

# GURUKULA NETWORK



Newsletter of Neohumanist Schools and Institutes affiliated with Ānanda Mārga Gurukula

Issue 32 May 2011

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Neohumanist Consciousness  
Proutist Democracy  
Circle of Love Research  
Moral Foundations of Society  
Chanting in School  
NHE Teacher Training Events  
Global News  
and more..



*Sávidyá yá vimuktaye - Education is that which liberates*

## **Gurukula Network**

**Newsletter and Journal of  
Neohumanist Schools and Institutes**

**Gurukula Network is published by the  
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## **VISION OF ANANDA MARGA GURUKULA**

The Sanskrit word "Gurukula" (pronounced gurukul) has the following etymology: Gu: darkness; ru: dispeller; kula: an institution. Gurukula is an institution which helps students dispel the darkness of the mind and leads to total emancipation of the individual and society at large.

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 its 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-round 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>

**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. Ananda Marga Gurukula also 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.

## **NEOHUMANIST EDUCATION**

Universal Love and Values  
Holistic Development  
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



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# Neohumanist Consciousness is the Next Evolutionary Step

By Marcus Bussey

The seeds of culture and human creative energy lie in deep memory. In the long expanse of time over which humans evolved from early hominids to *homo sapiens* there is the common denominator of insecurity. Not only was there the threat of predators but there was also the threat of scarcity. Life was short, fragile and for the most part brutish (thanks Hobbes). Human consciousness developed in response to this relentless pressure. Security came from the collective and meaning was drawn from a sense of embeddedness in the group and the world that might be called unconscious relationship. Over time culture grew as the brain grew and human experience was reflected in our increasingly large brains and articulated in language (Wade, 2007). But then things changed as we developed agriculture and the sense of separation that comes with the ability to manipulate one's surroundings (Christian, 2004).

As humans developed ever more complex social structures and all that these entail they became ever more distant from the world. Spirituality became a way back to this sense of belonging in relationship. The agricultural social world was still insecure – now there were other human beings as predators and agriculture was always vulnerable to the shifting moods of climate – so culture emerged as a way to build security and meaning into the unstable. It also gave expression to the human desire for connection that I am characterizing as 'relationship' – yet because humans build patterns they also create institutions to maintain them and with these came organized religion. The result of all this is that forms came to dominate lives and to ingest our dreams and to edit and delete the possibilities immanent in the formless world of inner being. Humanity was in a reductive trap in which form and formless danced ever more closely as the binary that was the hallmark of being. Dualism and the dialectic of form-formless thus took over in the great Schism at the heart of human pain.



Edvard Munch "The Scream" 1895

The rise of industrial civilisation has amplified this schism until we all look into the eyes of Edvard Munch's screaming woman and find something of our selves there – a portrait of our inner alienation – not unlike Dorian Grey's betrayal in paint.

This amplification is what sustainability activist Sara Parkin calls the compound interest version of history (2010) in which the long journey from relationship to separation has gained momentum and intensity not arithmetically but geometrically. Ironically as we have striven for security we have created insecurity all around us. Now the self, defined and bound by addiction to doing and numbed through habit stands on the brink of yet another evolutionary possibility. This alienated self we call an individual – naked in the light of the world, standing alone, above, shriven of all sense of relationship, free to act, born to consume yet desperately lonely. And here we stand with destiny at hand, knocking on the door like Beethoven's baleful theme from his Fifth Symphony and we do not know what to do. We are paralysed in our own power. And that is the real paradox.

## Longing for the Great

Yet, the spirit is still there framed in this moment as a reminder of the relationship we have lost with the planet and our fellow travelers. It is the counterpoint to fear and insecurity. It is what Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar calls the 'longing for the Great' (1982) – that sense of connection again that lifts us from paralysis into power. And ironically this is done by dropping our addiction to individualism. This for me is what lies at the heart of Neohumanist spirituality. It is a reframing of humanity, not as above the common confusion of being, but as co-creators with all of life and its material base. This is a shift in consciousness like that which heralded the emergence of humanity from the savannahs of Africa on two legs, with language and tools; it appeared again with the domestication of crops and animals at the beginning of the agricultural age and yet again at the moment we significantly increased our ability to manipulate the natural world through ever more sophisticated technology in the industrial age. Yet, such is the law of compound interest history that each period has been significantly shorter (and more intense) than that which preceded it.

With each step along this evolutionary road we have further lost our ability to relate. Spirituality is about this ability that lies beyond form. And Neohumanist critical spirituality offers yet another step forward in this human evolutionary tale. As the environment and human social and technological complexity reach breaking point we reach yet another evolutionary cross road. To evolve now, it seems to me, requires us to find again the power to relate, but not instinctively as our early ancestors did. For we now have the possibility of becoming conscious beings aware of our place within the whole and of the responsibility and potentiality of this new way of understanding our place in the Cosmos.

This is a form of critical consciousness and the sense of relationship is spiritual as it is embodied, as opposed to religious which is the product of institutional forms. This emergent consciousness promises to underwrite an entirely new identity and socio-aesthetic expression, perhaps even a critical renaissance which grows out of what Peter Wexler calls a 'wild history' and leads to a 'mystical society' (Wexler, 2000). At last the macro-historical wave that took us from unconscious relationship to hyper-individualism must retreat before a return to a conscious sense of relationship, **an awakened relating**, that offers us a vision of a new human being in vibrant relationship with the entirety of existence.

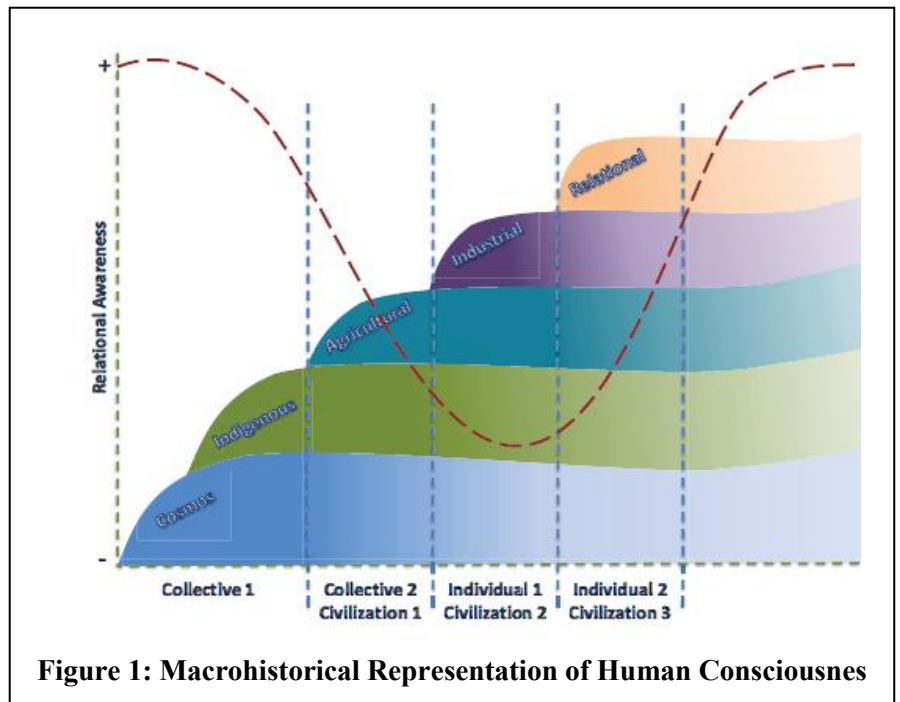
This progression is captured in **Figure 1** as a fluctuation superimposed over a set of waves. It is a raw macrohistorical representation of the journey of humanity from embedded relationship that is essentially passive and unconscious through increased alienation and self destructive behaviour to an awakened sense of relationship.

Each wave heralds the emergence of a different kind of human being – the first is the hunter gatherer, the second is the agriculturalist, the third is the industrial and the fourth is what? A new human being in a relational universe that is waking up to itself through our own eyes, as physicist Michio Kaku speculates (2005). This longing for the great is calling for a neohumanity that is defined not by any external advantage but by an inner orientation to life based on **consciousness of relationship**.

This consciousness lies at the heart of a critical spirituality as it establishes the basis for all activity based on an ethics of relationship. Such a relational ethics will call forth a new form of civilisation over time. But it will take significantly less time than the past as each calling forth has been telescoped due to the law of increasing returns.

Thus **Type 1 civilisation** is agrarian in nature and humanity is more or less collective in that there is no individual at the heart but the pattern of the tribe. This form offers us a proto individualism as it tends towards hierarchical structure and alpha leadership models as found in the classic civilisations. **Type 2 civilisation** is industrial and defined by the individual as the primary source of creative and social energy. In this formulation the collective is shunned (remember Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal dictum that there is no such thing a society, only individuals) and individuals stand outside of relationship (Christian, 2008). **Civilisation Type 3** will see, if we read the signs correctly, a return to relationship that is qualitatively different as it is awakened to its own embeddedness in the world of being and things.

I believe this awakening heralds a new revolution in critical consciousness, a Critical Renaissance, that will give a new form to human cultural expression and reshape human identity, the values and aesthetic principles upon which order is founded and meaning generated. It seems likely that the Neohumanist awakened consciousness that P. R. Sarkar articulated, which involves the acknowledgment of relationship and an ethical connection with the universe, is to be the next step in human evolution.



**Figure 1: Macrohistorical Representation of Human Consciousness**

Christian, D. (2004). *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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Dr Marcus Bussey is Research Fellow in regional Futures at the Sustainability Research Centre, University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia.



# Roots of Societal Transformation

By Dada Shambhushivananda

*The Intercultura Foundation held an international conference in Milan, Italy from the 7th to the 9th of April 2011 on the topic of Reconciling Babel: Education for Cosmopolitanism. The purpose of this conference was to reflect on what it means today to be a global citizen and on how young people may be educated for this citizenship. Dada Shambhushivananda addressed a plenary session and gave a workshop on the topic "Roots for Societal Transformation" which introduced NHE as a response to the tensions emerging out of drive towards cosmopolitanism.*

We are living at a special moment in history when the social and economic systems are in turmoil and the natural world that sustains us all is equally turbulent. Furthermore, the opposing narratives of people sharing the same biosphere pose both challenges and opportunities. In addition, the global information revolution led by a host of technological advances goad us to squarely face the stark neglects and widespread global disparities in all walks of life.

In a nutshell, the neglect of the body (inner ecology); neglect of others (foes, minorities, other species and vulnerable people); neglect of the environment (outer ecology); neglect of the sublime mind (value-based thinking); and, neglect of the spiritual (cosmic sentiment) all emerge as opportunities for forging a new cosmopolitan Renaissance in the 21st century. At the root of these challenges for social transformation lies a need to "re-frame the frames of knowledge that we use to construct our world going beyond tribal, religious, national or even civilizational lenses."<sup>1</sup>

It is this cry which leads us through empirical, systemic, world views unto mythical analysis and brings us to a neohumanist perspective. Neohumanism,<sup>2</sup> the philosophy and practice of love for all beings - living and non-living as propounded by Indian philosopher and seer P.R. Sarkar (1921-1990), attempts to reconcile inner and outer; individual and collective; tradition and modernity; rational and intuitive; material and mystical; local and global; living and non-living; and pragmatism and idealism.

What lies at the core of global citizenship? How to foster and strengthen social and natural resilience? What should be the pedagogical response to shift human consciousness towards a world guided by a balance of individual liberty and collective interest?

## Finding the 'essence' of identity

We are all different in many ways, similar in other ways and identical on some level. Identity is not about the multiple roles that we play in society. Rather, it is the essence of what we call 'me' or 'us'. It is the combination of all three- our physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions as they inter-relate with the world around us. Yet, at the core of our existence is the universal-spirit. When we get disconnected with the universal spirit- universal love and universal consciousness, we become like a tree which is cut off from the roots and soon the tree of civilization begins to become dry and ultimately dies out. Hence, the only way to revive the elan-vital of human civilization is to bring back that essential component in our life styles- the practice of love and compassionate perspective towards all that appears different and varied.

It is with this perspective that we need to eliminate the wide disparities prevalent in the world today and yet preserve the diversities that add to the beauty of human civilization. To maintain this harmony, it is also essential to spell out the cardinal moral/ethical principles as distinct from the local cultural differences. A 21st century cosmopolitanism must be based on these ethical principles if it is to last. Unless we modify our lifestyles and bring them into alignment with our spiritual journey, we shall not be able to remove the dichotomy that exists between me and them. Towards this end, the yoga and meditation methodologies were also discussed as an integral part of any coherent neohumanist response. Through connecting with our deepest inner-self, we also get connected with the universal cosmic-self that pervades the entire creation.

