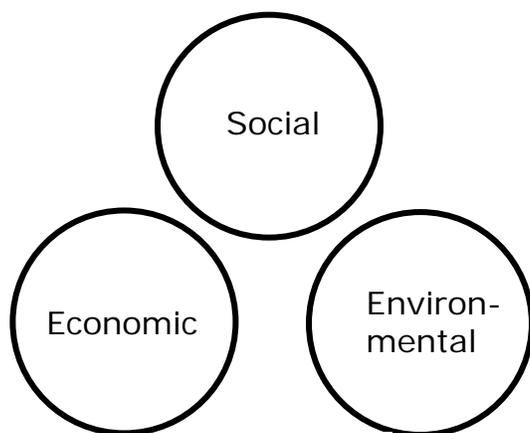


Figure 1

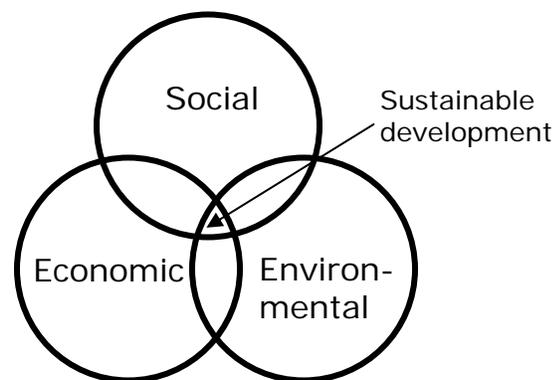


Figure 2

Each of these spheres is composed of numerous components, or sub-spheres, which are critical for the development process. The U.N., for example, has developed indicators of sustainable development which divide these spheres into 'themes', i.e. social themes (equity, health, security, education, housing, and population), environmental themes (atmosphere, land, oceans/seas/coasts, fresh water, bio-diversity), and economic themes (economic structure, consumption and production patterns). There are many configurations of sustainability indicators, but they generally fit into these three development spheres.

Although it has become quite common for international and local organizations to speak about sustainable development, few have a clear idea how to achieve it. As Ramesh Bjonnes pointed out in his article, *Prout's Vision of Sustainability* (see Gurukula Network, Oct. 2005), the logic of capitalism is to generate profits, not to resolve social or environmental problems. In the free market system, sustainability takes the back seat to short-term capital accumulation. And while social development specialists and environmentalists can easily articulate their respective priorities, they often lack the vision, knowledge, skills, and power to implement solutions that satisfy the triple bottom line, i.e. that simultaneously stimulate healthy economic activity, promote social welfare, and protect the environment.

Prama: An Alternate Paradigm

Sustainable development has provided a more visionary and comprehensive development paradigm than those before it. However, it has become everything for everyone and consequently is not able to provide clear and strategic guidelines for implementation. In 1987, the same year of the Brundtland Report, a small booklet was published in India that contained a series of lectures given by P. R. Sarkar on the topic of "prama". While not a model of development per se, prama places sustainability within a larger conceptual framework and offers a clearer notion of what purpose it serves and how it can be achieved. Sarkar defined prama as a state of dynamic balance between individual and collective life as well as between the physical, mental, and spiritual spheres of human existence. A society is successful to the degree that it is able to sustain this balance. Sarkar's ideas are useful for reconceptualizing both development and sustainability.

There are two important distinctions between sustainable development and prama. First, development models have mainly concentrated on the physical sphere. Although Sarkar agrees that meeting basic physical needs is the first priority in any development process, he explains that human needs are mental and spiritual as well. According to the theory of prama, sustainability is only possible when current and future needs are met in all three spheres. Second, Sarkar explains that these needs are not static, but evolve over time in the direction of spiritual realization, the goal of human life. Development, then, is not simply a process towards greater technological sophistication or wealth accumulation, or even greater civic participation, but rather a movement towards the spiritual sphere, while *simultaneously* meeting physical and mental needs. Prama, then, represents a progressive balance that must first be established in the physical sphere, then the mental, and finally the spiritual.

For Sarkar, each and every aspect of individual and collective existence has a physical, mental, and spiritual dimension. He symbolizes the balance between these three dimensions with a triangle, or trikon'a (Figure 3). Similar to sustainable development indicators, the physical, mental, and spiritual spheres are divided into sub-spheres which, in turn, can be composed of numerous sub-triangles. The physical sphere consists of sub-spheres that relate directly with the mundane world, such as agriculture, industry, trade, physical health, energy, water supply, etc. The mental sphere encompasses more subtle fields of human endeavor that

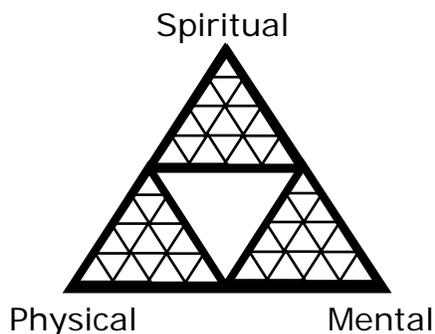


Figure 3

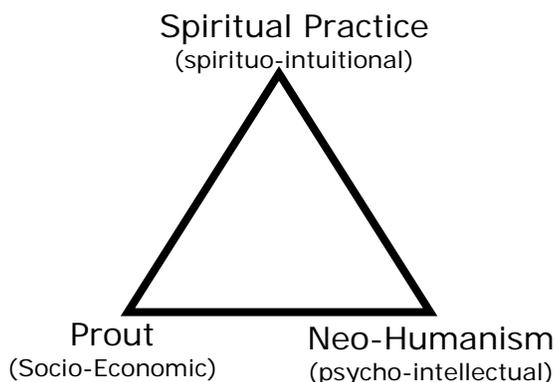


Figure 4

primarily involve mental functions, including the arts, philosophy, politics, psychology, and parapsychology. The divisions in the spiritual sphere are fewer and correspond to aspects of the spiritual endeavor. A perfect state of prama implies a balance within each level (sub-triangle, sub-sphere, and sphere) and between all levels.

The sub-sphere of education will serve as a useful example. Sarkar explains that the “hard” sciences which relate directly to the mundane world (e.g. physics, chemistry, biology, etc.) are located in the physical sphere and the humanities, arts, and social sciences belong to the mental sphere. So, chemistry, which is a sub-triangle of the physical education sub-sphere, could be further analyzed into the sub-triangles of organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, biochemistry, physical chemistry, educational chemistry, and environmental chemistry. Remember that prama implies a balance within and between all triangles and spheres. Continuing with this example, in the field of biochemistry, the pursuit and production of specific pharmaceutical drugs must take into account its influence within and between all three spheres. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a proper balance within this sub-triangle (biochemistry), with other sub-triangles (fields of chemistry), between the sub-spheres in the physical sphere (education and health) and with the mental and spiritual spheres. In a similar way, the field of psychology, as an educational component of the mental sphere, could be divided into sub-fields or sub-triangles, and efforts made to attain and sustain prama within these disciplines would help to balance the mental sphere and its relationship to the physical and spiritual spheres.

The Practice of Prama

From the above description, prama appears to be far more difficult to achieve than sustainable development. In truth, its scope and mission are broader and more complex. Yet prama is not a stand-alone construct; rather, it is an integrating framework for several theories and practices that Sarkar had already developed. Among these earlier contributions, three stand out as crucial to the task of materializing prama (see Figure 4). For the physical sphere, Sarkar’s socio-economic theory, PROUT, progressively utilizes material resources in order to meet current and future needs. Sarkar realized early on that capitalism was, in fact, the cause of many imbalances in this sphere and hence was an unsustainable system. For the mental sphere, neo-humanism cultivates a moral and spiritual bearing in intellectual and social activities and frees the intellect to pursue more creative and intuitive knowledge and solutions. For the spiritual sphere, a systematic and rational spiritual practice and ideology accelerates individual and collective movement towards self-realization.

These three form a synergistic triangle that operates in all three spheres to establish prama. In the physical sphere, for instance, although PROUT may play a dominant role, neo-humanism helps to integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives while spiritual practices provides the necessary inspiration and direction. In the mental sphere, neo-humanism is central but PROUT provides guidance for maximum utilization of metaphysical and supramundane potentialities. In the spiritual sphere, Sarkar explains in his discussion on “pseudo-spirituality” that neo-humanism is required to remove dogmas that hamper spiritual development. Together, all three balance each sphere and harmonize the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of individual human life and society as a whole.

Prama-based Education

Education is a basic requirement of life and a fundamental human right. No society can achieve prama without a proper educational system. What are the implications for education in a society striving to achieve prama? The following are possible strategies for bringing education into a state of prama:

- For Sarkar, an imbalanced society must begin with the physical sphere. Initially, there must be efforts to provide educational opportunities for everyone. Applying the principles of PROUT, adequate educational facilities and programs should be available to all, children and adults.
- In order to balance the physical, mental, and spiritual spheres, all educational fields (sub-triangles) need to study the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of their disciplines and research methods for bringing them into balance.
- The practical applications of PROUT, neo-humanism, and spiritual practice should be introduced into the educational system from the very beginning. Curricula from pre-school to post-doctorate must incorporate age-appropriate concepts to gradually develop a deep understanding of these theories and practices.
- Significant coordination and cooperation will be essential for balancing each academic discipline within its field and between other fields. Current educational institutions foment, rather than decrease, barriers between these disciplines. Prama-based education must strongly encourage inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary study and research to forge a more synergetic intellectual development and academic climate.

- Prama involves a transformation at both the individual and collective levels. Educational programs must assist teachers and students to achieve prama in their personal lives as well as within larger structures, e.g. social, economic, political, etc.

Towards a Sustainable Wholeness

The hope of sustainable development for a better world depended upon resolving the global problems in a more comprehensive way. Yet after years of disappointing efforts, some proponents recognize that the tools in their hands—the existing social and economic systems—are inadequate for achieving sustainability. Prama, one could argue, is a next step forward. Based on a more holistic understanding of human needs and an integrated development strategy, prama moves society not just towards a sustainable future, but towards one that creates greater individual and collective wealth, expands our mental horizons and possibilities, and elevates our spirits. In the true spirit of Gaia, Sarkar presents us with a conceptual framework that understands the inter-connectedness of all beings and systems and methodically moves us towards a state of wholeness through balance and progressive sustainability.

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Continued from Page 14 ***CNS Haiti***

❖ Start Broad, Pinpoint Gradually

The diversification and broad scope of the project goals and activities are extremely important especially during the first stages of the project. Keep in mind that the project goals should not necessarily stay fixed, but could be flexible and able to adjust to local conditions. With the increase of your knowledge and experience gradually pinpoint the project objectives, always consulting both donors and beneficiaries.



Initially AMURT's proposal to CIDA included the rehabilitation and curriculum support of 2 NHE schools and 5 regular schools in the NW. The local communities petitioned the organization to instead open and manage a secondary school. After prolonged needs assessment which included visioning forums and input from both government and sponsor consultants AMURT amended the project goals. The project concentrated on setting up 3 model NHE schools, one of which would serve as a teacher training and professional education centre. All things considered, at the end the proposal financed a NHE project of large scope without originally having such an objective. The initial broad focus and community orientation of the project proposal was crucial in gaining the trust of both the funding agency and the local population.

And always remember that the success of any project will be determined by the degree of your ingenuity, persistence, and constant ideation on the broad purpose of your mission.



AMURT is currently in the process of translating from French and publishing on line all documents and manuals associated with its Haiti projects. Please contact the author at haiti@amurt.net for more information.

Website: www.vssnet.org/Haiti.htm

Ananda Vidyadharma Community Project

Huay Ma Lai, Thailand

By Michele Montenegro

When approaching the Ananda Vidyadharma Master Unit, you can hear the drums and guitars. Dada Ramakrishna got them last year so that the boys would play music with the children of the village instead of fighting with them. And it helped! Nowadays the children from outside don't come so regularly anymore, but most of Dada's boys are really into playing music and the smaller ones even formed a band which plays weekly at a guest-house in nearby Sangklaburi.



On the border of Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand, close to the city of Sangklaburi, is an area of mountains and jungles. In this area live the so called hill tribes, like Karen and Mon.

Originally coming from Myanmar, but pushed back into the jungles and mountains bordering Thailand, these hill tribes have kept fighting for their land. During a massive offensive in 1989/90 the Burmese army captured the most important border point with Thailand, the Three Pagoda Pass, so far jointly controlled by Mon and Karen armies. The entire village was burnt to the ground and later rebuilt and settled with ethnic Burmese. The Mon, at one time the most powerful and most cultured people in the region, and the Karen are today living in the border region between Thailand and Myanmar. On the Thai side they are tolerated but in no way encouraged. They are not fully recognized as Thai inhabitants and therefore don't have the same rights as the Thais. To protect the social, political and economical well-being of Thailand they are not allowed to leave the area without permission of the government.

Most of the population has a low level of education and is living in impoverished conditions. They are presently dependent on bamboo and thatch for construction and often persist in illegal logging to sell or use in building, increasing the serious stress on the local eco-system. The villagers cannot obtain enough funds to increase agricultural production, a practice in which the community is most highly involved, by buying more livestock and implementing modern agricultural methods. As a consequence the community remains stuck in the cycle of poverty.

Twelve years ago, in the midst of a beautiful natural setting near one of the few remaining rainforests in Thailand, Dada Ramakrishna started cultivating a piece of wild neglected land in the village of Huay Ma Lai with the idea to grow into a community project. After two years of hard work a big house was built and in 1996 a boys' home was initiated. A comprehensive farming system with agriculture, dairy animals, mini-forestry, mini-ponds (water catchment) has been set up to support some of the daily needs of those living at Ananda Vidyadharma.

Today Ananda Vidyadharma is an independent community project that supports the people in the village of Huay Ma Lai and the surrounding area as well. It has initiated several projects to develop the community in and around Huay Ma Lai:

"Baan Dada" is the name of one of Ananda Vidyadharma's main activities; the boys' home. It is a home for boys from marginalized families of the Huay Ma Lai community, its surrounding areas and nearby Sangklaburi. Some children are



orphans, some are abandoned, while others come from families in which the mothers were widowed or mistreated by their husbands. The boys' home complements another project of the Neohumanist Foundation in Thailand, Baan Unrak, which houses abandoned and destitute girls and women in Sangklaburi, a town that faces similar problems as Huay Ma Lai. Currently there are thirty-four children between 3 and 19 years of age residing at Baan Dada.

A day at Baan Dada starts early in the morning, when the “mothers” are already busy making breakfast and lunch-packages for the children. A few of the children are going to Didi’s Neohumanist school in Sangklaburi, but that is a half hour away and most of the time they hitch hike to and from school. Therefore most of the children prefer to go to the Christian school in Huay Ma Lai. The youngest ones and the new children are educated at Ananda Vidyadharma itself. A teacher is employed to teach them Math and Thai. She does this with a lot of enthusiasm, art and games. Volunteers often help with teaching English. After school the children do their duties (watering the plants, etc.), practise music or just play around. They are very good in inventing new games. At 18.30 the children do collective kiirtan and meditation. The evenings are for homework. Between 8 and 9 PM most of the younger ones get tired and the quiet evenings start, and one can enjoy the beautiful sky and forest sounds.

“Dairy Goat Lending Project”

This project was started one year ago and involves purchasing and lending goats to families in nearby villages. There, the females are being impregnated. After the offspring are able to take care of themselves, the goats will be returned to Ananda Vidyadharma so that they can be lent out to another village. This process is repeated continuously, resulting in an ever-increasing number of goats for the local residents.



“Community Weaving and Bamboo Handicraft Projects”

These are Fair Trade projects which have been set up for the villagers in the surrounding communities. The villagers are skilled in weaving baskets and other goods from bamboo. It requires a relatively small amount of bamboo to make a basket. Ananda Vidyadharma planted a lot of bamboo last year. The baskets and other goods can be made at home. They can also do weaving at their homes. Ananda Vidyadharma provides the yarn and at Ananda Vidyadharma a few women are employed to sew them into bags, clothes and other items. The payment to the villagers covers their minimum costs of living.



“Unite for Sight - Eye Care Program”

This program provides free eye care for the local residents in nearby and remote communities. General examinations are given and reading and acuity glasses are distributed. Ananda Vidyadharma coordinates the program for Unite for Sight, a foundation from the United States. They have provided Ananda Vidyadharma with the necessary equipment for performing the examinations, and also help with arranging the volunteers and eye operations where needed. Ananda Vidyadharma helps the volunteers to reach the villages and with lodging. Glasses for



reading and distance are provided by the volunteers. Volunteer optometrists and ophthalmologists come every few months to do additional examinations and to perform surgeries as needed. In the Sangklaburi area, the major eye problems are pterygium and cataracts, as well as minor traumas. Thus far, ten villages have received services from this program. Approximately 1,500 examinations and 6 major surgeries have been provided.

Health Awareness Project

This program seeks to promote the awareness of various health issues. Yearly events are organized around a certain theme, including yoga, HIV/AIDS, and drug awareness. Theatre, music and games are the primary tools of education used at these events, as well as informational posters. The children at Baan Dada, as well as children from the surrounding villages are participating in these events.

P.R. Sarkar Vocational School

Since most of the children don't have the legal papers to get permission to leave the area, there is an enormous need for a vocational school. For this reason it would be good to have a vocational school in the area. Another reason to start a vocational school is that the nearest one is 4 hours away in Kanchanaburi and families don't have the financial capacity to send their children to the bigger cities. It is Dada's dream to open such a school one day. Next to Ananda Vidyadharm, land with a size of 56 rai has been purchased by Ananda Marga Gurukula. The goal is to establish a vocational school within three years, where the students can take mechanical, electrical, IT technology related and dress making courses. The first steps, to clear the land and to make the pathways have been initiated. The next step is to find sponsors for this project.



Natural Construction

Dada prefers natural building techniques, like adobe, when it comes to expanding. At the moment an activity-hall is under construction and plans for a library and a primary school are already on the drawing table. Recently a mud house was built for one of the employed “mothers” and in the future all of the bamboo houses will be replaced with mud houses. Also for the new volunteer residents an oasis with adobe houses is planned.



Thinking Ahead

Dada always looks ahead and is already thinking of the days that the boys will go to college. This will require a lot of funds, so he came up with the idea of planting rubber trees during the coming rainy season. The trees will be ready to harvest in about seven years which is the same amount of years that it takes before the boys can go to college.

Positive Microvita in the Forests of Ananda Vrati

By Dada Vimalananda

Are there positive microvita* in a master unit? For sure!

Everything started one morning in Ananda Vrati Master Unit.

“I should carve some stones with Shrii Sarkar’s quotations and put them at the feet of the trees!” What a crazy idea, still ... why not.

I asked a Master Unit resident how to find carving tools and he suggested to look for a tool shop in Scranton, PA. I phoned and they didn’t have the right tools. I had my first setback ... still I trusted the positive microvita, and that there should be some alternative way to get the stones carved. I

started to call mortuaries and one of them agreed to help me out. I collected a few stones from the ground and I took off. I had all my luggage with me and along the way after a couple of phone calls I decided to travel to Washington DC. There in Home Depot I found the tools I was looking for and I started the work with the stones. In Washington DC Dada Vimalananda gave me a couple of short quotes and in few minutes the stones were vibrating with Shrii Sarkar’s words. It was encouraging. I showed the opera prima in New York Sectorial office and more appreciation came. I was now ready to start the project as soon as I was back in Ananda Vrati. Once there I went into the woods and I placed the first stones with quotes. More ideas started to flow ... let us give a name to the forest ... let us call it Spirit Forest.



One of the little secrets of Ananda Vrati is that there is a wonderful collection of books on different types of subjects related to education, outdoor, adventure, sports, games etc. I got attracted by one which is named ... The Virtue Project. By chance I found some cards related to the books. There were 52 virtues for 52 cards with the name and description of each one. I started to play with them. There was one with the name ... steadfastness. Actually I didn’t know what it meant so I read the explanation. Interestingly enough I found myself completely lacking in that virtue ... ok, I will complete this project no matter what, this is the meaning of steadfastness. The second forest came alive and it was called ... the Virtue Forest.

Early morning I decided to start the operation. I moved the garden tables to accommodate the tools, placed the cordless phone, gathered the computer to listen to the Prabhat Samgiit songs, displayed the cards and then ... the hardest job ... collect 52 smooth stones. Actually in Ananda Vrati there are plenty of stones of a quality called blue stone that is the material used for landscaping and external pavements. All around the area it is possible to see beautiful dry stone walls made with this special type of stone. Still 52 good stones ... find them, carry them ... it took me a while and some sweat. I started to carve the virtues, first the short ones ... love, tact, mercy, trust, unity, etc. By midday I was completely exhausted but 21 virtues had been produced, on stone.

One forest, two forests, but what about the main forest, the one we used for the obstacle course? Let us call it the Cakra Forest. I went there and ... unbelievable; there was a series of big tall trees all in one line. These are the cakras! I can set the stones around the biggest ones with all the names of the propensities. I really got excited and doubled my efforts. Let Ananda Vrati be a place where everybody can meditate on our ideology just by walking in the forest. Besides that we will have to take care of it and maintain it and keep it clean. Who could think that stones would have so much value.

One forest, two forests, three forests ... but what about the 15 shiilas (shields)? Is there a forest available for them? Of course there is, and the first carved stones are already in place. Now there is still some difficulty regarding the longest shiilas ... I don’t want to write a poem on a stone. Some adjustment will need to be made and some shiilas will be reduced to one or two meaningful words. Well, it is time to sleep. I think it is enough work for today. Ananda Vrati has now more meaning and its microvita are still there waiting to be useful to those spiritually inclined minds who wish to come and spend some time in its surroundings.

*Microvita are very minute particles, from which living substance is formed. It is through the emergence of microvita that life begins and carries forth

Sunrise Schools, Bucharest Romania

By Didi Ananda Devapriya

There are two Sunrise Playschools in Bucharest Romania in Bucharest Noi and Mihai Bravu. The Bucharesti Noi kindergarten began in 1991 to serve the needs of children in a poor neighborhood in the northern area of Bucharest. In 1992, with the support received from the Infant Massage Association (Sweden) and other sponsors, a house was purchased, renovated and equipped for the second kindergarten in Mihai Bravu. It was the first school in Bucharest to implement a program of integration and individual therapy for disabled children and today there are only three kindergartens like this in the Bucharest region. The program is based on Neohumanist education and the children with disabilities participate fully in the daily routine and receive individual therapy and massage from a kineto-therapist.

Autumn Bazaar

In the autumn in Romania every year, all of the homes are busy preparing for winter. Romania is still a country that does not import much food, and thus relies mostly on local agriculture. In the winter, vegetables become very expensive, and so traditionally, families prepare for the winter by canning fruits and vegetables and making “muraturi” which are pickled vegetables (especially cucumbers), making jams, and making a type of sauerkraut called varza from cabbage. This is especially true in the villages, but also in Bucharest the piatsa is full of people stocking up on cucumbers, parsnips and carrots for their muraturi, and buying cartons of plums and apples for jams.



In the Fall, in our two neohumanist kindergartens in Bucharest our cooks also prepare muraturi, varza and jam. And even the children are involved preparing for our annual Autumn Bazaar! We have two kindergartens, both called Sunrise Playschool, and to differentiate them we call them by their neighbourhood names – Bucharesti Noi and Mihai Bravu. In the Mihai Bravu kindergarten, every year we celebrate autumn with a special event called the Autumn Bazaar, which also serves as a fundraiser for the school.

This past Fall the children spent weeks preparing. They made muraturi, cutting colourful vegetables into different shapes, like stars and circles, and pickling them in salted water. They also made many kinds of crafts; paintings on canvas, painted ceramic plates, painted bear statues, and lanterns made with thin translucent colored paper. The whole school also participated in making a big paper mache bee, that would become the grand prize of the “Tombolo”, Romanian for a raffle. We also designed T-shirts with photos of the children and printed them on shirts that the parents brought in, and produced a CD of songs from the Italian class that the children have been doing. Games were introduced during the practical life section of the curriculum pretending to play market. Also math games with counting and dividing things were done.

In the last days before the Bazaar, the children were busy helping bake sweets and goodies for the big day. The Dolphins were making butter cookies with cookie cutters, the Zebras made spinach triangles with thin phyllo dough, and the Bearcubs made corn muffins and lemon cake. More cakes were made by teachers and Didi, and parents were asked to bring in fruits, vegetables and flowers, as well as a toy for the raffle.

On the day of the Bazaar, the school was buzzing with excitement. The teachers and children dressed up in traditional Romanian costumes. During naptime, the teachers and volunteers had transformed the courtyard into a marvellous open air market! Swings and slides were draped with cloth (to prevent our shopkeepers from

the temptation to run off and play on them) and then decorated with the paintings and photos of the children preparing for the Bazaar. Tables were brought outside and different stands were arranged. There was the fruit and vegetable market, headed by Diana, the flower shop and muraturi shop with Mery. There was an arts and crafts gallery, with an exposition of paintings, the ceramic plates and painted bears. There was the T-shirt and CD shop, under Diana's supervision and finally the giant bumble bee on display next to handmade raffle tickets. Inside each ticket was a number that matched a number that had been placed on the toys brought in from home. When a ticket was bought, then the same number was placed in a hat for the raffle of the bumblebee at the end. And for the pastry shop, Madhavi had artfully laid out a table with delicacies – the spinach triangles, packages of cookies artistically wrapped in cellophane and ribbons, and many luscious cakes.



At last, the Bazaar was officially announced to be open for shopping, as some traditional music filled the air, and parents came to shop and join in the games! Children called out “Come and buy my pickles!! Come and buy my beautiful flowers!!” and dutiful parents and grandparents were soon laden down with items, particularly from the stand where their child was posted.

One of the most popular places turned out to be the Tombolo raffle. Cristina, one of the teachers from our Bucharesti Noi school ran that area, and was always surrounded by a crowd of children, eagerly searching through the basket of toys for the one matching their number.

The festivities ended when Marilena, our gymnastics teacher gathered all of the children in a circle to perform a traditional dance for the parents, which was a very charming finishing touch.

It was a wonderful experience for the children to be in the role of grownup shopkeepers, and to have the parents involved and participating with enthusiasm in this elaborate game. Children always feel proud when their parents can see and appreciate something that they have done, and it is very empowering for them when they can act out important real world roles. The parent participation is what really makes the event memorable for the children, and they continue to talk about it for weeks in the school.