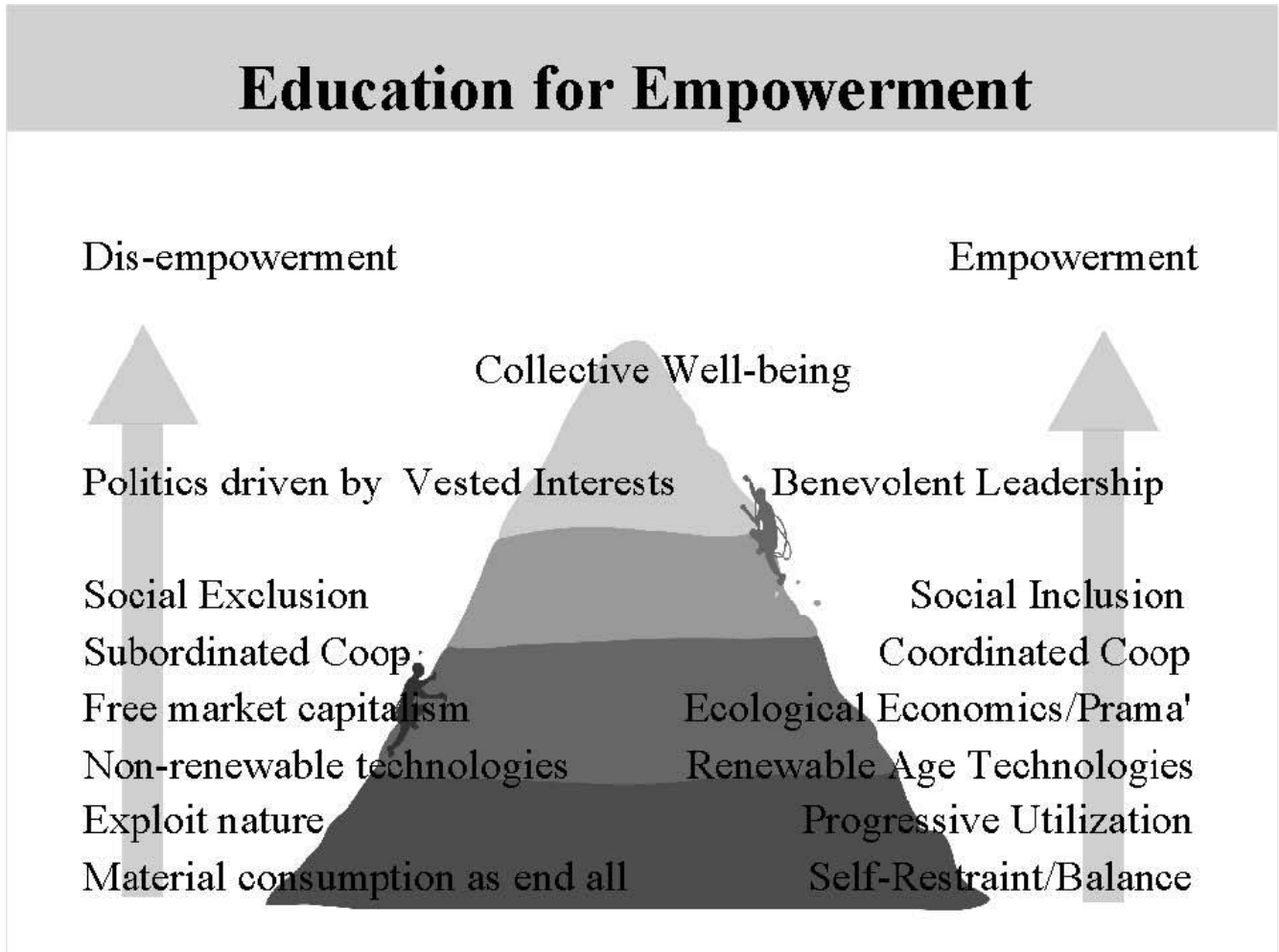
## Resilience through Empowerment

Resilience is the ability of a society to survive and thrive in the midst of crisis and all odds. In order to build resilience, the inherent potential of each community, rather each citizen will need to be tapped. People become empowered when their inherent longings are satisfied with the least cost to the rest of society and nature. Hence, an empowerment model should enhance the welfare of each individual, society and nature through a quadruple bottom line – economic prosperity, social inclusion, harmony with nature and spiritual growth. This is the focus of Neohumanist Education.

The future of society will greatly depend on recognizing the emerging paradigm which calls for the end of modernity and its outmoded ideologies of patriarchy, individualism, materialism, dualism, nationalism and even humanism. Instead the

emerging paradigm points towards a partnership model, multicultural reality of human experience, empathetic civilization, and recognition of self-realization and ecological ethics. In order to build a resilient society, we shall have to choose the empowerment modalities which call for a socio-economic system which encourages regional self-reliance in all basic amenities of life.

PROUT (Progressive Utilization Theory) is one such approach<sup>3</sup>. It invites abundance by streamlining our economies in harmony with nature. By showing restraint in exploiting the planet's fossil fuels and by tapping the abundant renewable potentials of nature, we can reverse the trend of increasing scarcities. The tensions of global citizenship remind us that we are a fragile link between the past and the future and our choices today will inevitably condition our options tomorrow.



In summary, we need a neo-magna carta which will establish the rights and responsibilities of all beings - living and non-living; we need to spell out universal ethics that go beyond religious nomenclatures; we need to adopt a socio-economic system that will strengthen and empower local communities and help improve the purchasing power of each citizen and not only a few while neglecting the majority; and, we need to modify our lifestyles so that we do not pursue happiness at the cost of pain to others. Thus true development would be that which is built on our local resources and not based on draining others' resources for feeding the consumption of a few. Hence, the task of neohumanist education<sup>4</sup> is to affirm and express our self-realization modalities while bringing to centre stage thinking and action based on ecological ethics and social justice especially in all our inter-cultural dialogues.

#### References & further readings

<sup>1</sup> Inyatullah, S., Bussey, M. & Milojevic, I. [Editors], Neohumanist Education Futures: Liberating the Pedagogical Intellect, Tamkang University Press, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Sarkar, P.R. Neohumanism in a Nutshell, A. M. Publications, 1987

<sup>3</sup> Shambhushivananda, PROUT: Neohumanist Economics, Dharma Verlag, 1989

<sup>4</sup> Gurukula Network November, 2010 Special Issue, <http://www.gurukul.edu/gknetwork/Issue31/>

*PROUT, Progressive Utilization Theory, is a socio-economic theory outlined by Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar as an alternative global economic model based on his neohumanist philosophy. Many people have been voicing the need of promoting a new governance system for Egypt, based on Prout. This article aims to address this need, going on to propose the format of a new authentic democratic (political-economic) system without political parties. Our present-day democratic system based on political parties is cited as the root cause of all socio-economic-political problems and despair. The article aims to explain the basis and concepts of true democracy (or economic democracy), based on Prout principles as well as a neo governance system for providing economic stability, for all countries: developed and developing. Interested readers are welcome to contact Prof Ghista <d.ghista@gmail.com>*

## Civilian Democratic Political-Economic System, for Liberated Countries and Countries with all systems of Government by Ac. Dhanjoo N. Ghista

### **1. Wave of Social Unrest due to Governmental authoritarianism, massive corruption, economic woes and gross disparities between rich and poor**

Friday February 11 was a historic day in Cairo, when Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak resigned as president and handed over governance control to the military, after being 29 years in power. He had finally bowed down to an incessant demand for him to step down, from an 18-day pro-democracy demonstration wave by hundreds of thousands of Egyptians in Cairo, primarily in the Central Tahrir Square. Fireworks and joyous celebrations filled this city of 18 million, after Vice President Omar Suleiman made the announcement on national TV just after nightfall. Tens of thousands of Egyptians chanted outside Hosni Mubarak's presidential palace in Cairo, that the people had ousted the president. In Cairo's Central Tahrir Square, several hundred thousand protesters exploded into joy, cheering and waving Egyptian flags.



***Thousands of protestors in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt***

Hosni Mubarak had tried to cling to power and to pacify the people, by handing over some of his governance authorities to Vice President Suleiman, while keeping his president title. However, following an explosion of people's protests on Friday rejecting his appeasement move, it appeared that the Military had forced him to resign. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians marched throughout the day in cities across Egypt, while soldiers stood by, surrounding Hosni Mubarak's palace in Cairo and Alexandria and the State TV building.

Friday was the biggest day of protests yet in this historic people's upheaval, that began on Jan. 25. Growing from youth activists working on the Internet, it developed into a mass movement of widespread protest on Mubarak's authoritarian lock on power, corruption, economic woes and widespread disparities between rich and poor. Finally, the people of Egypt were able to voice their discontent in public. Nobel Peace laureate Mohammed ElBaradei, whose young supporters were among the organizers of the protest movement, summed up the people's feelings when he told the Associated Press that this was the greatest day of his life, that the country had been liberated after decades of repression, and that he expected a beautiful transition of power.

The world will not soon forget the scene in Cairo's Central Tahrir Square on Friday, the day that President Hosni Mubarak announced he was stepping down from his 30-year rule after 18 days of protests. Surrounded by celebrants, NBC's Ron Allen shouted from the Square that this is what freedom looks like, that people cannot contain themselves as this is the moment that they have waited for.

From Egypt, to Tunisia to Algeria to Libya, this liberation wave has spread along Northern Africa. On the other side of the seas, the relatively wealthier Gulf State of Bahrain has also joined Yemen and Jordan among the growing list of dissatisfied citizens demanding governmental changes. So now what should the political governance change consist of, so that community development and people's socio-economic security are the prime considerations? Can we propose to Nobel Peace laureate Mohammed ElBaradei a governance system for the people by the people, a truly civilian democracy, which even the world has not hitherto known ! So, let us hence examine the concepts involved in this neo-governance system.



## 2. Political Governance and Economic System required for Peoples Welfare

For the society (of a community) to be considered to be progressive, it must be able to provide to its people a reasonable quality-of-life and a reasonable degree of happiness factors:

- Equity (for all communities and races) in having equal access to basic living needs and community services (such as education and healthcare);
- Social security, food and water security;
- Social justice, and constitutionally guaranteed charter of human rights to basic necessities of living;
- Social economy (for peoples economic empowerment) backed by a Democratic civilian governance system;
- Conducive environment for physical, psychic and spiritual development.

A society that is able to maintain such a progressive state can be labeled as being civilized. When this civilized societal state and development can be sustained in a community, we can term this state to be sustainable development. Thus, sustainable development implies sustainability in all the above mentioned quality-of-life and happiness factors of human living. The aims and measures of sustainable development as well as its components need to encompass all segments of society and reach down to the poorest segments.

Hence, in Developing countries, it can be advocated that poverty reduction be undertaken as a priority, rather than just focusing on an increase in productivity and output or burgeoning of the middle class. Obviously in terms of social justice, one cannot accept sustainable development which continues to maintain the wide gap between the rich and the poor, between the G-7 countries and the developing countries. Let us hence walk down the lane of such a Sustainable community, and analyze the social, economic and political factors required for (i) poverty alleviation, (ii) adequate peoples purchasing power for produced goods, (iii) opportunity for everyone to fully develop and utilize their potentialities, and (iv) resulting improvement in the quality of life for all people.

## 3. Sustainable Community Development

For a community to be sustainable, it should have (i) a universal social outlook, which will provide a binding force for its different ethnic and cultural groups, (ii) a cooperative (or peoples participatory) economic system, (iii) and a peoples empowerment providing civilian democratic political system. In other words, a community should have socio-cultural, economic and political sustainability, as depicted by the Community Sustainability triangle in **Figure 1**.

The *Sustainability triangle* is our new concept, whereby we bring together the minimum set of three requisite factors for a balanced (stable) system, and apply it to social systems, governance systems, production systems, community-sectorial system, etc. It is based on the concept that the minimum number of components of a stable system is three, based on the concept of equilibrium of forces acting on a structure.



**Figure 1: Balanced Triangle of Community Sustainability, comprising of a minimum set of attributes for sustainability**

## 4. Neo-Social Outlook (Neo-Humanism) for a Sustainable Community

Generally, people are influenced by and attached to narrow group sentimentality of culture, race and religion, to favor their own group. This causes polarization in society, to the extent that people having religious or ethnic background different from the main stream population get marginalized. How can we rise above this type of narrow sentimentality? Because of Consciousness being deemed to be the fundamental source and constituent of human mind, all human beings can be considered to be bound together by common ties of fraternity. Furthermore, the destinies of all human beings are inter-linked.

The important idea, from a social view point, is that human society is one and indivisible. This concept of universal social outlook is based on the doctrine of Neo-humanism, propounded by the great sage Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. Neohumanism

inspires us to raise our consciousness above narrow sentimentality by recognition of the divine origin of all human beings. The key to global peace is, hence, for all people and all nations to accept and imbibe the universal social outlook, and develop public policies based on the concept of one for all and all for one.

## 5. Neo Socio-Economic Order based on Co-operative Economics, for a Sustainable Community

There are invariably many obstacles in the implementation of such a progressive neo-humanistic social outlook, caused by a great majority of the people in the world not having the basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing, health-care, education), as well as other requisite physical amenities to save time spent in physical chores. This points to the need of a Neo Socio-Economic Order, to foster a conducive environment for optimal development and distribution of human and earth resource to: (i) enable all human beings to afford the basic necessities of living, (ii) be materialistically comfortable by meriting emoluments commensurate to the significance of their work in society, and (iii) (at the same time) be able to develop their parapsychic (and spiritual) potentialities.