It was also a very successful fundraiser this year, thanks to the generosity of the parents, raising about 450 euro for the school, which is a very considerable amount in Romania. This amount was used towards the repair of the van used to transport our children with disabilities and take the children on field trips, as well as towards didactic materials and outdoor toys.

Bucharest School Plays

Both schools spent December preparing for a special performance for the parents. In Mihai Bravu the smallest bearcubs performed songs and poems, while the littlest ones tended to wander off stage a bit...The Zebras had beautiful costumes for "The Snow Queen". They got a bit tongue-tied by the excitement (loud whispers to the rescue!), but it was warmly appreciated by the audience. The Dolphins performed a Romanian folktale called "Veronica", with songs and lines and elaborate props and all! In Bucharesti Noi, they also performed "The Snow Queen" and many traditional Romanian Christmas carols - including one with a wooden puppet of a goat whose mouth opens and claps shut to a rhythm in the song. At the end of the performances in both schools, Santa came and distributed a special present to each child.



2006 School Updates

Bucharesti Noi Sunrise School

In Bucharesti Noi Sunrise School, our children receive many enriching cultural experiences, to help broaden their minds and awaken appreciation for real cultural experiences, instead of shallow pseudo-culture. This year, the Multicultural Festival was about France. One of the girls, Anna, is from a bilingual French/Romanian family. We had special French apple tarte, with café au lait (made with Inka of course!) and French cheeses. Anna helped to teach the children French words and songs in circle time, and we looked at pictures of France and heard French fairy tales. The classroom was decorated with French flags and pictures.

Our teachers, Cristina and Sumati, are very creative story tellers, and involve the children frequently in acting out stories. The children love it and the teachers also encourage them to get their parents to read stories to them at home. They also enjoy history and sharing Romanian cultural heritage with the children, so they took them to see the Romanian Traditional Peasant museum, as well as the Natural History Museum. The children were impressed by the big apes in particular. The children are enthusiastic about Italian classes with “Arianna” – a doll that accompanies Didi during the lessons, and many have bought their own “Ariannas”. During one lesson, children drew pictures of the 3 Little Pigs, and then they were cut out and used for storytelling in Italian. They were so delighted that they spontaneously insisted on acting out the story. Now they understand and speak many Italian words. Several of our children attend painting class in the nearby park. Now that spring has finally arrived, we will start going regularly to the nearby park to play outside. We also had a trip together with our friends from the Mihai Bravu School to visit an indoor playground of gigantic inflatable play structures. The children also love going to the theater, and have seen several plays this year at the children’s theatre Tandarica downtown. The favorite was Jack and the Beanstalk. Adi, who has been working with us since the beginning as the school caretaker has just gotten qualified as a professional cook and the children really enjoy her meals prepared with love.

Sunrise School Mihai Bravu

After Christmas, we had several staff changes, but all of which turned out to be very positive in the end. We now have a talented new cook, a very helpful new driver and Madhavii has returned from maternity leave to teach. Our teachers, Devakii, Larisa, Madhavii and Mery have been engaged in making very creative and interesting experiences for the children. This year we organized a multicultural day about Lebanon. An ambassador from the Lebanese embassy in Bucharest came to the event, and the parents of Janik and Rebecca, who have Lebanese origins, brought special Lebanese foods – tabouli, falafel, flat breads, and humus. The children spent a week learning a traditional dance from Lebanon, learning about its history, making pictures of musical instruments, the patchwork look of the fields, etc. The whole school was decorated with posters from the embassy and, special decorations were made by the children on the theme of Lebanon. The ambassador was very charmed by the whole event, and brought slides and music about Lebanon which he showed to the children. The children also went to visit the Town Hall of Bucharest to make a special plea to preserve a local playground that is destined to be turned into a new shopping complex. They had made a big drawing of the playground, which they presented to the Mayor’s assistant who came to meet them.

The children have also been attending a Romanian traditional dance class once a week at the local Children’s Centre. When selecting extra-curricular activities for the year, only the dance teacher was willing to work with our special needs children. In fact she is very patient and encouraging to Antonia, Anamaria and Daria, so we are very happy that they are enjoying participating in the class. The children also attended an Astronomy course this year at the Children’s Centre, which included opportunities to look at the moon through a big telescope in the observatory. They also have been to the ballet or theatre about once a month. On Mother’s Day the children performed dances of choreographed asanas for their mothers, and there was a contest to see if the mothers could recognize their own portrait in the drawings made by their children. Every month the teachers also organize a special birthday party for all of the children with birthdays that month. The whole school is decorated with a special theme, and the children play related games and stories. In one party this winter, the theme was “fireside story telling”. The classroom was decorated with a paper “fireplace” and the teachers had prepared an old-fashioned hand-held slide projector with slides of a story. During the Communist times, there was very little TV, and families used to use slideshows of stories for entertainment. One of our favourite parties was on the theme of “Babies!”. Each child brought a baby photo of themselves, and there was a contest to see if the children could recognize each other. Winners won a sweet candy pacifier, otherwise they got theirs dipped in salt!

News from the Children's Home Familia AMURTEL, Panatau Romania

Our children's home in Panatau has 16 children from the ages 5-19, and was initiated in 1992, soon after AMURTEL arrived in Romania and identified one of the most urgent needs to be that of children abandoned in state homes. The home is situated in Panatau, a small village in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains where the children grow up in a natural and healthy environment. The children are divided into two family units. The older group of our children all came from state children's homes where they experienced severe neglect, were tied to their beds, and often beaten. The younger group of children came to us in 2000, and had all been abandoned in state hospitals after birth, and also experienced severe neglect. Many of our children have learning and psychological disabilities and need extra attention. We have 10 staff and a "mother", a trained psychiatric nurse that has grown up with the first child and will grow old in the house. The children call her Mami. We have also instituted a system of contracts with the children to help teach them more independence and responsibility. We also have two cows, a guard dog, a donkey and frequently other cats and animals adopted from the neighborhood.



Every year, before Christmas, the children of Familia AMURTEL spend several weeks rehearsing and preparing for a special event. The whole village is invited for two showings of a theatre performance, followed by a big feast. The first night is for adults, and the following day there is a "matinee" performance only for children. Our staff is busy for days preparing complicated vegetarian versions of traditional Romanian favourite dishes, and preparing the house to host a dinner for about 70 people. This year the show was a musical dance version of "Snow White." Although many of our children struggle with their studies because of

learning disabilities other challenges, performing is something they do well and it gives an opportunity for their talents to shine. We had performed "Snow White" many years ago when the children were quite small, and it was a struggle to have enough characters – but now with the two groups of children it worked out perfectly! The small ones were the dwarves, and the older children played the other roles, and Gopi was telling about how much you could see their growth and improvement in acting and dancing since that first performance. Iosif was in charge of the sound system and sound track.

After School Center in Panatau, Romania A New Partnership with Panatau to Help Disadvantaged Children

Panatau, the village where we have our children's home, is in a hilly rural region where most of the population survives on subsistence farming, as there is very little other economic activity in the zone. Most families live below the poverty line. For some, the only economic income they receive is the 20 euro monthly allowance from the state for raising children. Food costs in Romania are not much lower than in the rest of Europe. Rural families live off of their land, but the diet is often very poor. Watery soup, bread and potatoes are the main foods. Many children growing up in such families do not even receive a proper hot meal in a day. Education levels are also quite low, and as many parents have not completed high school themselves, children get little support in their studies, thus perpetuating a cycle of poverty. Alcoholism is very high, as farmers make a traditional homemade brandy from plums, making alcohol always freely available. This also impacts children, as domestic violence is very high.

Modelled on a successful project in a neighbouring village, AMURTEL would like to open an after-school Centre where especially disadvantaged children could receive a hot meal, homework support, and extracurricular activities such as computer courses, sports activities and creative, cultural activities. This would relieve some of the strain on family budgets, ensure good nutrition for the children, as well as promoting better achievement in school. We felt it was important that such an initiative only be done if there was local support and commitment to collaborating on the project. In fact, the mayor of Panatau was enthusiastic about the initiative, and we are very pleased that he has signed a partnership contract with AMURTEL. The mayor has designated a community owned building to be utilised for the project rent free, and after the first year of functioning, the community will assume responsibility for the running costs, except for food costs which will be provided by AMURTEL. AMURTEL will also be responsible for the programming, staffing, and running of the centre. We have made a project proposal for funding from a Dutch foundation which also sponsored the opening of a similar project in a nearby village, and we are now waiting hopefully for the response.

Peace Day at the Lotus School, Mongolia

By Nitya



Peace day is an internationally recognized day that has taken on a special significance for the children of the Lotus Centre in Mongolia. For Mongolians, the word *ekh-taivan*, 'peace', connotes images of peace with the Russians, or perhaps peace without guns and tanks. Peace Day in Mongolia, however, has developed from a different angle. Rather than focus on peace between political leaders, countries, or political ideologies, Peace Day has become a recognition of the need for peace of another kind; of the need for each of us to develop a sense of peace within ourselves, and of the importance of children in the future of society.

The day begins at seven in the morning at one of Mongolia's Buddhist nunneries, and from there commences a tour of the country's various religious and spiritual institutions. By noon, the children of the Lotus School are waiting excitedly to perform a concert of music, dance and theatre to the audience of Buddhist nuns and monks, Catholic bishops, Muslim imams, foreigners and Mongolians who have come together throughout the morning. The children have learnt the words for peace in a dozen languages, including Hebrew, Italian and Thai.

The concert is about to begin, and the performers enter to the sound of music and the twinkling bells in their hands:

Shalom shalom shalom, ('Peace' in Hebrew)

May peace be with you, Chorus the children,

Shalom shalom shalom,

I'm all that you do,

May peace beyond all understanding

Fill your heart and mind...

The concert is followed by lunch, and everyone enjoys our vegetarian food, despite the tastes being new to some. "This is the best food I have eaten in Mongolia!" commented one of the guests, to the delight of our cook!



After lunch are the peace games. Children and adults, young and old alike, sit down to cut out doves and colour in pictures. Outside is the peace wall, where the children and visitors press their rainbow hands. The air smells like paint, and everyone is smiling as they show off their coloured palms or attempt to scrub the paint from their fingers.

At the end of the day, we raise the giant peace dove and stand underneath for a photo. It is wonderful to witness the smiling faces of the 140 Lotus children, at the end of this joyful day. None of these children have had easy lives; their childhoods have been marked by abandonment, rejection and abuse. They know well enough that peace does not always exist in the world around them, and if they are to overcome the inevitable challenges that await them, we will have to help them find a sense of peace and self-worth that emanates from within. Days such as Peace Day are all a part of this process, helping to show the children that they too, can be part of

something special. At least for this day they can feel contented and carefree, and carry their happy memories until the next Peace Day at the Lotus School.

Sunrise Centre, Malta (Centru Tbexbix)

History of the Centre by Didi A. Rainjana

Last January was a milestone in the history of the Sunrise Centre in Malta. Six years after the premises were bought and renovation started, the Centre's inauguration and launch of the Sunrise English Club, its first activity took place.



Playing "spot the difference"

Whoever saw the house back in 1999 would not expect it could turn into a learning centre. The Sunrise Centre is located in one of the lowest income areas of Malta, with the highest rates of illiteracy, unemployment and other social ills, and it had been over 15 years since the house was last inhabited. Before that it had been a small slum, with a number of families occupying a room each. However, after the last resident left, the house became the local dump, with everybody literally dumping their unwanted things there. The 10 rooms, a three-room basement, a central courtyard with a well and a roof, were literally all full of rubbish, and it took lots of manpower and even more determination to carry the 30+ skip loads of junk down the 80 steps.

A lot of work has been done since then due to the commitment of a nucleus of people and the support of many others, and the task of 'transforming' this house into a proper place for an Educational & Social Service Centre has been accomplished successfully.

At the opening it touched me to see the previous owner of the house with tears in his eyes for seeing the 'revolutionary' transformations of the house that was once his and that from now on would serve the noble purpose of an educational centre. (As it turns out this man studies humanism and became extremely curious when he heard "Neohumanism" mentioned in the inauguration speech and as soon as he came home he searched the Internet for more information!)

The whole process has been a very interesting experience for me and I am grateful that I have been part of it with the others. Forming the Centru Tbexbix Committee and each member taking responsibility for a different area (construction, fundraising, PR, etc) was a turning point and speeded up the process tremendously. The enthusiasm and unity built up more and more and it has been very inspiring to experience all this together, to witness all the small "miracles" unfolding one after the other, and see the joy and satisfaction in the eyes of the Margiis.

Recently some of the neighbours have been joining us bringing with them their enthusiasm and cooperativeness and more and more people have shown appreciation and interest to help or volunteer in the activities. Also Didi Rasamayii has joined the team recently and I feel she is the proper person to follow up on this project and together with the others bring it to its full development

My heartfelt appreciation goes to the committee members (Kamala, Jagadiish, Kalyani, Trpti, Shashvati, Amrta), Nirmalendu,, Didi Ananda Tapomaya, Didi Rasamayii and to all the people that in these years have contributed in one way or another to the materialization of this project; I am sorry that I cannot mention all their names. Amrta, who has been working in this project for more than two years, moved on to the Sweden Training Centre last new year to undergo Acarya Training.