So then, let us enunciate some of the tenets of our new **Cooperative Economics Model**, based on the socio-economic-political theory called **Prout** (Progressive Utilization Theory), propounded by preceptor Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar. The first tenet is the common patrimony (along with rational consumption, equitable distribution and maximum utilization) of the natural resources of the planet. The second tenet is that, for individual security and societal stability, the minimal necessities of living (housing, clothing, food, healthcare and education) need to be guaranteed through 100% employment and minimal wage. The third tenet is that the remuneration for ones contribution at work and to society needs to be proportional to the importance and value of the contributions.

The fourth tenet is that the productivity of commodities be proportional to the collective need, and that prices be kept stable; this will help augment purchasing capacity and standard-of-living. The fifth tenet is that the Socio-Economic system should foster the development of physical, intellectual and parapsychic (or spiritual) human potentialities as well as their implementation for collective welfare. These economic tenets are summarized and are represented in the Socio-Economic System triangle in **Figure 2**.



**Figure 2: Socio-Economic-system triangle for our Co-operative Economics system model**

Finally, as a sixth tenet, we are advocating that all businesses be cooperatively structured and managed, so that all employees who contribute to revenue generation also share the profits. This equitable economic model can be termed as Cooperative (or Collective) Economics, as opposed to Corporate Capitalism (or Free-reigning Market Capitalism) in which: (1) self-interested groups and individuals maximize their own welfare (in a free-market environment) at the expense of the general public; (2) bank agents unscrupulously induce people to buy homes that are above their means for mortgage payments; (3) bank heads resort to enterprise banking by investing in company stocks, while risking the bank clients monies; (4) corporation heads have ridiculously disproportionately huge salaries compared to other employees. In fact one of the main causes of today's economy debacle is this unchecked capital-grabbing by self-interested groups and individuals. We are hence advocating that our concept of cooperative capitalism replace corporate (or free-market) capitalism.

## 6. Peoples Political System: Civilian Democratic Political System (CDPS)

*Why do we need an alternative political system? What is wrong with our present-day widely touted Democratic system?* The present-day Democratic system is essentially Political Party governance, instead of Peoples Democratic governance; it is hence totally undemocratic. In other words, the elected governing parties impose their own policies, agenda and biases on the people. Political parties are like corporations, and the elected political party essentially controls the state assets during its ruling period. In Developing countries, this is the time for the ministers (who are members of the governing party) to make money (for their families and next generation) through corrupt practices. The next disadvantage is that the ministers and cabinet members are appointed from among the members of the governing party. So there is no appropriate match between their backgrounds and their portfolios. The biggest objection to this Political Party-based Democracy is the total waste of time and public money caused by (i) the governing party wanting to pass legislations according to their party policies, and (ii) the opposition parties finding faults with the legislations and preventing them from being passed, often at the expense of peoples benefit (as is the case with health reform in US).

*So then what are we advocating?* In the community sustainability triangle (of figure 1), the three balanced components are (i) Universal social outlook (presented in section 4), (ii) Multi-faceted economy (discussed in section 5), and (iii) Peoples political system which is our new concept of Civilian Democracy, without political parties. The basis of CDPS is that the direct link of government with the grass-roots people is through the various sectors of the community, such as the education sector, healthcare sector, legal sector, agricultural sector, industrial sector, finance and banking sector, transportation sector, etc. Each sector can be represented by an association, such as the association of school teachers, association of doctors, association of lawyers, farmers association, association of industrialists, association of bankers, miners association, etc. Each sector is concerned with promoting its optimal function, such that the sector serves the people in the best possible way, and the interests of people working in the sector are also served. Hence, if each sectors association elects its most competent representative to the state legislative assembly or government, then this representative would be in the best position to enable the sector to best serve the people as well as look after the interests of the people working in the sector.

This is the basis of the **Civilian Democratic Political system (CDPS)**. Herein, the government is composed of elected representatives of all the sectors of the community or state. Thus the State health minister, elected by the state healthcare association, would be a healthcare professional; s/he would hence be in the best position to know how the healthcare delivery system and policy should be structured and budgeted, such that people get the best healthcare that the state can afford to provide. Likewise, the state education minister, elected by the association of educators, would be an educationist and would hence be best able to develop the state education system (so as to best serve the education needs of the state). Also, as a representative of the association of educators, s/he would also be able to look after the welfare of school and college teachers.

The Civilian Democratic Political System (CDPS) would also be most fair and economical, because it would be eliminate corporate financial support of costly election campaigns of political candidates, who in turn are obliged to frame public policies favoring these business groups. It would also eliminate partisan politics and governance policies being shaped by the biases of political parties. Thus, the Civilian Democratic Political System (CDPS) can truly be termed as the Peoples Political System (PPS).

## 7. Towards a Stable Economy

It is to be noted that a stable financial system of a community is linked to its economic and political systems and policies. There is no reason why we should have ongoing alternating inflations and depressions. Our proposed CDPS (or PPS) would ensure a political-economic policy which is in the best interests of the people, and thereby also safeguard the economy and peoples assets.

In the context of the current financial crisis plaguing the world today, two prime factors (aside from fraudulent banking practices at the expense of their clients) behind this crisis are (i) the big unethical disparities in wealth promoted by the capitalist system, thereby money having lost its capacity to be the unit of socio-economic equilibrium and stability, and (ii) investment of wealth in enterprises of non-yielding returns, such as in excessive defence spending and unjustified wars, which do not earn any income in return. Our people's political system would prevent such a flawed political-economic policy and wastage of people's assets, and hence contribute to a stable economy.

## 8. Governance System for all Countries

This is verily the Civilian Democratic Political System (CDPS), as the People's Political Governance System (PPS), that we are proposing for Egypt to Nobel Peace laureate Mohammed ElBaradei. In years to come, this could well be the starting point of a new 'people wave' sweeping across the world to replace the present-day Political Party Democracy by Civilian Democracy, which the people of the world have never before known but will come to love as it will give them socio-economic security and a fulfilling life.

The beauty of this governance system is that it would suit and could be adopted by countries with all systems of Government: (i) Presidential Republics, (ii) Parliamentary Republics, (iii) Constitutional Monarchies with ceremonial monarchs, (iv) Constitutional Monarchies with active monarchs. Thus, all countries can come to adopt this Civilian Democratic Political System (CDPS), which will bring about political, social and economic stability due to people's satisfaction.

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# On the Moral Foundation of Society

By Ac Devajinana

A human being is provident, which means we create our present using individual and social identity using a culturally discoursed mental story, and we create our future by the collective telling of a new story for humanity: a story that is dedicated to the all-round welfare of all people, plants and animals, the present and the future, and which defines progress in terms of humanity, solidarity, life and love. This article examines our relation to the universe, the facts of human existence, to realize the direction of human progress and the role of society.

## **Ethics: our relationship to the universe and its social implications**

*—Love the earth and sun and animals, Despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, Stand up for the stupid and crazy, Devote your income and labor to others...And your very flesh shall be a great poem.*”—Walt Whitman

Deontology judges ethical correctness based on adherence to rules, norms, duty, or obligation; the present is contextualized by the past, by history and by culture, thus giving rise to ethical motivations and presenting us with moral obligations. Utilitarians rate the moral value of an action by its utility maximization. Both are intellectual excursions and leave the common human being standing on shaky ground when faced with anything except the most trivial ethical choices. Virtue ethics is concerned with the development of moral character, rightly noting that morality needs to filter into our life, our business, and our education systems. Virtue ethics is being orientated (I am moral) rather than a doing oriented (I behave morally), and is closer both to the eastern traditions as well as our practical experience of day-to-day morality. While it is true that the past contextualizes our actions, that duty motivates us, that prudence towards the result is essential, all this morality is nothing if it does not exist within the character of human beings.

“When a man begins to have an extended vision of his self, when he realizes that he is much more than at present he seems to be, he begins to get conscious of his moral nature. Then he grows aware of that which he is yet to be, and the state not yet experienced by him becomes more real than that under his direct experience...his will takes the place of his wishes.” Our moral nature allows us to see that there is purpose in life because our will can create, that we are not restricted to our self, but our truth lies in our future greater-self, that we are universal to some extent. Animals are amoral,

they cannot be moral, they cannot postpone and plan, but man is moral: for good or bad. An evil man is immoral, or “imperfectly moral,” but has to utilize his moral nature and “sacrifice his present inclination for the unrealized future.” At each level we have the immediate and the moral urge. On the physical level we have desire for pleasures and a desire for health. On the mental level we have the desire for entertainment and desire for mental expansion through concentrated mental effort. On the community level, we have selfish needs and a desire for collective good. The former we share with the animals, the latter is characteristically human, and to be wise is to let the play of the former exists within the boundaries of the latter. And so in good health we find pleasure, during the act of learning we have fun, and community welfare vicariously gives us benefit.

Law “is nothing but the perception of harmony that prevails between reason...and the workings of the world.” Natural law springs from the simple rule of action and reaction, for every action there follows not only a subsequent action—but there is a reaction which is the appropriate response of the universe. The manifestation of the laws of universe, the style of response, is called nature. This requital of action has guided the vapors to form earth, guided the atoms to form life, and guided life to develop into human beings. That is to say natural reaction has led to the evolution of the universe until the formation of human life which is characterized by reason and independence. Human beings, though still constrained by natural law just as animals, have a dominant psychic existence where we are governed by human laws. In the psychic realm we have some freedom, but our minds have still sprung out of the universe and are governed by the same response mechanisms which created natural law. It follows that our minds need to be in constant communion with the life of the universe outside ourselves for reason to blossom, if such contact is lacking our intellectual excursions will lose touch with reality like an uprooted tree.

Were we not bound by law our lives would lose meaning. Tagore compared this to a river: at first glance the banks confine and limit the river, they do not allow it to freely merge with the surroundings, but without the banks the water could not play its role, it would be without purpose. Just as in accepting its banks the water becomes a river that is able to flow to the sea, in accepting law our lives become a mission and we are able to progress. “It is only those who have known that joy expresses itself through laws who have learnt to transcend the law. Not that the bonds of law have ceased to exist for them—but

that the bonds have become to them as the form of freedom incarnate. The freed soul delights in accepting bonds, and does not seek to evade any of them.<sup>13</sup> A more modern example: in his acceptance of the rules of basketball, Michael Jordan was able to transcend the rules and aspire towards perfection. If the rules had not been there, if in a moment of frustration Jordan would have asked to be exempt from the prohibition against traveling, then the play would have been lost into a chaos in which no greatness could have been achieved.

As humans we have reason and will, we can proceed against the flow of law, just as we could swim against the current of a river, but not indefinitely because the accumulation of reactions will eventually overwhelm our will. *Wisdom* is our moral alignment with these laws, and it leads to *development* and *progress*. Natural law has created progress up to the birth of man. Society should be structured so that we continue the tradition of progress, which has led to our birth in the universe, by continuing to evolve to higher states of being. Hence, in creating society we are to *extend the order of nature into the human domain by proper application of our will*. But such a society needs to follow the same ideal that nature adheres to: the requital of action based on the principle of universal progress, i.e. social order (law) is our response to each other and to the environment based on universal welfare, which is love. And just as natural law is the expression of this urge for progress (welfare) in the form of an evolving ecological harmony, society is the expression of our collective urge for progress in the form of an evolving human family. This is manifest in the flow of humans organizing around the principal of social equality and justice in a ceaseless effort for all-round collective progress. Returning to Tagore: morality is our ability to extend our vision of ourselves beyond our current self, to make the yet unmanifest society more real to us than what we see on the evening news.

Logically, the ideal of progress exists provided there is a goal which can be considered absolute. In an effort to identify such a goal we are at the mercy of the great teachers of humanity—if any knowledge is to be considered valid in the history of human learning it is the patient observation and experiment of the founders of humanities wisdom traditions for they have given us knowledge about the goal: an ultimate state of consciousness, a place of inner joy and love, beyond all relativities. Progress is movement towards that state, not mental or intellectual development<sup>14</sup>. However, mental and intellectual development becomes progressive when it serves humankind's goal of establishment in universalism, love, and freedom from greed en route to spiritual unification. Thus morality is not a goal, but if it be practiced through a conscious act of living then it creates a dynamic force which enables us to progress. "Moral ideals must be able to furnish human beings with the ability as well as the inspiration to proceed on the path of Spirituality. Morality depends on one's efforts to maintain a balance...The aim of such morality is

attainment of such a state of Oneness...where no desire is left for theft; and all tendencies of falsehood disappear."<sup>15</sup>

In the judo-christian fable of Adam and Eve, with the development of reason, creativity, free-will and thought, humanity was dispelled from (evolved beyond) the *paradise* of animal existence, and now had to confront the challenge of life, of awareness, and of death. As with the eastern tradition, we find that man is caught between two forces: one to retreat (escape) back to animality and another to progress towards full birth as a human being. Animal *is lived* by the biological laws of nature, it is a part of nature and never transcends it but man *must live*: must develop in reason, love, understanding, and creatively express himself. "Being endowed with reason and imagination, man cannot be content with the passive role of the creature...In the act of creation man transcends himself as a creature, raises himself beyond the passivity and accidentalness of his existence into the realm of purposefulness and freedom. The healthy answer is to create his reality, the pathological answer arises when man feels helpless and expresses his power destructively."<sup>16</sup> To be identified with ones "I" feeling is to achieve internal certainty of self, and to be able to embrace the uncertainty of life; one can either identify with one's sense of being, "I am I", or gain identity by virtue of having conformed to a social group, "I am we". Submission to irrational authority, over-intellectualization, and idolatry are escapist answers to the challenge of humanness. Devotion is an effort to arrive at truth with ones entire being, with the entire and dedicated act of living. For psychologist Erich Fromm "The problem of man's existence, then, is unique in the whole of nature; he has fallen out of nature, as it were, and is still in it; he is partly divine, partly animal. *The necessity to find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever-higher forms of unity with nature, his fellowmen and himself, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man...the understanding of man's psyche must be based on the analysis of man's needs stemming from the conditions of his existence.*"<sup>17</sup>

The two forces give man two alternative ways to answer each these needs, one productive and one regressive—but one must have some answer, for these needs are as real as hunger, and if human development is lacking then we are left with a regressive response. As humans we must (1) Relate (love vs. narcissism), (2) Transcend (creativity vs. destructiveness), (3) Be Rooted (fraternity or universalism vs. incest or groupism), (4) have a sense of identity (individuality vs. herd conformity), and (5) have a frame of orientation (reason vs. irrationality). Likewise, for Sarkar, the human situation is inherent with natural longings which distinguish human existence from animal existence. To fulfill them is to live a human life but requires struggle and fight, to choose the easy path is to live an animal life. Sarkar saw human life as a march towards divinity, requiring stamina and courage. Thus the natural human longings are a continuous impetus which motivates man. One wants to express one's creativity in productive work, to move in life with

increasing speed while experiencing a continuous feeling of love and safety (this feeling arises when we relate to the world through love, and when we are identified with our inner self), to expand in every aspect of life and comprehension, and to unify one's existence with the supreme consciousness.

## Society and Neohumanism

—*Now when you are in a mood of pleasure, just distribute it throughout the universe – let all the hearts of the created universe dance in ecstasy and throb with energy. And this is the gospel of the day: we are for all, we are for the Neohumanistic progress of the entire Cosmos. This is the idea.*”—P. R. Sarkar

The community is the local manifestation of our universal self. Society as a whole, and community in general, is the merging of our stories into a culture, and is thus an expansion of ourselves, it is an inclusive vision which “we” struggle to manifest. It is our cultural self that defines our subjective discourse and allows us to translate our experiences, to make sense of our existence, and to form a story of who we are and why we are here. “A true society is like such a group of pilgrims who attain a deep psychic affinity while traveling together which helps them solve all the problems in their individual and social lives...Together they share their possessions, and together they march ahead, singing in unison. In their eagerness to move ahead with others they forget their trifling differences...The essence of cooperation resulting from this collective movement aims at expanding a person's mind by striking down the barriers of meanness.”<sup>vi</sup> Furthermore, society should stimulate man to be an active and responsible participant, to be productive, creative, reasonable, and to grow spirituality; should be such that “no man is a means toward another's ends, nobody is used...for purposes which are not those of the unfolding of his own human powers; man is the center, and where all economic and political activities are subordinated to the aim of his growth,”<sup>vii</sup> negative qualities are not rewarded by material gain or prestige, acting morally is the norm, opportunism and exploitation are deemed antisocial.

“In this universe of living beings there are some fundamental problems applicable to all which are to be solved by all. These problems may be taken as the common features in the life and Dharma of living beings, and the allround health of living beings depends on the happy solution of these problems.”<sup>viii</sup> Humans, to be sure, are faced with the more poignant problem of *living* with reason, responsibility, and love, whereas the problems of animals are largely automatically solved by the harmony of nature and their instinctual behavior. If we visualize ourselves as nature extending herself in an effort for transcendence, then humanity becomes the evolution of the universe into a new paradigm in which creativity, love, reason, and justice are objectively manifest. That is to say, these qualities had been concealed within the universal principal of action and reaction, but this principal has *come down to earth*, as it

were, and is doing its patient work as human beings, as a *human principle*. It could not have been otherwise, spiritual union is an individual affair, and the divine enters creation most effectively, not through the imposed relatedness with animals, but in an act of love through the voluntary union with human beings—and so with the emergence of the human principle devotion is created.

“The more these problems are solved with mutual cooperation, the more beneficial it will be.” Neohumanism is the inclusion of nature and animals within the jurisdiction of social order and justice. Nature can thus be seen as a template for humans to expand upon. If we neglect those who cannot take care of themselves, or if we usurp nature's laws with our own, then we have violated our purpose which is universal welfare and spiritual progress. “Nature's wealth belongs to all living beings. What is a burden to the earth is a burden to all. Disregard of these ultimate truths eventually leads to disorder in social life, and society's potentialities are destroyed before they have a chance to develop....The significance of founding a true society lies in solving all problems in a collective way....always remember that those possessing little strength and ability, and those not provided with the means to survive the struggle for life by Nature, must be led along in companionship.”<sup>ix</sup>

## Conclusion:

“Is it a dream? Nay but the lack of it the dream.”<sup>x</sup> This is not a dream—rather it is the absence of dreams of personal aggrandizement and the acceptance of the responsibility and potentiality of human life. Choosing the right answer to the challenge of our own existence is the only way to build a good society, and that means taking responsibility for all. The light of reason must shine in every direction if it is to shine at all. We have been passe in acceptance of our place in history, waiting the perfect market, the classless society, or the return of the messiah—only to find that our greatest enemy is our own humanity which turns evil when it is removed of the chance for productive expression. A good social order is closer, perhaps, then we think, for evil is not an end in itself, but just a perversion of human needs resulting from the lack of our progressive response to the universe.

<sup>i</sup> R. Tagore, 1916. *Sadhana*. Project Gutenberg Ebook. Page

<sup>ii</sup> For a discussion of the psychological degradation of modern society and human progress see P.R. Sarkar *A Few Problems Solved part 6*, and E. Fromm *To Have or To Be*.

<sup>iii</sup> P.R. Sarkar *A Few Problems Solved: Part 6*, in The Electronic Edition of the Works of P.R. Sarkar, Ananda Marga Publications. Page 12

<sup>iv</sup> E. Fromm, 1955. *The Sane Society*. Routledge, London. page 36.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid. page 24

<sup>vi</sup> P.R. Sarkar *A Few Problems Solved: Part 6*, in The Electronic Edition of the Works of P.R. Sarkar, Ananda Marga Publications. Page 40

<sup>vii</sup> E. Fromm, 1955. *The Sane Society*. Routledge, London. page 269

<sup>viii</sup> P.R. Sarkar *A Few Problems Solved: Part 6*, Page 32

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid. Page 34

<sup>x</sup> Walt Whitman



# NHE Conference in Jarsuguda, Orissa

November 6-10, 2011

By Didi Anandarama

## Pre Conference Activity at the Ananda Prerana School

The Ananda Prerana School, located in Jarsuguda, is a Kindergarten in a newly constructed building with 60 children. Didi Ananda Pramita is the principal and Didi Ananda Kaoshikii the supervisor. The school has plans for expansion and of becoming a model Neohumanist school. Before the conference we held a pre-conference activity at the school where much work was done on upgrading the environment and the curriculum.



The school has nice vegetables and flower gardens and a big playground. We painted a big mural at the entrance gate with images of children going to school, watering plants, caring for animals, reading, dancing, riding an elephant and doing yoga and meditation. Inside the compound a long wall got the whole Yama and Niyama story, *The Fairy Flower*, painted on it.



We shifted the Morning Circle into the Dharma Cakra hall where all the children can sit in a circle. The room is called the „Circle of Love room“ and it now has a big mural of the Brahmachakra cycle on it. The children enjoyed the colourful additions to the school and even the gardener thought that the new murals went so well with the blooming flowers in the gardens which he tended.



I brought lots of puzzles, games, and books for them, including a magnet board with magnet attached letters, bead stringing, memory games, construction games, flannel board, etc. . We set up learning areas for different activities with tables and chairs, shelves, baskets and mats. The block area is demarcated with chalk on the floor, and there is a reading corner, a creativity room, etc.





## The Conference Begins

The conference was held on the spacious Master Unit, Ananda Samvrdhi, where a Kindergarten is run with currently 90 children. Dada Hiteshananda Avadhuta is the principal and plans to expand the school in the near future to Primary and Secondary Schools.

The conference was attended by two dozen principals and teachers of Ananda Marga Kindergartens, Primary and Secondary Schools from different parts of India. The focus was practical implementation of Neohumanist Education practices. In the evenings there were sharing presentations and films of inspiring schools and projects. Some highlights of the conference:

### Ideas for School Environment

- „Sa vidya“ya“ vimuktaye” – „Education is that which liberates“ to be posted on a public wall near the office.
- A bulletin board for informing parents and visitors about the school, the school calendar, events and announcements.
- Posting the E.D.U.C.A.T.I.O.N anagram with title “Objectives of NHE”. These are the traits in the child the school is aiming at through its teachings.
- A mural painting of Brahmachakra painted on a big wall.
- A Yama and Niyama poster for each classroom
- Vegetable and flower gardens to tend and if possible animals to care for.

### Circle Time /Morning Circle

- An optional style of gathering in a circle was introduced as an alternative to the usual row and columns. The participants practiced various elements of a 30 minutes Morning Circle:
- English songs with movement from the Circle of Love manual which has over 300 songs, Prabhat Samgiita singing or with mudras, recital of inspiring quotes and Sanskrit verses, sitting meditation, story-telling and yoga for children.
- A suggestion was made to hold smaller Morning Circles in individual classrooms where the content could be more age-appropriate.

### Story Telling

The Didis and teachers prepared and demonstrated the various ways of how to tell a story:

- Verbally with gestures and by varying your voice and adding songs to the story
- Using a book to show the illustrations while narrating the story
- Using the „Magic Circle“ with small figures on a landscape on a circular cloth
- Involving children to hold stick-puppets with the characters and objects
- Using flannel board and felt figures that stick to the board
- Hand puppets with a puppet theatre



### Language Arts

Using the content in the Circle of Love book we discussed creative ways of teaching language and demonstrated easy to make material for sight reading. Language arts is basic to all learning. There are three abstractions:

1. Conceptualization – experience into thought – non-verbal
2. Verbalization – thought into speech – oral
3. Literacy – speech into print – written



*The School has 3 classrooms, Nursery to KG2. They have a big bus to pick up the kids.*



*Stick Puppet Story Telling*

## Yearly STUVOL Curriculum

We discussed designing a yearly curriculum that brings NHE elements into the entire learning of the class. We elaborated on the STUVOL (Student Volunteers) syllabus using the Circle of Love manual and its themes for a two week period. Local cultural celebrations were added into the yearly calendar. For example the Spring Colour Festival theme is dealt with for two weeks. Each theme will not only be covered in the STUVOL period but also overlap into other subjects in coordination with all teachers. Each theme will have at least one leading story, then songs, rhymes, quotes, befitting Ananda Vanii, Sanskrit slokas, Prabhat Samgiita, selected vocabulary taught during Language Arts, a related science activity, art and crafts, games and other activities. Example:

Theme for two weeks	Story	Songs, rhymes	Quote/Ananda Vanii, sloka	Prabhat Samgiita	Vocabulary	Science	Art and Crafts	Games	Activity
God									
Space									
Air									
Fire									
Water									
Spring Festival									
Earth									
Plants									
Insects									
Fish and Reptiles									
Ananda Purnima									
Birds									
Etc. see Circle of Love Manual									

## Creative, Individual Child-based Learning

We found a way to introduce new educational material such as puzzles, manipulative educational material, reading books, building blocks and other activities. At the Ananda Prerana School one room was set up as the Creativity Room where the new STUVOL syllabus will be implemented. Learning corners with tables and chairs, shelves and mats were set up. Children were instructed about the rules of how to work with the educational material on a one to one basis, and how to return the material after use. This learning method has enriched the child's experience as the child faced new challenges and was able to measure their own achievement. The children also learn to rely on their own timing, making their own choices and practicing responsibility.

## Teachers' Attitude in the Classroom

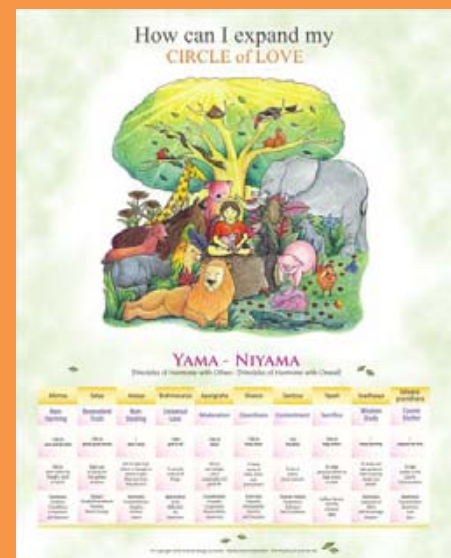
When the teacher uses sweet, polite and respectful ways of talking and interacting with the children, the children copy the teacher and in the course of time the learning atmosphere becomes relaxed, pleasant, peaceful and ideal for learning. This attitude is in line with the dictum of Shrii P. R. Sarkar "The teachers must bear in mind that whatever the ages of their students – child, teenager, young adult, or older person – all to them are but children of different ages, and they too are children like them."