The Sunrise Centre Opens its Doors By Didi Rasamayii

The months of intense preparation for the opening were followed by 5 days of closed doors. Not that we were sitting still, rather the opposite. We were busy getting chairs, desks and other donations from around the island so that our newly opened but still empty centre would soon be functional. When we got back the neighbours expressed their surprise. We had officially opened yet never had the doors remained closed for so long. We

explained that there was still a lot of work to be done, and although they understood, they persisted in their eager requests to start activities as soon as possible. So much enthusiasm we could not withstand. We changed our plans, started our Sunrise English Club a month earlier than scheduled, and entered into it as a kind of experiment. We put a simple poster on the door, prepared a lesson of ice-breakers and games and waited to see what would happen.



S for Snake

On the planned day, while we were still preparing, cleaning chairs, etc., Alfred came in, trousers and trainers full of dust, to check if we were open. 15 minutes later he returned with his twin brother and together with 3 girls our first class was formed. Introductions, name games, memory games and in the meantime speaking in English (it does help that I do not speak Maltese, they are really making efforts to speak to me in English, there is no alternative!) and some writing and reading too. From shyly answering our questions in the beginning the children transformed to playful competitors when they forgot about the learning aspect and just played. And they learned in the meantime. Seeing the joy in their eyes and laughter I got a deep sense of satisfaction and growing love, and a feeling that nothing could be more rewarding than for these kids to play, learn and grow to their full potential. Two days later, when I opened the door 15 minutes before class the girls were already waiting there and within minutes some new children joined too (as well as curious passers-by, neighbours and parents). This time we were 8, and again we did games. The throwing-the-beanbag-calling-out-names is by far the favourite and everyone learns each others' name in no time at all!

The children who came for the second time were already more confident and easily participated. One of the new boys seemed extremely shy at first, but easily joined in with the games and his face was shining as he played. Another boy was reluctant to answer to which school he is going. It turns out he is going to a special school for children with behavioural problems. He seemed ashamed and several times in the afternoon he was restless and distracted. However, what a change in his attitude when he was able to teach me some Maltese words after class! I said the words I knew, and he would say the English. Then he started to tell me new words, and he wouldn't stop! Anything he could think of: window, door, eyes, nose, blood, Tuesday, etc etc. He told me he will teach me more words next time and with a big smile and a cheerful "Ciao Didi!" he went home. It made me realise the gain lies in raising their self-confidence, and ability to learn. That will help them in many more ways for the rest of their lives. Again, what could be more worthwhile?

In the meantime the group has grown to 20 children, and still more are asking to come. We smilingly accept them, knowing that we will need more resources very soon. But the faith in that all that is needed will be provided is strengthened as new volunteers come forward, donations in kind and money are received and positive feedback comes from parents and local social workers. On top of that, more requests are coming from the people who walk in as soon as our doors are open: activities and courses for adults, for smaller children, in English, computers and other subjects. With such sympathetic response from the neighbourhood and the enthusiasm of our volunteers the Sunrise Centre cannot be anything but a success!

Since the writing of this article more people have come forward to join the Sunrise English Club team, now consisting of 12 volunteers! Complementing the game-based group activities, sessions in small groups of 2-3 children per teacher have started in order to give attention to their individual needs, as well as group activities for the younger 5-8 year olds. Another activity of the Sunrise Centre is about to take off as professional therapists have come together and formed a team that will offer free psychological support to women and youth of the local area. And finally, some really good news on the funding side: the Centre has received a grant from US Embassy for the purchase of its first computers!

Ananda Marga Neohumanist School Korle Gonno, Accra, Ghana

Making a Good Thing Even Better

By Sari Wood



In my classroom at the Ananda Marga Neohumanist School in Korle Gonno, my students were reviewing words that start with the letters of the alphabet. The children were trying to explain to me that they had been taught a song to help them with this lesson. “Great!” Or so I thought. In unison the children began to sing, “A is for apple. B is for ball. C is for Cat...” They got all the way down to where X should have been and I heard the children say, “asassinfoff.” So you might have guessed that I had no idea what they were trying to say. Sometimes the accent can be tricky, but I’ve never had that much trouble deciphering. I called in the headmaster to translate and he didn’t know either.

It turns out that they were trying to say “X as in fox.” But they couldn’t say the actual letter. They didn’t know what “as in” meant, nor could they tell me what a fox looked like. When I held up a magazine photo of a fox, they had no idea what it was. When I asked them if it was a fox, if it was what they were talking about, they shook their heads “no.” That, my friends, is one of the biggest problems with rote memorization. Children can memorize almost anything if you repeat it enough times. The problem is that very often they don’t understand what they have memorized. New teaching techniques need to be added to the curriculum to help the kids with the comprehension of new skills. It doesn’t do the children any good to memorize addition tables if they don’t understand what five added to five means concretely.

Challenges like this are major obstacles for schools here in Ghana. In addition to poor teaching techniques, the schools experience problems like unpredictable attendance. You are never sure how many children will show up to school, or even at what time school will start exactly. Students are shuffled in and out of classrooms seemingly without much logic. Not all students have had exposure to the same information and/or teaching styles. This contributes to achievement gaps and inadequate knowledge foundations which smite any chance of comprehension. Without a solid foundation, it is very difficult to teach new skills. It is very rare that the whole class is on the same proverbial page. These problems are far above and beyond the typical lack of supplies and text materials.



As a result of my recent volunteer experience at the school in Korle Gonno, I have decided to tackle the root of all of these issues. Early this summer, volunteer-led discussion groups will be held to accomplish the necessary tasks of designing an appropriate curriculum, training and educating the teaching staff, establishing a school year schedule, and creating a better link between past, present, and future volunteers. All of these things will help to create a more consistent and sustainable learning atmosphere for the students. Hopefully, they will then be able to continue on to primary school well-prepared for the skills they will have to learn there.

Didi Shanta, the directress of the Lotus Children’s Centre in Soko, oversees the activities at the Lotus school and the school in Korle Gonno. Also a member of the educational committee for the schools, she is hopeful that some discussion and training will bring vast improvements to the existing student body and even attract new students and families to the program. The establishment of both the outreach schools was a major accomplishment, and vast improvement to the few early education opportunities that are available to the under privileged communities of Soko and Korle Gonno. But just the existence of the schools is not enough. Much has to be done to bring these schools up to the standards of their government funded and privately funded counterparts.

This task is not too great. With a little collaboration and a little elbow grease, these children can have as good (or hopefully better) an education as their more well-to-do peers. The volunteers at the Lotus Centre and other friends of

Continued on Page 32

Schools and Development Projects in Porto Alegre, Brasil

By Giridhara

I recently visited the AMURTEL schools and development projects in Porto Alegre, Brasil. I was initially impressed by a group of small children from one of the schools who sat patiently during a large AM retreat waiting for their turn to perform. They all sat quietly in their places then got up and performed very nicely. When I saw their calm behaviours and I mentally compared that with what I had come to expect in young children – restlessness, self-consciousness, a need to move or to talk. I knew that there was something special going on here.

AMURTEL runs 6 schools and a community development project in the industrial city in the southeast of Brasil. There is a very nice primary school with very modern and attractive facilities. There was a special meditation room and every class rotated through that room each day. The teachers were all practicing members of Ananda Marga and all had bright faces and professional dress. We saw the Circle of Love songs and movement being practiced by students as well as more conventional tasks. The older students were learning English and having a couple of Americans visit was a chance to say “hello” and try their new skills.

We also toured several of the pre-schools including one that had a high brick wall facing the street. Our tour guide explained that the dividing line between two rival gangs was that street and that sometimes there were gun fights near there. The community recently asked AMURT to take over a community centre that the municipality no longer wanted to run...after meeting with the residents AMURT agreed to manage the centre and the municipality would provide funding.

The development project includes an after school program for small children that includes feeding them a nutritious meal, a program for at-risk teenagers to teach them some job skills and involve them in community service. One of the projects involves learning to grow herbs and plants and make essential oils and scents which the members of the community use to make their own high quality natural soaps and shampoos at no cost. This project has room for developing some community gardens and other projects. AMURT and AMURTEL have been working with the community and the local governments for 30 years and there are now strong working relationships. Everyone in Porto Alegre knows AMURT.

Continued from Page 31
Korlo Gonno, Accra, Ghana

Ananda Marga are committed to the success of the program. All are pitching in to initiate change and maintain progress. The current volunteers at Lotus will be heading up the forum to discuss what needs to improve and how it can be done. All the teachers have expressed an interest also.

Of the improvements to be made, the development of the curriculum is the most important. The curriculum needs to be standardized for all the classes in each school, and from school to school as well. This will ensure that the children are all being taught the same information, and that they will all be at relatively the same level when they reach primary school. This can be accomplished by gathering curriculum standards from other public and private nursery schools, and finding out what children are expected to know when they reach the first form of primary school. The native Ghanaians will be the biggest help in this aspect, as they will be more familiar with the current expectations of the system. With a standardized curriculum no child will feel as though they missed anything. It will help them secure confidence in their learning abilities and ensure that they maintain their eagerness for learning in the future.

The enthusiasm of the students is already thriving. They respond amazingly well to volunteers as well as their usual teachers. That enthusiasm is a nice indicator of the potential of the program. Now is the time for the teachers and mentors to take the system to the next level while we still have the chance to preserve that early childhood attitude towards school: inquisitive, energetic, and optimistic, and even a little fun.

Love, Play and Unity

Teachers Education Weekend, Zonnelicht, Den Bosch, Holland March 3rd, 4th, 5th 2006 Summary - By Sanne



Friday, March 3rd

The Introduction was given by Yolande

Neohumanism is a feeling of love for everything, which is present in all of us. At 'Zonnelicht' we try to touch this

feeling in children, parents and other people. Children are encouraged to do something with their feeling of love, to be who they really are. The teachers are motivated to reach a process of development on the way to unity in themselves as well as in the children. Their way of working will always be dependent on time, place and person. Our inspiration as teachers comes from our sense of intuition and spirituality. Our rationality and intellect are guided by our inspiration.

A Lecture on Play - By Luti

Play is an essential part of the development of children. Children and play are naturally connected; around the whole world children are playing. Playing children do not discriminate at a racial or cultural level nor do they discriminate between languages. They understand each other. A clear definition of play has never been formed, but the characteristic of play is that it's not fixed on a purpose; it's leading to nothing in particular, except that it is leading to itself. The child becomes his or herself by playing. Play involves movement and the flow of movements with no particular goal in mind. Play can be seen as a way of making sense or giving significance to the world of the child's experiences. Play is called truly play if its origin comes from a free flow that includes improvising in a playful way. The form the playing takes is an expression of the personality of the child. There's surprise and expectation in play. Certain conditions foster play, including freedom to play, boundaries, safety rules, and control of overflow and underflow in the classroom.



Play can be seen as:

- an activity of joy, movement, fire
- related to objects, to body or other people
- having a non-external purpose
- self-initiating and controlling
- having a continuous variety of expectation and surprise
- an activity with less influence from reality, but the influence from reality is not removed.

Luti explained about different stages of play, according to the development and ages of children. She made a connection to the layers of the mind. We watched a video which was recorded in our school, showing playing children. We recognised the characteristics and stages of play.

A Workshop on Music - By Madhavi

Sound makes matter move and music can foster unity through sound. Sound touches our hearts. Rhythm is also important for unity. Rhythm is needed to create order in the universe. Rhythm can be created by interspersing movements with breaks. Music fosters the creation of forms. We need to create forms, to function in this world. For that we also need an awareness of space, time and person. Madhavi related this to the different stages of development of children. After this we were inspired by singing songs, exchanging songs and movements, creating rhythms and movements and finding new ones.

Lecture and Workshop: The Experience of Unity - By Dada Shambushivananda

Nothing in the universe is static, everything is moving. Everything in the universe (energies, cells and creatures) is constantly dependent on the moving force of action and reaction. All things are moving together in a 'game' of action and reaction. All differences have come into existence based on a level of dependency; dependency on action and reaction to each other. So, the universe is moving by an interaction of all creatures and energies, which are different, but the same in that all creatures have come from a source and they all want to go back to that source. They are moving from unity to unity. Everything in the universe is constantly vibrating. The force of prana, which means vital energy, life force, drives it all. Manush means man is mind. Humans have a visible expression of mind and this discriminates us from other creatures. The expression of the human mind is dependent on body, environment and will. We came from the same source and want to go back. The way to this goal of unity is dependent on our will. Our will can move us to action and reaction. Every action creates a reaction; reaction creates action and so on. But to reach what we all deeply really, really want, we have to enjoy reaction, without being attached to the action. In this state we are free from samskaras, all our attached actions. For this we need viveka, our discriminate intellect. Our discriminate intellect brings us to an awareness of inner values and the inner expression of these values, the outer expression of these values, and the modality in which we are moved (for example: the value of self knowledge brings the inner expression of devotion, the outer expression of service and moves us to the modality of discipline). Dada gave us a clear explanation about this process and together we were shared and discussed a lot of things which have to do with viveka.

Workshop: Creative expression in relationship to Yama and Niyama - By Yolande

Yolande gave us each a card with a moral value from yama and niyama written on it. We had to give our own expression to that value by using a creative medium. The relation between the value and the image that we were creating had to be geared to children of a certain age. We discussed all the images and shared ideas and visions about it, got inspired and formed new ideas.