## NHE Conference Action Plan

- All material covered at the conference will be presented by participants at the upcoming Education Training Camp in Raipur.
- Jarsuguda Schools will be pursuing model NHE school status with attached Teacher's Training
- Ac. Kishan Sood will be supervising schools and giving teacher's training in Patna area and Nepal
- Hisar Naresh will establish a school at the Master Unit in Hariyana

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# NHE Teacher Training

Zonnelicht School, Den Bosch, Netherlands

Theme: Neohumanism

March 10-12, 2011

Notes by Didi Anandarama



This spring the Teachers Training in Holland was held at two schools separately and simultaneously, one in Den Bosch and one in Hoorn.

In the Zonnelicht School in Den Bosch 27 teachers attended the three day seminar with the focus on Neohumanism. A teacher who had

taught for eight years, the longest of any teacher, commented that this was a very welcome topic delving deeper into the philosophy while previous trainings have been more focused on methodology and teaching skills. In light of Neohumanism, the first day focused on the human being, the second on the teacher and the third on the school community and society.

## DAY 1

On the first day Dada Pranakrsnanda presented the Brahmachakra or the wheel of consciousness, the evolutionary theory applied in Neohumanist Education. He focused on the interplay of inseparable consciousness and energy. Energy makes consciousness into the world of the five elements and out of the densest form of consciousness life emerges and evolves into various life forms. The wheel is turning from subtle consciousness to crude and from crude to pure consciousness again. The key is to be centered in consciousness while the energy is dancing just like a boat has to keep the flow of the propeller and motor steadily going while the storm is raging. We are part of the mind and body of God or consciousness. We are coming out of the humanized God by being conscious ourselves. We as individuals are microcosms of the macrocosm. At various stages we are dominated by instinct, intellect or intuition as we go through our own experiences on the evolutionary journey towards returning „home“ to where we came from.



The thread of the human being was carried into the afternoon programme by Didi Anandarama who led a discussion and games on the nature of human beings treading the path of harmony with the world and with oneself while moving on the circle of creation towards the goal of life, the attainment of pure consciousness.

For one of the games we had cards made of the description of the 10 principles of Ya ma and Niyama as they are found on the Yama and Niyama poster. Each participant had a card and had to find their partner who had a description of the same principle. For another activity groups of 3 or 4 people were given 3 cards with different principles and they prepared a demonstration of how to apply them with children.



In the evening we watched a beautiful PowerPoint presentation of the Brahmachakra Cycle in Dutch followed by videos of various NHE schools including one in Russia. The teachers were inspired by this, feeling part of a greater network of schools, seeing the many varieties of application of the same philosophy.



## DAY 2

The second day focused on the teacher with a presentation by Didi Anandarama on the seven highlighted qualities of a teacher as given by Shrii P.R. Sarkar:

1. Integrity
2. Strength of character
3. Righteousness
4. Unselfishness
5. Spirit of social service
6. Inspiring personality
7. Leadership ability



It was distinctly noticed that P.R. Sarkar put emphasis on the human qualifications above the academic or acquired certification of the teacher.

This was followed by a presentation by Didi Ananda Devapriya on “Holistic Self-Development for Teachers”. Please see separate article on this presentation in this issue.

The afternoon featured a discussion, in two small groups, of how to communicate observations of a child to the parents followed by role plays under the guidance of Ole Brekke, drama expert and educator. Small groups of teachers prepared real life situations between teacher, child and parent and related psychological approaches for the welfare of all.

In the evening there was a cultural programme prepared by the teachers involving all in lively folk dancing including a dance presentation by a teacher from Eritrea. This event loosened up everyone and a suggestion was made for the next Teacher’s Training to have this programme at the beginning of the seminar as an ice-breaker.



### DAY 3

The third day we watched the film Empathic Civilisation and Dada Pranakrsnananda lead a discussion following it. Then the participants broke into three groups of seven or eight and brainstormed ideas for 15 minutes at three tables. They took turns at each table so that each group contributed and added to each of the following questions:

What does society need from us on a:

1. personal level
2. educational level
3. plants and animals level
4. greater society level



### Closing

The teachers training closed with sharing of Circle Time activities in two age groups and final evaluation and closing. Teachers expressed that this was the best Teacher’s Training as they felt a strong bonding with each other since they were together as a team from the same school. They also liked the meaningful thread that was holding together the seminar which helped them to go deeper into the concept of Neohumanism.

## NHE Teacher Training Itehari, Nepal

A NHE Teacher’s Training was held from April 3-9<sup>th</sup> for the teachers of the Ananda Marga schools in Nepal. The training was held at the AMURT Academy in Itehari for the first time. Nineteen teachers attended from the following Ananda Marga schools:



\*AMURT Academy Itehari - managed by Tara Kafle as the director and Nis'tha as the Vice Principal. It has 225 students from Nursery to 5th grade and 13 teachers. \*Ananda Marga Primary School - located in A'nanda Kaustubha' Master unit. The principal of the school is Didi Ananda Hitavrata. The school has 300 students and there is also a children’s

home associated with the school. \*Ananda Marga Primary School in Hitoda - The principal, Didi Ananda Radhika, attended the program. The school has 100 students. \*Ananda Marga Primary School, Sarlahi - The principal, Prabhat Kumar attended the program.





# NHE Workshop

## Neohumanist Education and a Resilient Society

Taipei, Taiwan, January, 2011

An NHE Workshop was conducted by Dada Shambhushivananda in Taipei Taiwan, January, 2011, which was attended by 15 persons. The theme of the workshop was: Neohumanist Education and a Resilient Society. Below is a summary of the presentation given by Dada Shambhushivananda during the workshop.

We live in challenging times. Society is in turmoil and nature is showing its fury. It is as if the ground under our feet itself is slipping away. These tumultuous and epochal developments on the planet raise a pertinent question: How to build a resilient society in the midst of uncertain times?

### **Life Divine is the Goal:**

Education lies at the core of social transformation. However, unless the education is neohumanist in nature, it is less likely to respond to the current challenges because the roots of present crisis lie in the lack of fuller understanding about the very purpose of human existence. It is for this reason that Shri P.R.Sarkar stated that: “Morality is the base, Intuition is the way and Life Divine is the goal of a human society.” When this goal is vividly recognized by one and all, it will become easier to solve the knotty problems facing the individual and collective bodies. A life divine will inspire a path of benevolence, universalism-centered policies and a life style beyond ego and self-interest. Neohumanist Education affirms that the purpose of life and education is liberation from all bondage: physical, mental and spiritual.

### **Awakened Conscience- the path:**

Intuition practice is the modus-operandi to raise our awakened conscience. It can provide us the stillness of mind to discriminate between good and bad, proper and improper, between right and wrong, between selfishness and selflessness. NHE puts “Awakened Conscience” at the very core of its philosophy, principles and methods. Reflection based on rationality and love lie at the core of principles of NHE. The success of NHE also will have to be measured through the filter of moral sense and unbounded compassion & love. Educational process will depend on who is being taught, what is being taught and where or to whom? Yet, the fundamental principles of NHE will continue to draw their inspiration from the path of awakened conscience.

### **Bio-Psychology and Methods of NHE:**

The approach of NHE recognizes that humans are mental beings and possess unique temperament and capabilities. The strength of NHE derives from a broader recognition of the importance of applied psychology in dealing with the task of educational process. The methods of NHE must also therefore utilize the bio-psychological differences among different human beings. Unless this is done, the entire investment in educational infrastructures will end up as waste of precious time and resources. NHE shifts the focus from past to now and future; from material to material and immaterial; from mundane to supra-mundane and spiritual; from 'I' to “I and us”. Let the future of all beings be important and NHE can aid the life-style & behaviour modification revolution in order to achieve the goal of a resilient mind and a resilient society.





# Holistic Self-Development for Teachers

Based on a workshop given at the Teacher Training Program at  
Zonnelicht School, March 2011 by Didi A. Devapriya

Have you ever had one of those days when your computer crashes while in the midst of a project you have been working on for two hours without saving it? Next, the phone rings and you find out that the car repair is going to cost you twice as much as you calculated, and it won't be ready for another two days. You look at your watch, and realize you should have left for work ten minutes ago. Your phone rings again as you are hurriedly getting together your things, and your well-meaning friend gets a short, grumpy growl to call back later....

Everyone has a certain window of stress tolerance. When stress stays within that range – we are able to manage it with flexibility, creativity and a sense of humor. In fact, certain types of stress can be positively perceived as an interesting challenge, and can be quite exhilarating. Modern brain science calls this relaxed, calm, rational state in which we are master of our emotions a “regulated” state.

However, we also all have our limits – and when stress overwhelms our threshold of tolerance, we enter into “dysregulation”. This is the “stressed-out” state in which we become irritable, reactive and hostile or depressed, sad and withdrawn. Our emotional brain takes over – and we have greatly reduced access to memory and higher cognitive faculties, as its main functions are “fight, flight, or freeze.”

The ability to return to a regulated state after a dysregulating experience is called “self-regulation”. This is an increasingly vital skill for modern life and an essential one for effective Neohumanist teachers. As teachers, we experience our own emotional state mirrored in the children we work with. A teacher arriving at work after the experience described above, who has not tried to consciously self-regulate herself, will probably find her children particularly agitated that day, and her stress will continue to snow-ball. So how to return to balance, in the midst of spiraling stress?

It starts with breathing. Breathing slowly and deeply relaxes and harmonizes our entire physiological state. Deep breathing has the ability to “turn off” our stress response system, and trigger the parasympathetic nervous system – our relaxation response. It massages the knots that form in our heart and gut area and helps them to dissolve. The beautiful thing about breathing is that you can practice it anywhere, anytime. However, it can be particularly helpful to take a walk outside in the fresh air, and focus your attention outside of your stress, taking notice of the clouds, the sunlight filtering through leaves, the wind ruffling the grass.

Empathetic connection with another human being can be a true gift when in the midst of stress, if the person is able to listen and offer warm support without getting tangled up in your stressful story. A calm, positive, regulated person can soothe a dysregulated one, and this is also true in working with children – in order to help children to regulate – the soothing influence of a calm, regulated adult is an enormous aid. However, such external help is not always available to us, thus, it is important to develop self-sufficient methods to return to balance.

Yoga asanas have many benefits, but one of their main effects is that they work directly on our hormonal system. If practiced occasionally, an enjoyable, relaxed state will be felt immediately after practice. However, if asanas are practiced on a regular, ongoing basis, and especially if they have been fine-tuned to your individual needs by an acarya (spiritual teacher), your hormonal chemistry will alter, and gradually you will find yourself much less easily disturbed by external factors, and able to remain in a balanced, calm state even in the midst of stress.

Similarly, spiritual practice and meditation have many wonderful benefits, and a person who is grounded in their meditation practice will have a much greater “window of stress tolerance” than others. This is not only due to the relaxing components of meditation, such as deep breathing and withdrawing the mind from

distractions, but also due to the focus on a positive, spiritual thought. This practice of positive thinking helps one to “reframe” stressful experiences in a constructive way. It is often not events, but rather how we are interpreting those events, that upsets us. Though there are always many different interpretations for any given situation, the most relevant one for a Neohumanist, is the one that is able to give us a compassionate and constructive perspective. For example, a child refusing to eat her vegetables may be seen as defiant, testing our limits, manipulative or she may be seen as upset, overwhelmed, or even not feeling well. Our choice of interpretation will greatly influence how we will interact, and how we will be perceived by the child.

However, self-regulation is only one of the steps in holistic self-development for Neohumanist teachers. It is a fundamental step – because without the ability to self-regulate, it is very difficult to access the subtler layers of the mind. When our mind is in a stressful, reactive, emotional state, it tends to be functioning mainly out of “kamamaya kosa”, or our desire-mind. This is the part of the mind that is tamed by applying our own personal code of ethics. It is a gateway to the deeper potentials of our being.

I recently developed the following chart as a tool to help teachers think holistically about their own process of self-development. It is based on the layers of the mind model, and allows teachers to reflect on personal goals in each level of their being. It also gives Neohumanist directors a valuable tool to engage with staff in a deeper way. We used it in individual staff meetings, and it gave me a much greater appreciation for the spiritual beauty and fullness of each person’s being, as our usual interactions do not always give the space for deeper aspects to be revealed. The teachers also found it quite practical and helpful, even if several were more used to focusing on others, than on themselves.

In the recent Holland ETC, teachers spent time filling out the chart, and then placed it in a sealed envelopes. They then wrote their name and a date on it. The school director then collected the envelopes and will give them back to each person on the date they wrote – a sort of gift to themselves in the future to see their own progress.

“As you think, so you become”, is one of the fundamental truths underpinning Neohumanist philosophy. The very act of setting goals already helps us to move towards them. It is often quite amazing to re-read goals set months before that have dropped out of conscious awareness, and yet have been since realized, due to the momentum set up in the planning process. I hope that this tool can be useful for your own journey and encourage you to consider posting it to your future self, or sharing it with your Neohumanist director!

## Using Layers of Mind for Personal Self- Development

Dimensions of Consciousness	How to develop it?	Questions	Examples	Personal Goals for 2011
Body	Physical development (diet, movement, exercise, yoga asanas,)	What do I want to do to take care of my health? Do I need to focus on curing any particular physical problem?	Healthy balanced alkaline diet; drinking water; eating some raw foods + yogurt daily; sufficient sleep and rest; curing physical problems; sports, dance, running, walking, martial arts; asanas; time in nature, sunlight, air	
Desire Mind	Development of self-discipline, will power and self-restraint through a personal ethical code (such as Yama and	How would I like to improve my self-discipline and strengthen my will power? What area of Yama and Niyama would I like to focus on? How can I make	Time in nature; practicing silence and mindfulness; fasting; Yama +Niyama; 15 shiilas; communication skills; team-building skills; conflict resolution skills; practicing time management and organizing skills; taking personal	

Dimensions of Consciousness	How to develop it?	Questions	Examples	Personal Goals for 2011
	Niyama) <sup>1</sup>	the world around me better?	responsibility towards making the world around you better;	
Reflective Mind	Intellectual development  Intellectual development (continued)	What is something new I would like to learn? In what areas do I want to deepen my knowledge and skills?	taking courses; self-study; professional development; reading; researching; puzzles, mathematics or problem solving; constructive debate and discussion; critical thinking;	
Creative Mind	Development of creative expression, aesthetic awareness and imagination	How do I want to express myself creatively? What things help me enter into a deep creative flow, where I forget time and feel connected to something bigger than my ordinary self? What is a symbol or metaphor that is meaningful to me?	Entering a focused “flow” (even in sports), metaphoric thinking; reflecting on symbols and archetypes; painting, drawing, sculpting, singing, expressive dance or movement; practising creative visualization; playing an instrument; visiting museums, concerts, expositions, galleries, theater; reading poetry and good literature; developing artistic taste and discrimination; avoiding pseudo-culture;	
Intuitive Mind	Development of self awareness, spiritual discrimination, conscience, expressing service spirit, intuition	How can I listen to my inner voice? How can I differentiate it from the voice of my ego? How can I develop my ability to see the positive meaning in everything around me? What are my opportunities to help others and practice a spiritual perspective?	Breath awareness, deep contemplation, mindfulness, questioning “who am I?”, searching for the positive in every situation, developing the feeling of serving Spirit while serving others; mentoring others; listening and connecting through empathy and intuition; listening to your conscience; discriminating between ego/ spirit; practising positive thinking + affirmations	
Sublime Mind	Spiritual development	How can I experience spiritual bliss?	Meditation, spiritual contemplation or prayer; expressing spiritual devotion through songs, poetry, movement; reading spiritual poetry and stories about spiritually elevated people; discussing your spiritual growth with a mentor, creating space for spirituality in your life; attending spiritual gatherings or retreats	

<sup>1</sup> Ten universal cardinal human values;’ principles for relating to society (yama) and principles for personal integration (niyama)



# And then there was chanting....

## or How to Introduce Chanting & Kiirtan to Staff

By Mahajyoti Glassman

In general chanting is simply the rhythmic speaking or singing of words or sounds. Chanting can include mantra as well as other meaningful sounds from other languages. Chants may range from a simple melody involving a limited set of notes to highly complex musical structures, often including sometime lengthy repetition. In the Middle Ages some chants evolved into song, such as the Gregorian chant.

Chanting a mantra, sacred text, name of God, or other words is a commonly used practice. Many spiritual traditions consider chanting a tool to spiritual development. There are diverse examples of chanting around the world: in Africa, Gregorian, Vedic chant, Jewish chanting of Hebrew texts, Qur'an reading, Baha'i chants, various Buddhist chants, different mantras, Roman Catholic chanting of psalms and prayers, and so forth. Various Hindus and Buddhists chant Om. Followers of Islam chant the 99 names of Allah, "the beautiful names". Around the seventh century Christian developed the "Jesus Prayer" or "Lord, Jesus Christ, Song of God, have mercy on me." Native Americans also observe chanting in preparation for activities and ceremonies such as healing, hunting, battles, controlling weather, initiation rites and funerals.

Today chants are used in a variety of recreation settings, such sports events, battle cries on ancient battlefields, protesters championing a cause, auctioneers driving the price, jumping rope, and music concerts. In some many cases the chanting creates a feeling of passion and collective connection of purpose.

The ancient practice of chanting can be performed with the accompaniment of drumming, hand-clapping, rattles and other musical instruments with the continuous recitation of mantras or other sounds. There are no hard-and-fast rules for chanting. The most wonderful thing about chanting is that one may chant anywhere -- at home, at work, driving in the car, or riding the subway -- any time.

There are two basic types of chanting. Personal chanting where one chants alone, called japa. When one chants in a collective setting with others, this is called kiirtana. Kiirtana is usually accompanied by musical instruments and clapping. Both forms of chanting are recommended and beneficial.

### What is mantra?

Mantra is the transformation of breath into sound. The sound may be a syllable or group of words that with rhythmic breathing and repetition can clear the mind of debris and bring it into focus. Many consider mantra to

be a sacred thought or prayer to be repeated with the full understanding of its meaning.

The science of mantra is based on the idea that sound is a form of energy that has a definite predictable effect on the body/mind. Mantras have the ability to alter defective patterns of the mind as well as the actual chemistry of the brain. The power of the mantra is in the vibration of its sound/s.

Mantras may be chanted internally or externally. It is a formula for controlling and directing the mind in a more positive and ever-expanding way. This science acknowledges that emotions, feelings, and beliefs are vibratory in nature. We can choose the vibrations that define who we are, what we want to feel and believe. We have the power to select the thoughts that occupy the brain.

### How and why does it affect us?

Chants, songs, and mantras can provide "technical support" in directing the mind toward a goal. Through this practice we are choosing the positive power that certain syllables evoke. The effect of the sounds corresponds with the degree to which the practitioner feels or understands the meaning of the sounds. Although some benefit can be derived whether the meaning is understood or not.

Many mantras are derived from the Sanskrit language. This Sanskrit alphabet is based on the inner sounds emanating from within the body, specifically from the 50 glands clustered around the chakras. Advanced meditators attuned their minds to these inner sounds and each one of these sounds became one letter. There are 50 glands and subsequently 50 letters in the Sanskrit alphabet. So the Sanskrit language is the human body's eternal song. The careful combination of Sanskrit letters can vibrate these glands and the mind in a specific manner, creating a powerful elevating effect on the mind.

*If you want the truth, I'll tell you the truth,  
Listen to the secret sound which is inside you.  
The One no one talks of speaks the secret sounds to  
Himself  
And He is the One who has made it all. – Kabir song*

### Chanting with Very Young Children

With the young child chanting may be with words and/or sounds that have meaning or no meaning, simply because they like to explore sound. They may/should engage their mouths, hands, feet, and body. They can stand, sit, dance, or jump when repeating.

The following are some chanting ideas:

The vowels: Ahhhhh. AAAAA. EEEEE.

IIIIII. OOOOO. UUUUU.

Consonants: MMMMM. SSSSS.

Om.

Shanti. (Peace)

Om shanti.

Om shanti shanti shanti.

Om Jyoti. (Light)

Shalom. (Peace)

Baba Nam Kevalam. (Love is all there is)

Love is above me. Love is below me. Love is all around.

Children love moving their hands: clapping, holding Jnani mudra, Anjali mudra, making other hand/arm movements over the head, behind the back, holding hands, clapping partner's hands, clapping body parts, etc. Coincidentally this also goes for the feet, such as stomping or dancing. They may chant/sing together or do a copy cat, call response. Chants may be sung loudly, softly, with a whisper, with only the lips moving, inside.

### The Uses of Chanting

Chanting may be practiced at any time during a class. It is a great opener and closer, but one may break out in a chant at any moment.

Teachers may facilitate discussions with children about when they would like to chant. Chanting can, of course, be performed any time of the day, but is especially useful when emotionally challenged. ....at night in bed, when trying something new, when someone grabbed your toy out of your hand, when someone gets in front of you in line.... When one is experiencing stressful situations such as when one is scared, unsure about something, crying, sad, frustrated, disappointed, and mad. What other situations call for chanting?

Chanting is one method for regaining and maintaining peace during stressful times. When we are feeling stress, a few moments of chanting (either internal or external) can clear away the dusty negative thoughts that obstruct our connection to our Inner Teacher. When lying down to sleep, mantra repetition can calm the mind/brain, giving the body permission to relax. When sad or frustrated, it can uplift the emotion and refocus the attention toward the positive.

When the mind is calm and clear, we make the best decisions for the well-being of all. The mental equipoise in our mind/body influences others' feelings of peace and harmony. Our positive kind words and actions bless ourselves, because we feel good in the process of positive thought and action, and have the potential to touch all around us. This is how we make the world a better place.

*You know that the science of aesthetics is a special characteristic expression of all microcosms in the entire universe, not only of humans but of all living creatures. This inner spirit of aesthetic science leads all the microcosms to seek a congenial environment for their psychic expression, for all unit minds are searching for a totally congenial environment for their development. This development leads to a state of psychic balance, attained as the results of all one's actions and reactions. While seeking to attain this state of psychic balance, human beings invented the science of aesthetics.*

*Everything in this universe of ours is moving, and this entire universe also is moving around the Macrocosmic Nucleus. This movement is from imperfection to perfection, and this element of dynamism is the essence of aesthetics. While trying to analyze the nature of this dynamism, one is bound to conclude that aesthetics is surely a science, for it moves according to fixed and self-created rules. But the realization of aesthetic feeling is not a science, rather it is a high-grade art. I said just now that this aesthetic science is not only a characteristic of the human mind, but of all living creatures as well. When we say that human beings have attained peace in life, what are the dimensions of this peace? When we say that we are all seeking a peaceful environment, what does it mean? Is it some kind of physical relaxation? No, certainly not. If so, then that relaxation would be physico-psychic, but the subtle feeling of joy in aesthetic science is psycho-physical. Now the question is, is this joy only psycho-physical? No, it is not: it is both psycho-physical and psycho-spiritual. When the mind seeks a subtle feeling of joy without expecting the fruits of its action, this is certainly psycho-physical, but when this experience of joy moves in a well-defined way towards a goal then it is certainly psycho-spiritual.*

*Shrii P. R. Sarkar, from "Heterogeneity in Aesthetics", Published in: A Few Problems Solved Part 5*

# The Role of Competition and Culture in our Education Systems

By Kate Ericksen

Recently, I watched a video on YouTube<sup>1</sup> showing 5 North Korean kindergarten children playing classical guitar together. They were playing them like pros with (dare I say it) plastic smiles and synchronized turning on their chairs. The performance was very polished and I watched with both a sense of awe and disbelief. I was wondering if the footage was really genuine, as it just did not seem possible that such young children could be playing such complicated classical guitar with such flourish and perfection.

However, what I found even more interesting was to read though the comments that people had written below the video. This video definitely sparked a powerful trigger with many people around the world and some rather heated arguments and discussions ensued. They ranged from awe and admiration, to disgust at how the parents must have pushed them so much, to a criticism of communist state education, which doesn't allow children to experience childhood. A grown-up child performer wrote, who had been forced to practice for hours a day on the guitar, talking about how he would have bleeding hands, and the sacrifice that this required. Others admired the development of the brain which would have occurred due to this musical training and wished that in their culture, they took education as seriously as in Asia. These viewers' comments echoed many of the sentiments that have passed through my head in the last few days, as I reflected upon a performance that I took part in judging recently in a school in the Philippines.

My purpose in writing this article is to explore the issues that surround competition in schools, across cultures and to reflect on whether the inclusion of competition at a young age encourages healthy development and promotes our neo-humanistic vision, or whether it goes ultravires to it. I will look at how cultural perceptions influence the way in which schools function and how we can encourage more "buy in" by staff at our schools to truly model the values we say we teach, of which our views on competition are one such value.

## Competition and Education

Competition is considered by many as healthy, a fact of life, and is an implicit part of education, in which grades are regularly assigned and students ranked against each other in class reports in many countries. We are all subjected to competition when we enter the workforce – competing against others to win the job, so the earlier we are exposed to it, the reasoning seems to go, the better prepared we will be to meet the challenges it poses.

Thus, we should learn how to deal with disappointment – a natural consequence of competition – since there is only ever one winner and many losers.

As a classroom teacher, I have observed how having an element of competition in certain activities definitely does enhance interest and concentration. It seems a natural element in growing up, for example children regularly organize their own informal competitions at home, from simple activities, like who can make their ice-cream last the longest, to who can get the ball into the basket the most times.

Kids love guessing games, and I regularly employ “breathers” during formal lessons, in which we hold silly competitions to re-energise the class and provide a break from the challenges of academics. I wonder though how to tailor programs so that “healthy” competition does not become unhealthy. Where do you draw the line? How do you create competitions that encourage and motivate students, yet do not mean that some students' self esteem will be damaged? What role would the assessment systems in a true neo-humanist school have on student self esteem and willingness to participate and learn? How, as neo-humanist educators, do we reflect our values in the different cultures in which we run our classes and schools?