Saturday, March 4th

Singing songs with Madhavi

From Madhavi we learned songs, in Dutch as well as in other languages. We talked about the message, purpose and feelings to which the songs could appeal. We sang together, sharing different melodies and sharing and enjoying the feeling, which the singing gave us.

Lecture: The Difference Between Feeling and Intuition

By Dada Shambushivananda

When do you know, as a teacher, that something comes from your intuition? So, how do you know that your intuition is talking to you and that it's not, for example, your intellect or a feeling? Dada told us that one needs reflection. We have to contact the cause behind all the causes. First there's the Final order cause, which consists of feelings. If we want to go up, we have to go through our feelings. Then, behind the feelings, on our way to the Second order cause, we'll meet our urges. If we look what's behind our urges, we will reach the Second order cause. This one consists of our samskaras. If we go through our samskaras, we will come on the way of intuition. At this point we will be aware of atman, unit consciousness, which will, through all experiences, still be in existence. Atman is responsible for dreams and intuition. If we follow on our way and look behind our intuition, thus reflecting the cause of intuition, then we come to the Primordial cause: the state of spirituality. That will bring us in a state of universal consciousness, which is finally causeless (like energy). This process goes through the brain. The process of the development of the brain is similar to the process of evolution. First there's the reptilian brain, then the limbic system and at last the neo-cortex. The neo-cortex will be developed after birth till the age of 10-14. The more connections in the cortex, which are created by experiences, the more clarity it will bring us. By reviewing this, we can conclude that our role as a teacher is very important for the development of the brain. But for that insight we have to reflect.



Dada gave us a model to identify our style of leadership. To identify our style, we first had to give five assets, meaning strengths a leader should have, which were very important to us for a leader. Then we had to find five corresponding liabilities to these assets, meaning where these assets could lead if taken to an extreme. After that we had to form five protecting assets, meaning pragmatic qualities or virtues which would prevent us from turning good qualities into liabilities. By reflecting on the last group of protecting assets Dada gave us an image of our style of leadership.

Workshop: Be Free While Playing - By Vishvashanti

Vishvashanti divided the class into three groups. Each group formed a row and the person who was the first one in the row had to start walking and making movements. The others had to follow her/him exactly. When the first person decided to stop she/he had to turn the other way. At this moment the whole row had to turn. So the last person was going to be the first person now. This person had to start walking while singing a song. The others had to follow and sing as well. When the last person on the row ran to the first person, the row had to turn and follow the person who was going to start making movements, and so on. The three groups were walking this way, through the building. We were having a lot of fun and that created a sense of freedom.

After this we formed a circle. Vishvashanti put a little piece of paper on the ground. In turns we had to keep a certain distance from the paper, concentrate, close our eyes, walk to the paper and try to point to it with one finger with our eyes still closed. After this Vishvashanti asked some people to do the same, but this time by running. At last some people did this in slow motion. We found out that by running it was easier to do it than by doing it in slow motion. If you're concentrating and focussed and imagine a line from you to the object, then the shorter the way to the object, the better. By going in slow motion, you cannot follow your focussing impulse as well. In this situation you will lose control of your focus and will be much more open to catching impressions from outside. This process can be connected to the concentrating and focussing process of children. This has to do a lot with the intellect and senses.

Lastly, we were divided into three groups again. Vishvashanti took one group with him at a time, while the others were waiting in a room. Suddenly, a strange family walked in surprising the others. The first group was disguised with masks, and acted like a non-harmonious family. Everyone had a lot of fun seeing this and trying to recognise the real people.

More Singing Songs with Madhavi

We sang songs together again and we also read poems. This time we concentrated more on how to present songs to children. We concentrated on our expressions and our voices, like: tunes, rhythms, melodies, mime and movements.

Sunday, March 5th

Workshop: Circle Time - By Madhavi

Madhavi asked us what, in our view, was the aim of circle time. It was difficult for us to find one aim, so we made a list of different aims. By doing that we found that circle time appeals to all levels of the mind and that touching all the levels of the mind by doing a circle activity in a harmonious way, can lead to a feeling of completeness and unity. We talked about how to appeal to the energy of the children to make them really feel united from deep inside. Madhavi gave us examples of how to appeal to the energy of the children and how to inspire them. We discussed problems that we experienced, possible solutions and different ways to encourage the feelings of love and unity.

Workshop: Play-Exercise - By Vishvashanti

We started with warm ups and did a movement exercise to get our bodies flowing. After that we had to pretend to move our 'flowing bodies' through a stream of water, like we were pushed by the waves. Then we formed pairs and played various challenging games in which we each had to keep our balance while trying to make our partner lose theirs. This ended with another exercise in pairs where we had to keep each other in balance, by sitting on each other's knees and climbing on each other's back and taking different positions. After more warm ups we were divided into groups and Vishvashanti gave us instructions which had to do with taking care of plants. First we had to observe a plant. Then we had to imagine how the plant was feeling. We had to take the role of a teacher introducing the plant to children of a certain age. After this, the teachers had to act like the plant and appeal to the child's feeling of taking care of the plant. We shared our plays and ways and discussed them.



Evaluation

At the end of the weekend we evaluated the training and concluded that there was a good atmosphere at Zonnlicht. We were open to each other and there was a good feeling of unity and an inspiring atmosphere. Most of the teachers agreed that they had obtained much clarity about the themes: love, play and unity. The workshops and lectures were very interesting and inspiring! Beside this, the meditations and kiirtan had a good effect on the harmony as well!



ETC at Ananda Shila, India December 2006

By Didi Anandarama

This year's ETC was a step towards going deeper into the pedagogy of NHE and the art and practice of teaching along the lines of Neohumanism.

There was a presentation on the step by step process of Mediation that can be introduced in grade 6 to students to become peer mediators in resolving their own problems and conflicts. (see notes on Mediation in this issue). After presentation of the method, the participants divided into 12

smaller groups and prepared a mediation skit to be demonstrated for all. Unfortunately only one skit got the chance to be presented, but it was a most significant skit of a real incident of a teacher beating a child in school and the conflict between the parent and the school.

This model dilemma brought to our attention again the issue of corporal punishment in the classroom. The general consensus was to move away from physical punishment and mental abuse to developing a classroom atmosphere where there is regular 'Circle Time' and where the children and teachers build a caring community.

Our special guest was Dr. Anju Khanna who came all the way from Delhi to speak about her experiences in the classroom and what true education in action is all about. She was impressed by the vast compound of Ananda Shila and the great potential it has as a Neohumanist Education Centre.

One afternoon there was an array of seven parallel workshops, such as rhymes, story sharing, dance and drama, mediation training, Circle of Love, NHE Introductory Course and a miscellaneous group with our guest speaker Anju Khanna.

A class on 'Common Errors in English' was given by Ac Krsnakamalananda Avt which the participants could take back to present in their own schools.

Avtk Ananda Anurakti Ac presented a workshop on the "Practice of Neohumanist Education." She brought examples and demonstrated how to teach and capture the children's attention using local, natural and recycled material such as wood, plastic, wool and other materials. Deservingly she received a prize for the best workshop.



Other interesting and practical workshops were on creating an aesthetic learning environment, how to write a story for children in book form, a special rhymes class by senior most Didi Ananda Giita, how to set up the school's office room as a public reception place, communication skills, financial intelligence and how to make your own website. The workshops were presented by local and overseas Acaryas.

The highlight of the ETC was the last cultural programme prepared during the ETC and presented to the villagers who came from far and wide and stayed late into the night bearing the chilly cold. The children of the local primary and high school enacted dances and dramas and culminated with a special highlight of a

Continued on Page 39

Mediation

Notes from presentation given at Ananda Shila ETC by Didi Anandarama

For grade 6 students to become peer mediators in resolving their own problems and conflicts.

Mediation is the process where one person(s) tries to resolve a dispute, conflict or fight between two or more parties.

Mediation is necessary when a conflict cannot be resolved for a long time or when the disputing parties are not able to resolve it by themselves. The mediation can start when the disputants realize the importance of having the conflict resolved because they are not able to communicate directly because the conflict grows bigger and bigger each time they do. In the school community the mediators are known to all students. They are volunteers and have received special mediation training. They are supervised by one teacher.

The mediators may approach the disputing parties and suggest that they resolve their dispute through a mediation process or the parties may approach them for help. The mediators may go between them until they agree on who will be their mediator and on the time and place of meeting. The mediator helps the disputants to regain the ability to reason and bring them to a turning point at which they cease jumping at each other's throat and wasting time on endless efforts to prove who is right or hurt and beat the opponent. Having both disputing parties want to solve the problem is the most difficult aspect of mediation. But once the mediators help them reach the turning point they let both parties find their own solution together. The solution represents everything the disputing parties have agreed on.

Sample welcome speech of the mediator

My (our) role is to make sure that each of you shares whatever you are willing to say about the problem, to get equal opportunity to speak and to come up with a solution that will suit both of you best. Mediators don't take sides or judge either of you.

Your role is to tell us what happened, how you feel about it and what you want.

Mediation is a process, a journey. You choose the route, you sit at the wheel and I read the map and show you the way to your destination. If you want to get to the coast, and you don't know the way nor have a map – you will reach your destination if you follow my instructions, observe the traffic rules and really want to get to your destination.

On the way there are many stops and rests, we can quarrel over the directions and even some minor issues – whether to take the right or left turn or whether to continue the journey in the first place. As a mediator I do not have a driving license, but the map tells me which road leads to the coast. You have a driving license, but you don't know the least thing about navigation. I want to go with you, so I'll help you by giving you directions. One more thing, imagine the car has one steering wheel and double commands (like cars in driving schools) While one of you is steering the other can suddenly put the brake on or step on the gas pedal when in a bend ... whether or not we shall get to our destination safely also depends on both of you.

Stages of Mediation

Stage 1: - Introduction

Preparation: Two persons act as mediators. They arrive at the place of mediation, arrange the seating, provide paper and pencil, have a clock and arrange with each other who will facilitate when. They can plan to have a short break during the negotiations. As a rule, the school-based mediation is conducted without the presence of adults except in the beginning stages a teacher assigned to supervise the mediations at school may be observing.

Welcome: When the disputing parties arrive, one mediator will start with a welcome speech (see in the box) and then everyone introduces themselves with first name only.

Rules: There are rules for the mediators as well as for the disputants. Both set of rules are written on a poster and displayed on the wall. The mediators introduce the rules and ask if there any questions and whether the disputants accept these rules. If the disputants object the mediators explain that the rules allow everybody to feel safe and protected from insult and humiliation and help them shift from attacking people to attacking the problem.

Rules to Observe During Mediation:

1. **Only one person speaks at a time, never two. No interrupting.** (one may take notes to remember when his or her turn comes)
2. **No name-calling, insults or blaming.**
3. **Work hard to solve the problem** The purpose of mediation is to reach a mutually satisfying agreement which will be written and each party will get a copy.
4. **What happens during a mediation process is confidential** except in cases when some illegal actions are revealed. When the process is completed all the notes taken will be destroyed.

Five Rules for Efficient Mediators

1. **Do not judge.** Mediators are neutral. They do not take sides, even when they think that one disputant is right and the other is wrong.
2. **Do not give advice.** Sometimes mediators might think of solutions to the disputant's conflicts. They could see the solution better than those involved. But they should not suggest these solutions. This is the disputants' conflict and they must resolve it themselves. Only then will they feel responsible for implementing the solution.
3. **Be equally empathetic.** Mediators attempt to understand what the disputants feel: they put themselves in their shoes and look at the conflict from their perspective. Avoid taking sides, but try to understand how each person views the conflict.
4. **Keep confidentiality.** Disputants feel more comfortable expressing their feelings and problems when they know that the mediators will not tell anyone about their conflict.
5. **Show that you care.** Mediators care about the process of mediation and about the people. They try to help the disputants to reach their goal of understanding each other and resolving the conflict. If the mediators respect the mediation process, the disputants will trust that mediation can help them solve their problem.

Stage II – Account

Listen to the conflict and check if you got everything right. You may toss a coin to decide which of the disputants will start his or her account of the situation. While one of the disputants speaks one mediator takes notes and gives a summary of what he heard after the disputant finished. The other mediator makes sure there is no interruption from the other side. Then the other disputant speaks and the mediators switch duties. At the end both mediators check whether what they said corresponds with what they heard. It is important that everyone understood what was said.

Getting to the shared problem and compiling a list of problems. The two parties agree on the main problem. There can be several different problems and they need to be identified and listed on a board one by one. The mediators can talk in private and consult each others if all the problems are analyzed and if they need to ask more questions. If necessary each mediator can have a private word with one disputing party to see if they are getting close to be ready to talk about the solution(s)

Stage III – The problem

Think of possible solutions to the problem. The disputing parties must agree on a clear definition of each problem. Only then can they start seeking a solution for each individual problem. The mediator can suggest which part of the problem can be solved first

Choosing the best solution. Each time a number of solutions to a problem have been suggested the best one is chosen which is also acceptable by both parties. The mediators could help to negotiate and brainstorm solutions. They make sure the solution is considered fair by each side.

Stage IV – Agreement

Defining the implementation of the agreement. For each of the listed solutions that both parties have agreed to, the disputants and the mediators should define who will implement it, in what time frame and how.

Written agreement. A written agreement is drawn up and signed by both parties. The agreement says WHAT has been promised to be done by WHOM, by WHEN, WHERE and HOW MANY TIMES. The agreement may contain a provision on the consequences for those who break it.

After the mediation process. The mediators may write a short report on what has taken place in the mediation process and may keep this report and a copy of the agreement in a safe place with only the teacher in charge of mediation. Another meeting can be fixed where the two parties and mediators will meet to follow up the action on the agreement.

If no agreement can be reached, the mediators have several options:

- talk to each party in private
- suggest a short break or postpone the meeting until the following day
- ask each party if they would prefer another method of solving their problem, such as asking the teacher to make a decision.

Three most frequent ways people behave in a conflict

1. they deny the very existence of the problem
2. they counter-attack (verbally or physically)
3. they try to resolve the problem together as partners

Communication is expressing and receiving.

There are 4 parts to communication:

1. **Observation** – the concrete actions we are observing that are effecting us
2. **Feeling** – how we are feeling in relation to what we are observing
3. **Need** – the values, principles, ideological stands that are creating our feelings
4. **Request** – the concrete actions we request of others that contribute to us and to our mission

Example:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Observation | - I do this and that... |
| Feeling | - because I feel ... |
| Need | - I stand for (values, my ideology)... |
| Request | - I would like you (to contribute in reasonable ways) to my needs... |

We receive empathically through the 4 parts:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Observation | - I see you do or did this and that ... |
| Feeling | - from your actions I sense you feel ... |
| Need | - I know you need (respect, commitment to system and structure) ... |
| Request | - I know you want me to contribute to your needs ... |

...Continued from Page 36 ETC India

pre-recorded educative story with Prabhat Samgiita songs from Shiva's life.

At the conclusion of the ETC, participants were given the following assignments to complete over the course of the year:

- Write a story of 16 pages and illustrate it with the aim of publishing it in the local language and in English translation.
- Learn English by giving a class on "Common Errors in English" to others and learning 2 new words every day.
- Stop corporal punishment in the school
- Teach and practice mediation
- Make a website for your school
- Make a school yearbook with the help of the students.
- Those who take the NHE course will complete the assignments and coordinate region-wise for feedback and exchange. They will keep a portfolio with all assignment papers for review at the December ETC 2007.

Learning by Imitation

By Didi Ananda Devapriya

In Neohumanist Education, we all know that children learn best by imitating the example of the teacher. However, it is not only small children who learn well by imitation and example; it is one of the most effective ways adults learn as well. Have you ever experienced the difference between just hearing or reading about how to do something and then actually seeing it done? For example, there was a particularly difficult yoga posture called peacock that I had read had many benefits for overcoming fear, anger, and improving digestion, cravings and some other benefits and I really wanted to try it, but from the picture and the book, it looked simply impossible; it is a difficult balancing posture where all of the weight is supported by the elbows on the navel area. I tried a few times, but was immediately discouraged. Then a friend of mine showed me how she had learned, breaking it down into a few simpler stages. Within a month of practice, I amazed myself that I actually had learned how to do it.

Also, many times I have also had the experience of having my perception of a boring task transformed by seeing somebody do the same thing with delight. Once I was working in a café, and in the evening it was time to do the mopping; a task I didn't particularly enjoy. However, my co-worker offered to do it, saying "I just love mopping. For me a mop is like a big paintbrush and it is like painting in reverse, rather than putting on paint, you are taking off the dirt." I am a painter myself, and that forever changed my attitude towards mopping as drudgery.

When I first came to the school in Verona, I didn't have any background or experience working with such small babies. In fact, my first impression was that working with such small children would be little more than babysitting. But as I began to observe Tiziana, a teacher who had been working in the school for 15 years, I saw mastery at work. Her enthusiasm and delight in the children was obvious and infectious. She took such joy in participating in every aspect of their development and understood the world from their point of view. From cradling them safely in her arms and softly singing kiirtan so that they could trust and relax enough to take their first nap, to talking joyfully and without any sign of disgust about what a big kaka they had made while

changing their diapers, to setting up games to challenge a lazy baby to crawl towards a toy and dipping their feet in paint and having them make their first steps across a piece of paper to record it for the parents, she was constantly engaged in their world. The children absolutely adored her. There was elegance in the way she would resolve tearful situations, babies in crisis over their first separation from their mother, and reassure mothers that were anxious and guilty about leaving their babies alone.

As I watched her I found that I unconsciously began to mimic her tone of voice, her way of resolving conflicts and as I found they worked, I began to ask her questions about why she did things and about how to solve certain problems. I always found a wise and intuitive answer that was grounded in her own experience. I learned far more from her than I ever could have just by studying books, and still whenever I see good teaching at work, I love to watch and learn new things. Now in my new assignment in Bucharest, I am fascinated by how Sumati with her very orderly ways inspires a similar love of order in the children, and how they absolutely love to sit at the tables and carefully practice making dots and lines in very neat and precise rows. There is satisfaction in their work, and they are absorbed and concentrated in the task, taking delight in filling the page and staying until they finish before going to free play. They are impatient to do writing practice, and sad if it gets cancelled. Devakii, on the other hand, has a completely different but equally effective style. I love watching her tell stories with the children. She invents props out of whatever is conveniently nearby – a houseplant to represent a forest, a small candle to be a light in the darkness. When she works with the children, she enters completely into their world, they are co-explorers on an adventure together, and they just love it.

It is not only from senior teachers that it is possible to learn, though. I have also seen newer teachers that are finding joy in their teaching and shining with brilliance. In Verona, there were two teachers, Milena and Valentina that loved to work together as a team, and together they would create a magical and creative world. They were always experimenting

with new things. They had a puppet that they would use to introduce new things, Petronio, and then he introduced eventually a friend Merlino. One of the teachers took a trip to England, and told that Petronio had gone away to England. He sent postcards to the kids and Merlino would read them to the children and when Petronio came back, he brought small models of a double decker bus, telephone booth, London bridge, Big Ben and told all about his adventures in England. Every day after work, they would spend time together arranging the classrooms for the next day, often shifting around all of the furniture and creating new environments to explore. Once they found a gigantic cardboard box and they cut out windows and a door and spent an afternoon painting it to become a house. Games lasted for weeks with the new house. They also loved to take pictures of the children and each other, and their work was well documented for the parents to see.

In adults, it is usually our intellectual ego, the feeling that we know or should already know something that gets in the way of our experimenting with imitation. Once there was a story about a university professor, who was very proud of his degree and knowledge, that went to visit a monk to see if he knew anything worth learning. The monk invited him for some tea, and began to pour tea into his cup, but much to the professor's shock, he didn't stop when the teacup was full and it began overflowing and spilling over everything. The professor jumped up in alarm, but the monk said; "Your mind is like this. It is already so full that nothing more can fit in."

In order to be able to experience learning from mentors, and from each other, we often have to empty our cups of everything we think we "know" so that we can find that open, childlike space where we are willing to experiment, try new things and learn.

Especially in teaching, where theory is far less valuable than knowing how to put it in practice effectively, one of the best ways to learn how to do that is by observing master teachers; teachers who have dedicated their lives to teaching and have a wealth of practical experience that comes from their dedication and love of the field. Not all senior teachers may be "master teachers" because, as in all professions, there may be those that just see it as a job.

There is a story about three bricklayers busy at work. Someone comes up and asks what are you doing? The first one says "Can't wait until I finish this row so that I can go on my lunch break" the second "I am earning money for my family" and the last one motions at the whole structure and says with inspiration and pride, "I

am building a cathedral!" The teachers that become "master teachers" are those that make the paradigm shift from seeing it as a job or a way to make money, and take joy and pride in helping to shape a "cathedral" which is the realization that by teaching children, one is shaping the future itself.

It is not hard to tell when someone has reached mastery of their teaching profession; there is an enthusiasm, a freshness and spontaneity in their work, even though they have been doing it for years. They find continual delight in children and their play. There is also elegance in how they resolve difficult situations of discipline, or chaos. They communicate serenity and self-confidence, and the children respond to it. Mostly you can tell by how children react that they are magnetized by their teacher and respond to her slightest suggestion. These teachers may see themselves as gardeners, nurturing seeds they plant in the children, or may see themselves as coaches, encouraging and supporting.

However, learning by imitation is not the same as comparing yourself and trying to becoming something you are not. There is a very fundamental difference. When we compare ourselves to others, it is done out of a subtle kind of self-hatred. We think that we are not good enough on some level, and when see someone else doing well, either jealousy or competitiveness comes up or self doubt and depression as we begin comparing to see if they are better than us, and feeling bad if they are. On the other hand, imitating a mentor comes from that open emptied cup of wanting to learn something new. The best teachers never feel that they are too good to improve or learn something new. They maintain that openness and are constantly learning and open to new ideas, and especially they are constantly learning from the children themselves, and their own direct experience of experimenting with what works and doesn't work.

So to achieve mastery in your teaching, start by looking for examples of good teaching, and then experiment and play with imitating what you observe that works in others' teaching. If it doesn't work for you, don't force it. But usually the things that are attractive to you in someone else's teaching attract you because they resonate with your own understanding. So be patient, experimenting, observing more closely, experimenting again. Above all, learn to cultivate delight and joy in children. From that delight, empathy and intuitive understanding flows. Expertise will follow. It is natural to become good at what we love to do, because automatically we invest the time and energy, study, observation and experimentation needed to become experts.

Healing Stories

From Staff training in Panatau

By Didi Ananda Devapriya

According to Neohumanist philosophy, human life is an ideological flow. Our lives are not just made of a chronological series of events, but rather of stories that give those events meaning and color. Human life is an endless quest for meaningfulness, without which life is a dry and barren desert. We are trying to discover where we have come from, who we are, and where we are going. This quest leads us ultimately towards spirituality, and discovering a spiritual perspective with which to understand, interpret and direct our lives. Stories and story telling are an important part of this process. As our understanding and perspective evolves, we continually reinvent our own stories and look for inspiration in stories that mirror our inner hopes, dreams and values. In fact, stories are a type of magic mirror, in which we seek to know ourselves and our world. The stories that attract and influence us the most are those that reflect our own positive potential. All of us need stories that help us to reflect on and assimilate positive value from the obstacles that we have faced. We receive the inspiration to aspire towards greatness from the heroes we find in stories. For this reason, Shrii P.R. Sarkar emphasized the important role of writers in shaping the collective consciousness. He encourages writers to be aware that they are the pioneers of new trends of thought, and therefore to accept the responsibility to help uplift society. Neohumanist Education also places particular value on storytelling as one of the best mediums for transmitting values and positive role models, as well as encouraging creativity, imagination and the capacity to visualize.

Stories can also be a particularly valuable instrument in healing trauma in children. The very first months and years of life, fundamental ideas about the safety of the world, core beliefs about the self and trust in others are formed. Children that have survived extreme neglect and deprivation during that crucial stage, such as our children in the Familia AMURTEL children's home in Panatau, that were abandoned in the Romanian state institutions, face many difficulties because of this

neglect. As the conscious and sub-conscious layers of mind are not fully formed at birth, infants do not have a separate sense of ego-identity. Therefore, they tend to believe that they are the cause of everything that happens to them, and in traumatic situations this can lead to a deep-rooted sense of shame, based on the assumption that they must be bad and deserve the treatment they received. It is important for such children to be able to re-evaluate this mistaken assumption though, and realize that they did not deserve neglect, abandonment, or abuse. Storytelling can be an important tool in this process. However, most of the typical stories in books for young children are about children living with their parents in a family, and often the main themes of such stories is that mother and father will always be there, always love you, always find you when you are lost, basically reinforcing the lessons of love, safety, and trust that most children are learning in that stage. However, children who have had a painful early experience of the world also need stories to help integrate their experiences and find a healthy perspective and outlook. As models for such stories are not easily found in ready-made books, it is possible to invent more personalized stories that do reflect their lives and positive inner potential.

Recently in Panatau, we did a staff training about using and creating stories in a special way to help our children overcome their traumas and understand the world in a healthier way. Already we have been using theatre, movement and stories, as well as other expressive arts for many years, as we have found that creative expression helps to liberate the children from many complexes and discover their talents. The symbolism of storytelling provides a gentle and indirect way to address early traumas and problem behaviours, as children are much more open to listen to a story about an interesting character facing and overcoming obstacles that they can relate to, rather than directly analyzing psychological issues.

For example, all of our children in our youngest group (ages 5-9) were tied to their beds in the maternity hospital where they spent their first years of life. After the revolution, the Romanian government stopped opening up more state orphanages because of foreign pressure and concern. However, 10,000 babies continue to be abandoned a year. So the children are often left in

the maternity wards where their mothers abandon them right after birth, or following illnesses. The maternity hospitals are not equipped to properly care for so many small children, but they remain there usually for up to two years before they are placed in either adoption or state institutions, as places become available. As is sadly still often the case, there were not enough staff to supervise the children properly, and so they tied their wrists to the iron crib bars so that they would not wander off. When the children first arrived in our home in September of 2002, it took months before the red marks from the restraints disappeared physically, but mentally, still the impression lingers in their minds. For example, one of the small boys, when faced with any new challenge, tends to say “I can’t do it” and gets very agitated and upset and runs to his bed for safety where he begins rocking himself for comfort. After discussing this problem, and trying to understand the root cause of the behaviour, we came up with a story for him.