Education theorists do not agree on whether competitive desires should be encouraged or constrained. One theory claims that, since competition is part of every culture and since education should transmit culture, it is necessary to incorporate competition into education to help children get used to it in later life. Another theory views competition as opposed to collaboration and, therefore, as an evil element in culture that should be curtailed. At school this often results in an ambiguous attitude towards competition, which confuses students, who will then try to compete successfully without making it appear they compete.

*“It may help to distinguish two views of competition. In one view, all other competitors are perceived as the focus of competition; they need to be defeated. In the second view, the focus is oneself or some external entity (such as the clock or a mathematical problem). The latter view is more conducive to teamwork, which has become even more important in modern society.” [my emphasis][i]*

School counselors invariably are against the absurdity of some of the competitiveness that occurs in schools, because they have to deal with the fallout - distraught students whose hopes have been dashed, those who can't

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<sup>1</sup> (<http://tinyurl.com/68qxrmr>)



face their peers or teachers after being judged negatively, and those who become suicidal due to extreme pressures of competition – a well-known side effect of the stringent Japanese education system.

As part of a two year enquiry led by Cambridge University, British educators are now recognizing the damaging effects of competition on children's education, especially in the primary years. The study revealed that rewards for good grades have a negative impact and suggests that teachers should praise "effort" instead of success. Children who believe that their intelligence is fixed are less likely to make an effort to learn, whereas those who believe that their intelligence can grow will try harder. They found that "offering rewards on a competitive basis" affected pupils' perception of their classmates. Shy children often became "increasingly quiet or subdued" or were reduced to "passive scribes of a dominant child's ideas".[ii]

Many of the comments related to the Korean children's performance referred to earlier, reflected the cultural bias of those from different education systems and their concept of a "proper" childhood. As our AMSAI schools are often run by international personnel, we have the benefit of looking at things from a different perspective to the local culture, but we also need to maintain a balanced view and remember that every culture has both positive and negative aspects, including our own "home" culture. How do we sieve out and use the different positive aspects of both to enhance our curriculums and systems of school management, whilst reducing the negative ones? How do we influence the teachers' styles of teaching to reflect these values? If our teachers don't understand our values or don't place importance on them, what do we do?

### **Education reflects the culture of society in its current evolution**

The most memorable education paper I read at the University talked about the development of the concept of childhood as being only a very recent phenomenon. Prior to about 1850, children in the Western world were viewed as tiny adults, who were expected to undertake the same responsibilities and tasks as adults, albeit imperfectly, due to their undeveloped physical structures – thus earning them repeated beatings and scoldings. Child labour was the norm and "education" was the domain of rich children who received private tuition from hired subject tutors and governesses.

This system is still the norm in many "undeveloped" countries of the world today, where older girls do not attend school, or attend intermittently, because their main responsibility is to assist the mother in the raising of younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, feeding and caring for sick infants etc. Boys may be expected to help out in the farm instead of going to school, or be withdrawn from school at key times in the agricultural calendar to help the father, or as an apprentice in his chosen profession. A child (and subsequently a teacher)

raised in this type of world is going to have quite a different set of values and expectations than those of a child raised in a society which views childhood as a prolonged period of dependency and the opportunity to "have fun" without worrying about livelihood, where children are raised on a diet of TV, computer games and out of school hobbies are encouraged. (The teachers whom I worked with in Ghana did not understand the word "hobbies" and what it implied).

Only in the last two hundred years, since the Industrial Revolution, has formal education become the domain of the common person. With the rise of factories, there arose a system of "factory" education in which students are mass produced, much like material commodities. Our schooling systems today reflect this global emphasis on capitalism, competition and materialism – the ostensible aim is to produce happy and balanced children who will slot into the workforce with a minimum of effort from employers. Needs should meet the demand. When there is a gap between the two, then the education system must change to accommodate this. Verhoef, author of an interesting article on the different types of competitions included in educational practise explains further:

*"As the demands on a society change, its culture changes, and consequently also its educational practices must change. Though difficult to understand in detail, this process of change appears to be a never-ending, self-propelling cycle. In order for a system with feedback to be stable, the response to change must be delayed. Education, therefore, always seems too late in its adjustment. Currently, the knowledge and skills to survive in what has become known as the information society are being incorporated."*[iii]

### **School driven missions and objectives**

The public school in New Zealand, where I have worked for the last few years, last year undertook professional training in a program called PB4L – Positive Behaviour for Learning. This program has been used successfully in difficult and low socio-economic schools in Australia, US and around the world. Part of this program meant the school had to go through considerable consultation processes with parents, teachers and children to identify those core values felt to be important by the community. Once identified, then it is the role of teachers to transmit them and make students very conscious of them. Parents are expected to follow up on this back home too.

We came up with the "3 B's" – Be respectful, Be responsible, Be safe. It was important that the values were simple and easy to remember. This then meant that we looked at ways in which we could promote this message. Certificates are now issued on a weekly basis at school assemblies to those students who display these core values. Students who display these values at lunchtime have their names put in a raffle which is drawn at each weekly assembly, of which prizes include educational books. Lessons in social graces and being a helpful citizen were designed during staff training

sessions, where we broke into different groups and looked at different behaviours we wished to see our students modeling. These behaviours (such as sitting whilst eating or standing in a line before moving quietly through the school) were then explicitly taught, rather than students being expected to learn them through osmosis.

How does this relate to competition in schools? For me, it shows that it is important to take the time to sit down with teachers and stakeholders at the school to really identify those values which we deem to be important, and to then use these as a guide against which to judge the various programs we implement across the school. Having all people contributing in the process means that those initiatives will then be taken on board by more people, rather than it just being a decree that comes down from management. So – the values in a Neo-Humanist school are intricately linked with Yama and Niyama. What about actually looking at our school programs in the light of two or three of these principles and really reflecting on and thinking deeply about what we are doing. I mean a deep reflection, not a superficial one. If you were to choose three values, what would they be? Would “be respectful” then influence your policies on competition? How?

Despite groaning about it at times, it has meant that head teachers have been provided with a clear insight into how to guide the teams of teachers beneath them in the implementation of these values. Many insightful discussions amongst teachers have been initiated and plans of action formed, which I would say deeply reflected neo-humanist values and a respect and empathy for the students in their care. It has altered the way that we run sports competitions at our school and infiltrates every aspect of the school programs and systems that are put in place. It affects the way a teacher sets up her classroom, and the way that problems are dealt with between students when they are encountered.

### Shrii PR Sarkar on Competition

What does the founder of Neohumanist Education have to say about the role of competition in education? When I questioned the benevolence of competition, I was told by some that Shrii PR Sarkar was very much pro-competition. I came across this quote early on in my research on competition amongst Sarkar’s extensive writing:

*“Kaos’ikii [a yogic dance for physical health] is beneficial for both men and women. Competition in tándava [men’s yogic dance] and kaos’ikii is very good and encouraging. I strongly support it. There should be competitions wherever there are Ananda Margiis [practitioners of a specific system of yoga and meditation]. There should be competitions even where there are no Ananda Margis. There is no harm in it; rather it is beneficial in all respects.” [iv]*

I understand this quote to relate directly to the performance of kaoshikii and tandava competitions, not

as a blanket statement about the beneficial nature of competitions across all areas. It is this quote however, which I suspect is being referred to, when I am told that Shrii PR Sarkar approved of competitions. If the last two sentences are taken out of context, then certainly, it would seem that he approved of all types of competition.

I delved deeper to see if I could find other statements, which would either support the assumption that all competitions are beneficial, or whether it is relating to purely tandava and kaoshiki. This is what I came across:

*“...to bring about the real well-being of humanity, greater attention has to be paid to the psychic and intellectual expressions of human beings, for that will lead to perfect spiritual composure and all-round fulfilment in human life. Competition in the realm of physical pabula may bring satisfaction in material enjoyment, but it leads human beings far, far away from inner tranquility.” [v]*

So, in this quote Shrii PR Sarkar is saying that competition may bring about material benefits, as economists have proven to be true, and winners of Olympic medals, may vouch for this too - but for those trying to develop “perfect spiritual composure” and “inner tranquility” it will lead them far away. This then, seems to be key to our education system— where greater attention has to be “paid to the psychic and intellection expressions of human being.” This would then imply that we should carefully look at the types of competition we encourage in our schools, and gear them more towards competition to better one’s own performance rather than against another child.

In conclusion, I would encourage directors of our neohumanist schools across the globe to initiate discussions with their staff, in which they were not preaching at them and trying to change them, but rather recognizing them as fellow travelers on the path to realization. Take the time to seek their valuable opinions and expertise in the culture in which they are teaching. Together plan or alter programs to fit in alignment with a set of shared values which is co-created by all stakeholders in the school, and which then become part of the school’s motto and is displayed visibly around the school.

As both an educator and a spiritual aspirant, it is valuable to take time out to reflect on our actions and systems and how they either nurture or conflict with the values we say we espouse. By promoting the type of competition which focuses on improved self-performance, rather than against a competitor, it actually encourages collaboration and co-operative learning, which are surely aspirations for our neo-humanist schools.

[i] Dr Tom Verhoff The Role of Competitions in Education, 1997 - <http://olympiads.win.tue.nl/loi/loi97/ffutwrlld/competit.html>

[ii] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1572532/Studies-fault-competition-in-primary-schools.html>

[iii] Dr Tom Verhoff The Role of Competitions in Education, 1997

[iv] PR Sarkar, “Tandava and Kaoshikii” - The Awakening of Women [a compilation]

[v] PR Sarkar, Ananda Vanii - Ananda Púrnimá 1989

# Ten Teaching Strategies for Transformation

By Tony Palmieri

No matter *what* we are teaching, we can employ neohumanistic strategies that address *how* we are teaching it, which can make teaching that subject, no matter how mundane, transformative! Let's discuss each of those strategies.

## 1. Joyously Pursuing Activities of Interest

Since liberation and freedom from physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual bondage is our Mission, education must facilitate freedom.

Maria Montessori believed no one can be free unless he is independent. The learner will progress from a stage of dependence to independence and from independence to interdependence. As the learner moves along this continuum, inner feelings of joy and bliss increase. This bliss is of a permanent nature, whereas pleasure is a fleeting emotion always balanced by corresponding pain. To facilitate freedom, the learner should be encouraged to joyously pursue areas of special interest to him.

Educational research shows that learners tend to pursue learning activities of special interest to them, and this optimizes educational benefits to the learner. Intelligence theory asserts that each of us has multiple intelligences – kinesthetic, linguistic, spatial, musical, mathematical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, among perhaps others. We tend to have more of an interest in some intelligence area(s) than others, and will usually be more apt to pursue those areas of interest. The interesting point is learners generally benefit more by pursuing intelligences they are already “strong” in, rather than focusing on developing areas they have less aptitude in.

Traditional ideas have asserted that we must give instruction in areas where the learner is “weak” and needs further development. Since it is a natural tendency for the learner to avoid these “weak” areas and pursue areas of interest instead, it is necessary to impose external motivations and/or punishments to coerce the learner to learn. Not so. By facilitating the learner to pursue areas of special interest, there is little need to coerce and motivate the learner externally. The learner is internally drawn to these areas. The learner is “following his bliss.” Learning is not only maximized, but it is joyful.

Therefore, a classroom environment should facilitate the pursuit of areas of special interest. It should help the learner to follow his bliss. It is quite natural and healthy for a learner to pursue an activity repeatedly, and the learning environment should facilitate this. Another reason for facilitating the opportunity to pursue areas of interest is that it allows the learner to make choices, rather than have choices imposed.

The mind of the child in particular is inclined towards play and games. Engaging in play and games is more than just a diversion. It brings joy and bliss to the learner, and thus creates an ideal environment within the

mind of the learner whereby learning effortlessly flows. Shrii P.R. Sarkar has commented frequently about the importance of Games and Stories in education.

## 2. Purposeful Movement

Having noted that the learners seek to pursue activities of interest, we can refine what qualities these activities should possess. It is best when an activity involves the hands and the body, especially for younger children. Even abstract thinking can be expressed through the hands by drawing a picture, through the vocal cords by speaking it, through the limbs by signing it (sign language) or dancing it. While joyous vocals, subtle mudras (dance movements), and uplifting instrumentals are wonderful by themselves, when combined they became truly inspirational. In this way, the physical, the emotional, the mental, and the spiritual are better integrated. So if a young child performs an activity, the whole range of movement from locating the activity, picking it up, transporting it to the floor or to the table, setting the components of the activity out, executing the activity, cleaning up the activity, and putting the activity away all constitute additional beneficial movement.

Not only does all of this create additional movement, it creates *Purposeful* movement. The activity should fulfill some purpose. This purpose might entail:

- Care of Self – the child brushes his teeth after eating. A teenager takes up bodybuilding to increase his fitness
- Care of the Environment – the child gets a mop and mops the floor, or places his banana peels into the compost bin
- Yoga can be seen as purposeful movement of the body to balance energy flows and meditation as purposeful movement of the mental waves.