The story is about a small yellow bird named Galben that lives in an old rusty iron cage. The cage is not very clean, and smells bad, as the owners are often busy and forget to take care to clean it. They also forget to put food and fresh water in it everyday, so many times the bird doesn’t have enough to eat. But he has been living in the cage for a long time, and he is used to it. It is home for him, and somehow he feels safe, as he knows his cage very well. One day a large colourful bird with a blue tips on his wings flies up to his cage. He sees the bird inside, and feels so sad that the little bird has never had the chance to fly in the great wide blue sky like all birds are born to do. So he opens up the door to the cage and calls to Galben, “Little friend – come and fly with me and be free from this cage!” But Galben was scared. He had never been outside his cage. He says “No, I can’t! I have never been outside before!” But the bluebird is patient and

gently coaxes him to try, promising to help him learn how to fly. Eventually Galben decides to try and he stretches his wings for the first time. He jumps from the open door and his little wings flap hard, and raise him up in the air, but they are not strong enough and after only three flaps he falls and lands hard on the floor, crying. He gets up again, but flies right back to his cage and doesn’t want to ever come out again. The bluebird gives him a bit of time to recover from being frightened, but again comes and calls him “Little friend, come and fly with me and see the world from the top of that tree...”

In this way the story continues, with the bigger bird continuing to coax the little one out of his cage, and eventually he gets stronger and braver and learns to fly to the tree, then to the mountain, and finally high into the sky amongst the clouds. At first he always returns back to his cage after each adventure, but one day he goes so high and has so much fun that he forgets all about the cage and finds a new home with many other birds in a tree full of bird song and happiness.

We are still experimenting with this new form of story telling, but it is surprisingly easy to invent stories when using them to enter into the world of a specific child and communicate a positive message that you think may help him. In our kindergartens as well, we are also using personalized stories to help children to understand and accept the children with disabilities for example.

Stories have a way of resonating deep within us and linger in our minds and provide new meanings for years. Often we remember stories more easily than facts or other types of lessons. Especially for children that have special needs, stories that reflect their world and experiences help them to feel more accepted and less isolated and alienated.

Take a Romanian Countryside Vacation

About 15 km from Panatau, in the nearby village of Poieni, AMURTEL has an organic farm with a summerhouse used by our Familia AMURTEL children during the summer vacations. The farm, as well as some additional orchards, and two cows living next door to the home, provide a good degree of self-sufficiency in meeting the food needs of the home. Plums, cherries and apples are canned and made into jams. Potatoes, beets, celery root, apples, and carrots are stored in a cold cellar. Other vegetables like eggplant, beans, spinach, peppers, tomatoes and parsley are frozen. We even make our own organic popcorn! It is a very productive farm, however, much of the year, the house is not utilised. We are beginning to take steps to link with an Agro-tourism Agency to make it available to travellers, and would like to invite friends and sympathisers to consider coming to Romania for a countryside vacation. We are especially equipped for hosting groups of youth, and the house contains about 18 bunk beds.

Theatre Art Workshop for Teachers

ETC and Davao Training Centre, Philippines

October and November 2005

Led by Cecile and Jeremy
Notes by Rainjita (Davao STC)

In theatre we can use many forms of art like dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, visual arts, play of colours and many others. Theatre can be used as a means to get to know children and adults, to educate them, and to release tension. Theatre can be used as an exercise to control anger for example. We have the capacity to control our emotions. We are all different individuals but there is always something that is common that can connect us. As we are all unique we can explore each other by using theatre. In theatre we use physical, social, emotional and aesthetic elements.

1. The opening

To break the ice we started by singing this song:

Lakad Rosa

Lakad atras

Lakad, atras

Atras, atras

Lakad means move forward. Atras is stepping back.

Rosa is a name of a woman. This song is a song for woman's solidarity. We urge women to move forward but some times because of circumstances they have to move backward in order to advance. While singing this song, we make a circle. We move forward and step backward together according to the song. With two hands each will hold the shoulders of the person in front of her. When singing "lakad" we step forward and when singing "atras" we jump backward.

2. Introduction of Ourselves

Each person looked for a small object in the surroundings to represent her personality. She brought it in the circle and one by one each person shared about that object and why she chose that object to represent herself. Sometimes it was very emotional and this was a fine opportunity to get to know each other. After all were finished, all objects were placed in the middle of the circle on a paper.

3. Discussion and Individual Performance

The leader asked each participant the meaning of art and the connection of art and theatre. Then she requested that everyone should perform something individually. It was to be a dance, a drama, a song or anything. It could also be pairs. Anything that they believed they could do

and then the leader gave everyone time and space for a short rehearsal.

The performances by participants were as follows:

-One sister asked the others one by one to draw a picture on the same paper then she told a story according to the pictures on the paper.

-Another recited the conversation and the music in a Balinese dance Calon Arang.

-Two participants did pantomimes.

-One told the background history of a sacred Balinese dance and gave a short performance of Legong Kraton dance.

-One sang a song complete with the gestures.

-Two give a short drama

4. Discussion: Elements of art

We had a discussion of the elements of art that we should consider before giving a performance. They were:

-Space (small, wide, etc)

-Shape (square, circle etc) for body movement

-Line (straight, zig zag etc)

-Rhythm (beat, timing)

-Texture

-Colour

5. Sharing Feelings

The leader asked the participants one by one what their feeling was about their first performance. The leader wanted to emphasize that we all have the capacity for theatre or self-expression, so we should cultivate it.

6. Facial Expressions

We made a circle. One person made a face facing to the centre of the circle, then she turned to her neighbour, and the neighbour was to imitate the facial expression, then slowly she in turn changes the facial expression according to her fancy and she will turn to the next neighbour. The face becomes a mask and we practiced to make a smooth face and hard face.

7. Steps and body movements

Still in the circle, the participants were asked one by one to make a line with feet only: it could be straight, zig-zag, curved etc. It was a practice of making various

steps. After that we used only the hands. This is an exercise for making a dance or drama.

8. Mirroring

Each was to find a partner. One person become a mirror and imitated every movement and facial expression of her partner.

9. Group Mirroring

Groups of four formed a diamond shape. Every one took a turn to become leader. The leader did any movement and the others followed. Then the leader turned to her right side and her neighbour become leader and again all followed her movements. The movements were to be of flowers or animals etc.

10. Maximizing Surrounding Objects as Props

In theatre we do not need many materials. We can find substitutes for various items and maximize things around us. Two objects were placed in the middle of the circle. Everyone was asked to do a pantomime by using these two objects, but not as their usual functions. Another object was added to the middle. Each had to perform and use these three objects, but not as their usual functions.

11. Tell a Story in a Circle

The leader picked one object and started a story and then turned to one participant, gave her the object and then this participant continued the story. And again the participant handed out the object to another participant and again continued the story.

12. Drawing and Messages

Each person found a partner and they drew each other's face. The face drawing was given to the person whose face it was and she was to write a message she wanted to give to the world under it. The leader collected the pictures with the messages on them and pasted them on a big paper.

13. Short Story and Chalk Talk

Groups of four were formed. Each person told a story according to the moral of her message from the previous exercise. We used a blackboard to make sketches and to illustrate the stories.

Examples of messages:

- Share love, be brave and sacrifice
- Be in unity, forget our small differences and move forward.
- Let all children enjoy the sweetness of the world
- Let's share as brothers and sisters. Love heals.

14. Another Opening Song

Kumusta ka?
Konichiwa!
Apa kabar, apa kabar
Good day every one!

Araw ay masaya
Tayo ay mangla
Umikot ka, umikot ka
Humanap ng iba.

Together with all the gestures, shaking hands etc we used this song as way of introduction. If it is done with children, the partner will ask about her favourite food. If it is with adults, we can ask her motto, goal in life, favourite food to cook etc.

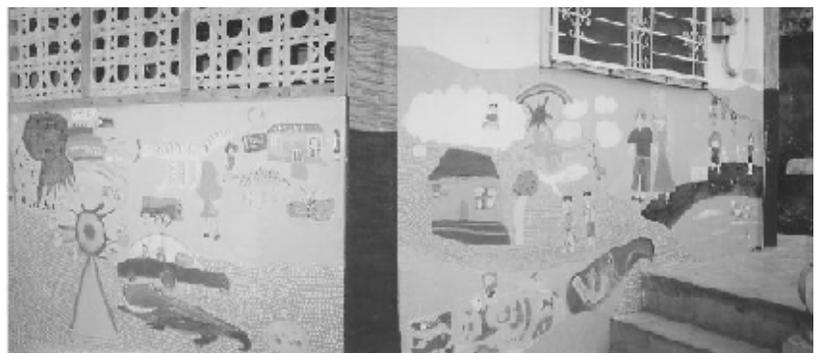
15. Paint me a Picture

We painted a picture in action by pairs. One example was to paint a buffalo with a farmer. One person became the buffalo and the other the farmer. Then two persons became one body and performed an action as one body according to the instructions of the leader. An example was to become a snake and to crawl, or jump, etc.

16. Spontaneous Response

The participants stood and made two lines facing each other. The leader was at the end of the lines. She started a conversation by suddenly addressing one participant. We had to think fast to give a response to the leader. The leader continued by addressing other participants. Example: the leader started to talk like a boss and was scolding one participant for not performing well. The participant had to respond like an employee to the boss.

At the end we discussed giving a performance, using the two days activities, to flood victims in an evacuation camp. It would be a drama or a mixture of dance, pantomime, songs etc.



Mural painting, drawn by AMSAI K2 children at the entrance of the school building in Davo.

YES - YOGA FOR KIDS

Priceville, Ontario, Canada
By Nilmini

I began teaching yoga classes for kids in the elementary school where I teach in Collingwood, Ontario. The classes began as a regular part of the physical education program but due to popular demand I formed a yoga club and children from grades 2 to 6 participate in the program. Children with autism, Downs Syndrome and Spin bifida are an important part of our club. The high needs children have educational assistants that work with them who help me to understand the children's strengths and vulnerabilities. I spend a lot of time on deep breathing because all the students lack the ability to do this. We always begin our classes with a short meditation. This is difficult for most of the students; however, I continue to encourage them to find that quiet place deep inside them. There is one particular student with Downs Syndrome who loves to sing Baba Nam Kevalam. He sings it at the top of his lungs. Now, whenever he sees me in the hallways of the school he breaks out singing Baba Nam Kevalam.



STUVOL



ABC - Anti-Bullying Campaign

Anti-bullying campaign is a project of CNS in Karlovac schools. (In some parts of the world, bullying is a problem among young people in school, the bully being a person who is habitually cruel or overbearing, especially to smaller or weaker children.) We have printed promotion material (leaflet, posters, T-shirts, hats). We gave workshops in communication skills, responsibility and conflict resolution. A roundtable was held in Grabrik Primary School with the director, a UNICEF worker and representatives of all the five primary schools of Karlovac and community workers. One group of trained students of Grabrik school prepared their own presentation with drama and powerpoint for their whole school. This project received funding from the National Foundation. We hope to carry on with this project as it is very much needed and appreciated.



Peers and Helpers

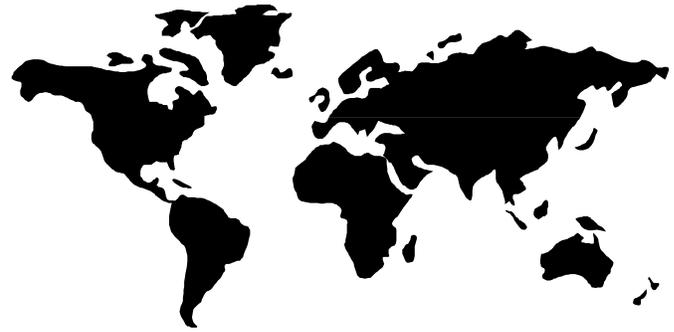
Peers and Helpers is another project of integration of school children with children with special needs. Through workshops and activities children from regular schools and special schools exchange and interact. This project aims at helping children develop their self-esteem, service spirit and friendship.

YES – STUVOL – SPROUT – ELF

NHE Teachers: Please share your classroom and community activities in these areas for the next issue.

In Other

Global NHE News



Hong Kong Sector

Sarkar School, Taiwan

The Sarkar School held an outdoor learning program November 7-11, 2005 named "Trace the Saint". They



went mountain hiking and climbing. One day the students and teachers walked 15km. It was a wonderful experience for all, providing an opportunity for deep introspection.

At school, we planted pineapple plants at the edge of the hill for soil conservation. The idea came from the Shrii P. R. Sarkar's book, Ideal Farming. The faculty and students wrote an article about the pineapple. We called the pineapple "The Hero of the Hill Edge".



The school undertook researching using the sun's energy for cooking and utilized the alternative method for cooking rice.

Delhi Sector

Valadora, India

In Vadodara town in Gujarat is a Tiny Green Island school called 'Ananda Marga Gurukula Ashram'. All the



children are on this photo along with Didi Vandita and the nursery teacher. The

building is owned since 1997 and has three rooms and a kitchen. Didi's dream is to be able to construct a boundary wall and have a nice protected garden first and then after have a second floor on the building to accommodate up to 50 children. Anyone who would like to support this school please contact the editors.

Muzzafarpur, Bihar, India

In Muzzafarpur, Bihar since 20 years the Ananda Marga Primary School has shifted four times until finally now

for five years has its owned premises. The ground floor can accommodate now 52 children from kindergar



ten to grade five. There are two teachers teaching along with Didi Ananda Jahnavii. Didi was met a wonderful supporter in Ananda Nagar, Angela from Australia who has helped her so that the school could grow to this capacity. Didi's dream is to be able to extend the building and to be able to accommodate 100 more children who are already on the waiting list. Didi has great interest in NHE and writing her own stories and illustrating them.

Bilaspur, Chatisgar, India

Ananda Pallavi is presently the principal of the Ananda Marga Primary School in Bilaspur, Chatisgar. This school has 65 children from kindergarten to grade 5 with three teachers and Didi. At present construction is in progress to expand the facilities that will be able to accommodate 150 children. Unfortunately they do not have a playground but the programme is good with elaborate cultural programmes that delight the children and guardians. If you come to Bilaspur you are welcome to call Didi at 07752 244451.

Kahira Sector

Syria

The Sports Union of Syria welcomed the Ananda Marga Yoga conference in March in the city of Suwaida in Southern Syria. Among the 80 participants were 20 children who learned some initial steps in Yoga and Quiet Time. They enjoyed morning circle activities and learned kaoshikii well. They delighted in the creation of their own dramas and performed for each other.

At present there is research by the Sports Union and Ananda Marga on how Yoga can enhance the learning of children.



Athens, Greece

The Neohumanist Centre in Athens has moved to a bigger and brighter space where the morning children's program, called One World Children's Circle, meets 4 mornings a week. We are not yet a

fully registered school but do follow the principles of Neohumanist Education for the 2 and 1/2 to 5 year olds who come. Vimala has been training for the last few years and now she's a great teacher in the process of training other NHE teachers. We're holding an NHE teachers training course at the moment with 24 hours of classroom theory, 30-40 hours of practical training with the children, required reading and assignments plus mandatory attendance at yoga and meditation courses.



We're delighted to have 6 trainees and a few part-timers. With the move to the bigger space and more teachers, we're looking forward to being able to accommodate many more children in the autumn. Besides the morning program, we have a regular parent-toddlers group and occasional Yoga for Children lessons for the elementary aged students.

Suva Sector

Ananda Marga River School, Maleny, Australia By Kamala Alister

This year has opened with more expansion and plenty of good news in our 12th year. At the end of last year we realized not only did we need to add a new primary classroom, but that we also could move ahead one year in our schedule to add a new "Prep" class in our early education area (in line with state requirements.) Now we finally have 7 classes for seven years of school (instead of mixed classes), plus three years of "preschool." The exciting part was receiving an unexpected government grant of US \$160,000 (!) to build and fit out the new prep classroom, after we had already budgeted and arranged loans to cover it ourselves. It felt like such a special kind of grace in the way it happened.

It was also a kind of spiritual experience to see our new buildings arrive on cranes through the air! This year for the first time, instead of renovating second-hand donated buildings, we were able to order buildings that were built off site, and then delivered to the school. A much faster and less stressful process! But of course they arrived late, during the second week of school. All the kids were on hand to see the buildings swinging through the air!

All told this last 12 months has brought US\$ 240,000 worth of grants, including funding for new play areas, new computer center, ceramic kiln and pottery wheels, and a beautiful new "art space" (open air and fronting into rainforest!). We have also been so happy to hire our first two Ananda Marga teachers in this year, and they have been such a wonderful addition.

Our new year six teacher, Tara McPhail, and school director Prabha Demasson, will be traveling together to the NHE Educator's Conference in Sweden. How wonderful that the school can support their trip.

On the last day of our school year in December, all the children pitched in to plant over 200 native rainforest trees near our creek (partially funded by more grant money!) What a beautiful sight! It was part of such a highly vibrated few days at the end of the year including great performances, and our usual deeply touching graduation ceremony. (Its always so beautiful to hear the

deep feelings of our graduating class about their years at the River School.)

Various service projects continue at the school such as year 1 students raising money with an art sale for poor children in India, year 3 students regularly visiting residents at a seniors' center, and all-school participation in the Walk Against Want.

At least ten River School families, and several teachers, attended the Ananda Mela festival, an annual event held at the Sectorial Master Unit (about five hours away). It was great for these families and teachers to have a blissful taste of a spiritual lifestyle, with daily meditation, kiirtan and yoga, plus inspiring workshops. As one teacher commented, "It was nothing like I ever expected to happen on this earth. I am successfully blissed out!"

Manila Sector

Sangkhlaburi, Thailand

The new AMSAI school in Sangkhlaburi was inaugurated with 120 children enrolled. Nearby construction has started on the new children's home that will be able to accommodate 200 children. It is being built on top of a hill with a view of the lake. The giant aesthetically placed institution will include a medical



clinic, a weaving factory, a kindergarten and a horticultural plot. Support comes from the Italian government.

Myanmar

At the Growing Together Preschool in Yangon in Myanmar children learn through the play-way method.



Art work is also an integral part of daily activities and the children meditate based on their readiness.

Indonesia

Our Rainbow AMSAI school in Medan opened a second

school in another part of the city. The facility is a new construction with 30 classrooms. In the opening semester 360 students were signed up. The old school has 1425 students enrolled. The two Rainbow schools print their own schoolbooks with color covers. Every year 16,000 books are printed.

New York Sector

Progressive School of Long Island, USA By Eric Jacobson

We negotiated an agreement with the neighborhood and the town for expansion in Middle School (7th and 8th grade) We had all of our building plans approved. Construction will begin within 2 weeks

We were in the news (paper and TV) several times this year for ...

-a first grader had an art exhibit at a local science museum

-a second grader created a service project to restore a famous antique carousel

-a sixth grader scored first place in Nassau County in a math competition, and will be the youngest of a 4 person team to represent New York in a National Championship

-a fifth grader starred on Broadway in the Lion King, and was also in South Pacific at Carnegie Hall, to be aired on public TV this month

Our theme this year is "Year of Hope," and my personal highlight was during an assembly (which was attended by a Didi in uniform) for Women's History when a fifth grader wrote an original song about Hope that included Baba Nam Kevalam at the end of each stanza.

Nairobi Sector

Lome, Togo, West Africa

Dada Tapan's school which started in 2001 has now grown to 3 classes with 35 children and three teachers from kindergarten to grade 3. The foundation has been laid for a new building and they are looking for funding for building the three classrooms. If you are able to help, please contact Dada at Box:B.P 30874 Lomé, Togo. <ecoloneohumaniste@yahoo.fr>

Georgetown Sector

Porto Alegre, Brasil

Since 1982 many children and teens have benefited by the numerous local NHE institutions. In recognition of their work which honors human rights, Ananda Marga was selected by the CMDCA for the "Humans Rights" prize for the year 2005.

NEW! NHE Publications For Sale

The Fairy's Flowers

A Neohumanist Children's Book

The Fairy's Flowers is inspired by the ten moral principles of Yama and Niyama as elaborated by Shrii P. R Sarkar in his book Guide to Human Conduct. Each concept, non-harming, benevolent truth, non-stealing, universal love, moderation, purity, contentment, service, study and self-realization, is delightfully interwoven into the adventure of Jonathan who sets out to meet the fairy in the forest.



This charming story has been circulating around the world in many schools and homes as a favourite for the past 20 years. Finally it is in a wonderfully illustrated book form.

The Fairy's Flowers was originally written by Mukti Devi from Israel and adapted by Didi Anandarama. The illustrations are by Masa Lenuzzi, a high school student in Karlovac, Croatia who won first prize in last year's 'My first book' contest organised by CNS in Croatia.

The Fairy's Flowers is a 32 page full colour glossy book with soft cover printed in India. It costs \$ 7 US plus \$ 3 for postage. To order, please write to amgkpublications@gurukul.edu.

"One is to be moulded in one's childhood. If one receives the fundamentals of education in the formative period of one's life, one will keep oneself alright in the teeth of the greatest trials and tribulations in life. A bamboo, when green, can be shaped or bent in any way you like. Once it ripens, any attempt to reshape it will break it." Shrii P. R. Sarkar

The Fairy's Flowers –CD

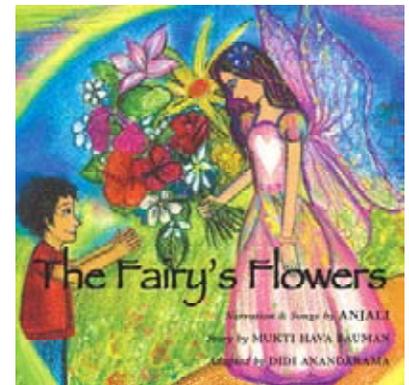
A Neohumanist Story and Songs CD:

This subtle work is based on a blending of storytelling and song. The Fairy's Flowers story is simply narrated, (in the style of raconteur Jim Weis) with no jarring whistles or drums. Phrases are sung throughout to help carry the fairytale, using the lyre, Indian bells, guitar, harmonies and counter voices. 14 celestial songs satisfy the young child's need for repetition.

Narration and songs produced and performed by Anjali (Angela Silva-Natarajan)
Story by Mukti Hava Bauman
Adapted by Didi Anandarama
Published by AMGK

1. The Fairy's Flowers (Story)
2. I Am Happy
3. Mother of the Fairytale
4. Wonderful Things
5. 'Tis A Gift

6. God Is In Everything
7. The Morning Sun
8. Have You Ever Seen?
9. Child of the Universe
10. God Was Whispering
11. I Am the Wind
12. Who Has Seen the Wind?
13. Sunlight
14. Sweetness of God



To order please write to: amgkpublications@guruklu.edu

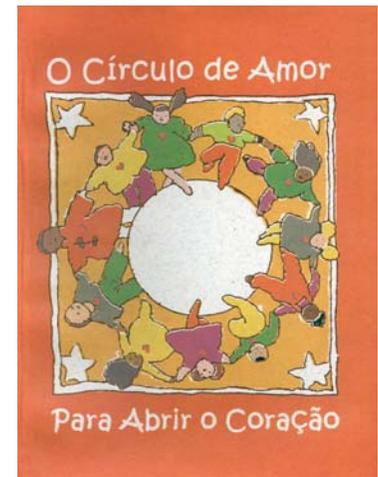
Cost: \$15.00 per CD

Bulk orders of 10 or more are available for wholetimers and NHE projects. Wholesale cost: \$6.00 per CD

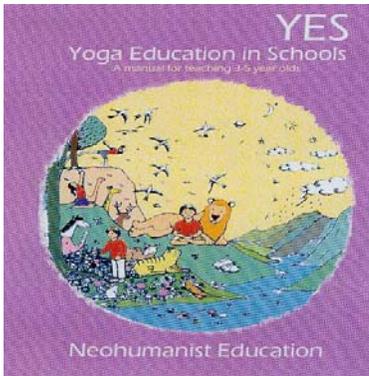
NEW! O Circuio de Amor

A new 65 page book, The Circle of Love, is now available in Portuguese with an accompanying CD of songs in Portuguese as well. To order yours, please contact:

Instituto Visao Futuro
Bairro Matao Porangaba SP
CEP 18260-000
Brasil
visaofuturo@visaofuturo.org.br



YES MANUAL - CD



YES - Yoga Education in Schools
A manual of practical activities of Tantra - Astanga Yoga for the personal development of children ages 3-5.

YES is the inner core of the NHE curriculum. This manual gives theoretical foundations and practical guidelines for teaching yoga practices to young children ages 3 to 5, in a gentle and safe way. It is composed of tested activities from experienced teachers from around the world who have practiced in Neohumanist school classrooms for many years. You will gain a deeper understanding of how to teach the subtle concepts of yoga, values

and meditation to children. As a teacher you can use this manual as a foundation to create your own curriculum adapting to the needs of the children in your locality and culture. This version is available on CD for internal distribution. A hardcopy version for sale to the general public is scheduled for some time this year.

Cost of CD \$25 US

To order please write to:

amgkpublications@gurukul.edu

NHE Materials For Sale - from AMGK and Other Sources
For details refer to previous issue of Gurukula Network

Joyful Things – music CD
by Kamala <inrsong@ozemail.com.au>.

Children - music CD
By Didi Ananda Ragamaya
<http://www.griotmusic.com>

Kid's Yoga Poster
<ihuad@ms48.hinet.net>

Circulo De Amor – music CD
By Didi Prema
Didi Prema sings 20 Neohumanist songs for children in Spanish. <amgkpublications@gurukul.edu>

Puppets and Dolls from Peru
You can order from www.rurapuk.com or contact Didi Ananda Muktvrata (<didiamv@ec-red>).

Circle of Love - Computer CD
Early Childhood Education Manual and MP3 Songs on

Circle of Love Songs on Music CDs
<amgkpublications@gurukul.edu>

New CDs from AMGK
PowerPoint Resource n. 1
<amgkpublications@gurukul.edu>

Neo-Humanist Education - book
A Documentation on NHE Schools Around the World
Edited by Avtk Ananda Rama Ac
<amgkpublications@gurukul.edu>

Circle of Love - book
STUVOL Guides for Kindergarten
amgk.glo@gurukul.edu

Yoga Warm-ups - book
Prepare your body for subtle asanas – by Mita Chen and Kaomudi

Ananda Marga Dictionary - book
For Every Day Use
Compiled by Ac Premayananda Avt

Neohumanist Education



*Five year old,
Bai-tae, a
graduate of
NHE's
Rakrook
Nursery,
leading 60
grade 1
students in a
one hour
yoga session
at the
Assumption
School in
Lampang,
Thailand*

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