## 3. Making Choices

With a myriad of activities hopefully available to the learner seeking to follow their bliss and engage in purposeful activity, they will be required to make choices. This allows them to pursue areas and activities of interest to them. It gives them a chance to be proactive rather than reactive. By being proactive and taking responsibility for their choices, the will and self-discipline are exercised, and thereby developed. So the opportunity to make choices fosters not only independence, but self-discipline as well. Independence and self-discipline are intertwined, and developing one develops the other. Self-discipline is an essential trait for ethical and spiritual development, and one of the best ways to develop it is through encouraging an individual to make choices.

The learner should be accountable for those choices. All choices have consequences. If Michael chooses to bully



the other boys in his class, he will only succeed in making himself feel worse. A learning environment can be structured that puts limits on choices, while still encouraging them. Scissors are freely encouraged to be used, but only if the students walk when carrying them.

The environment can also be structured so that each of the choices is a “positive” choice, and any “negative” choice does not even exist within that environment. Scissors are present in the classroom, even cutting knives, but switchblades are not. When this is not possible, instructions or ground rules will be laid whereby a particular activity or behavior is not an option because it may be a threat to the individual, others, or to the environment. The rationale for the ground rule is not to constrain choice, but to facilitate the welfare of the individual and the collective. Choices that do harm to self, to others, or to the environment are not permitted within that learning environment, and these activities are either removed from the environment, or not permitted within the environment. At a young age, these ground rules will usually be simply accepted as coming from a greater authority. As the learner gets older, they will approve of the rules, and when they are still older, they can assist in formulating and enforcing the rules themselves.

#### 4. Solving Problems

Educational activities are themselves problems to be solved. How to pour beans from one glass to another is a problem, as is how to write a program to respond to emails. A child should be motivated to read in order to solve a problem. Ideally they are surrounded by beautiful books, and teachers joyfully read to the children regularly. The problem for the child is “how do I recreate this joyous experience of reading for myself?” The answer of course is by learning how to read. This also answers the question of *how* best to get children to read: by making the experience of being read to a wondrous and joyful one! Then, independently chosen activities that develop reading proficiency will be joyfully pursued by the children. They will also welcome group reading activities they are invited to join.

Trying to solve a problem starts with hope, hope expands into intention, and intention grows into striving for mastery and self-completion.

*“Fullfillment comes most frequently in self-discipline and self-mastery in service to others.” Patrice O’Neil Maynard*

Problem solving and completing tasks is also a way of developing the will. Will is essential so that the child not only learns, but has a desire and a capability to actually use that knowledge in a purposeful manner.

#### 5. Teacher Example

Students will model their behavior and beliefs upon the teacher. For example, a teacher was demonstrating an activity to a three year old girl, and while demonstrating the activity, the teacher swept her hair behind her head several times. The child watched intently, and then did the activity on her own. While doing the activity, the

child would repeatedly take her hair and sweep it behind her head. It is not what we say but what we do. There is the story of a woman who takes her son to the doctor an hour away by foot. When they finally reach there, the doctor asks them to come back next week. They return the following week, once again walking for an hour. The doctor sees the boy and tells him he must stop eating sugar. The mother is very indignant, “why did you not tell us this last week. You made us walk for an extra two hours.” The doctor replies, “know, but last week I was still eating sugar.”

If we want to teach the children to be self-realized it would be nice if the teacher is herself “self-realized,” but this is not possible. However, it is important for teachers to adhere to a strict ethical code, to understand what spirituality is, how to develop it, and for they themselves to be actively striving for self-realization. If the learner simply wants to learn say C+ programming language, then this requirement is not as essential, or maybe not important at all. That is up to the learner. But if the learner seeks more than just mere knowledge, and seeks a teacher who might be a mentor as well, the spiritual development of the teacher is invaluable.

#### 6. Surrounding Learner with Love and Beauty

The learning environment or classroom should manifest love and beauty. The most important aspect of any learning environment is the teacher, so the teacher should be an example of love and inner beauty. It is also valuable if the learning environment or classroom also has a vibe and an appearance of love and beauty. It may be the architecture of the school, the paintings in the classrooms, the school lunches on placemats in baskets, the beautiful materials and books attractively displayed. The observation of children joyfully interacting as a community of learners is a beautiful sight as well.

The classroom environment should help inspire and facilitate the child’s innate desire to learn, collaborate, and serve. Rituals whereby the teacher lovingly acknowledges and greets each child are invaluable. The children can also learn to acknowledge, greet, and interact with each other with the utmost courtesy and respect. This makes the classroom a place where both teacher and student *want* to be. With intention comes striving, and with striving comes transformation.

Waldorf classrooms put a great emphasis on classroom materials that add beauty and enchantment to the environment, be it gnomes, elves, teepees, hats, natural art materials, soothing pink walls, plenty of windows, low hidden spaces, niches, elaborate gardens, etc. The net effect is to facilitate a joyous sense of wonder or wonder. Children in Montessori classrooms are drawn to the classroom materials, which are finely constructed and themselves works of art.

#### 7. Developing Appreciation and Respect for Nature

This is a logical outgrowth of surrounding the child with love and beauty, and could be considered a part of that strategy, or a separate strategy onto itself as is done here.

What is to be gained by developing appreciation and respect for nature? When we develop respect for nature, we are really developing respect for ourselves. When we respect ourselves, then we can respect others and all living beings. We understand that nature is not something separate from us, but it is the matrix within which we live and breathe. We see how animals care for their young and we strive to care for our children with tenderness. We see the struggle animals undergo just to survive and we are grateful for our existence. We see how animals are dependent on their environment to survive, and we realize we are just as dependent. We observe the changing of the seasons and become aware of changes in ourselves. We feel the majesty and grandeur of nature stirring in our own hearts. We see the great heights of Himalayas and understand the meaning of persistence. We see the distant galaxies and glimpse the vastness of the universe. We study the eco-system in our backyard and understand the importance of communities. We study the interaction of pest and host and understand how we are all mutually dependent. We study the rain cycle and sense we are like drops of rain returning to the sea.

Nature provides us with the ultimate learning environment, if we will just observe it, appreciate it, respect it, and invite its many lessons and observations into our hearts and minds.

## **8. Affirmation of Learner's Innate Goodness and Creativity**

The enchanting beauty of the external environment mentioned previously will help affirm the child's recognition of his own inner beauty and goodness, and draw out his own inner creativity. It is from this internal space, reaching into the deep aesthetic and spiritual levels of mind, that creativity and inner enchantment emanates.

The teacher will also facilitate this by continually affirming the self-worth and inner beauty of each child. This may be done by conscious interaction, by a simple touch on the arm, by an empathetic glance, by a brief verbal encounter and an encouraging word, by repeating affirmations and mantras affirming peace and joy, by visualization of loved ones, through guided visualizations under the sea or galaxies far away, and through inner journey's to ones "quiet place."

An affirmation of the learners self worth will also come in less esoteric ways as well. Whenever a child completes an activity, the child will get a deep sense of inner satisfaction, and the teacher can reinforce this by simply restating something like "you finished that puzzle all by yourself and you never gave up. How does that make you feel?"

Suppose a child takes out a puzzle but can't complete it. How can the teacher acknowledge the success of the child? Perhaps the teacher can acknowledge that the child is striving to finish and making a great effort. That is the important fact anyway. Whether the child actually completes the puzzle is really inconsequential. What is

important is that the child is striving to complete it. Now what if the child is not even trying? That child may have an intention to finish the puzzle. That is usually a safe assumption. The teacher could acknowledge that the child really wants to complete the puzzle, and this would also be encouragement. The teacher might redirect the child to another activity more appropriate for this child's skill level, and do this without imparting any shame or guilt. What a wonderful and uplifting lesson for the child to learn. Indeed any scenario is an opportunity to inject encouragement, and still more encouragement. With all of this encouragement, the teacher should have little time for any threats of punishment, nor any wasteful displays of fear, guilt, shame, and discouragement that mark many classrooms. Furthermore, the teacher does not have to resort to motivating ploys, rewards, and other external carrots. The ultimate reward she can give to any child is to acknowledge the inner joy that child experiences from completing, or striving to complete, a purposeful activity. Secondly, the child reaffirms that the only true reward is always internal, and no external reward can take its place. Thus the child rejects the external rewards and gradually becomes more motivated by internal rewards.

By external rewards, I don't just mean cookies and gold stars. Grades and diplomas are the most ubiquitous external rewards, as is learning in hopes of landing an attractive job. We have wandered way off course, and must get back to the experience of learning being its own reward.

## **9. Affirmation of Cardinal Human Values and Hope**

It has often been said that the effort of self-completion is impossible without following a timeless and universal ethical code. Thus an essential strategy of NHE is to instruct why an ethical code is essential, why it offers freedom rather than constraint, why it is inviolate, why it is non-sectarian, what its principles are, and how it can be followed in everyday life. A learner can be encouraged to take oaths and make commitments that they agree to, repeating the oaths regularly to reaffirm these principles.

Some parents may feel teaching about ethics is akin to religion, and therefore inappropriate in a non-religious school environment, or that ethics and religion are best taught at home. The astute teacher will see this as a golden opportunity to ask what values the parents would like to see reinforced at school, and establish a dialogue, rather than get apprehensive. Stories like the Ramayana, Job in the Old Testament, or Siddhartha, give inspiration and hope that moral individuals may have to undergo many trials and tribulation, but will eventually emerge victorious. They provide spiritual sustenance to us all. Fairy tales provide similar benefits, and this is why children want to hear them over and over again.

## **10. Service to others**

It is not enough for the learner to become enlightened. He must utilize that wisdom in service to a greater cause, in service to other living beings. Knowledge is truly empowering when the learner feels compelled to use that knowledge to serve others, or share that knowledge with others. Only then does the knowledge itself become purposeful. A learner may be quite proficient in physics and splitting the atom. This

# Thoughts on Testing

By Eric Jacobson

You will not get an argument from me against the state tests. They are well-designed by dedicated and brilliant thinkers. They accurately measure a narrow sliver of academic proficiency, assuming the child being evaluated is giving full effort on a normal day.

Their importance and use, however, are entirely overdone. So, rather than serving as a help to children and educators, or a source of inspiration, they have become an obstacle and a source of boredom. In the quest for an enlightened education, the over-emphasis on testing has led us astray.

It can easily be argued that even the entire spectrum of intellectual ability constitutes only a small portion of human capability, and state tests only measure a fraction of that intellectual function. Brain research has shown that human intelligence is varied and complex, and that the human brain is constantly changing. Already nine distinct types of intelligence have been identified—abilities that lead to a variety of worthwhile accomplishments that enrich all our lives. Although state tests focus on a portion of linguistic and mathematical intelligence, they are being used as the report card for children and their schools. What are the dangers of this?

- \* -- Children who don't do well on the tests grow up feeling inadequate
- \* -- Schools don't get the scope to develop other forms of intelligence, in fact they fall into neglect as their importance is marginalized
- \* -- Children who do well on the tests may not develop other areas that need improvement
- \* -- Curriculum becomes skill oriented, boring, repetitive, drill-filled, and ultimately developmentally inappropriate
- \* -- Politicians and taxpayers evaluate the efficacy of school fund usage solely on this narrow slice on achievement
- \* -- The joy of, and desire for learning go under assault as scores take priority
- \* -- Teachers find their creativity and flexibility constrained
- \* -- Children learn a specific skill set for answering questions while failing to understand the subject matter fully
- \* -- Seemingly endless test preparation fails to develop the subtlety and nimbleness of mind required for real life problem solving

A fuller form assessment is necessary. Sure, linguistic and mathematical aptitudes are important indicators. But should interpersonal, spatial, kinesthetic, naturalist, existential, or other types of intelligence be ignored? Are these abilities not rewarded in life, not needed in the world?

What about the intangible qualities that propel people to great deeds and achievements? Qualities such as moral development, work habits, motivation, sense of purpose in life, service, broad mindedness, and rationality? Should our energies not go into the development of such qualities?

At Progressive School we believe that academic achievement is like the luggage in the car's trunk. To guarantee it gets to its destination, focus on the engine! The engine that drives achievement is motivation. Proper motivation can help one overcome all obstacles along the road. One of the greatest motivators is a feeling that one's talents are needed. How can that feeling be developed if we are defining human beings in such narrow terms?

Am I exaggerating? Recently, someone asked people to twitter a one word opposite to ~~inspiration~~. The second most frequent response was ~~school~~. Is this what our children feel? Is this what we want them to experience?

My conclusions? Tests are good. The use of them is not. Neither is the importance they have taken on. Assessment should include the current state tests, but only as a small piece in a larger mosaic. When we allow them to dominate as an assessment tool, they begin to drive curriculum. This causes us to lose sight of the big picture. In the end, both a good education and our children get shortchanged.

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profound knowledge could be used to cleanly power entire cities or to destroy them at the flick of a switch.

When we share what we know with others, it clarifies our own understanding of it, and magnifies our own proclivities towards pursuing it. We thus come away with a heightened understanding. On a practical level, having older children share their knowledge by instructing and mentoring younger children assists the older children even more than it does the younger children.

By serving others, the learner accelerates his speed and desire to know even more, as he realizes how this knowledge will be utilized for good purposes. Knowledge feeds the desire to serve others, and the service of others feeds the desire to learn still more. Service and knowledge thus drive each other.

Service to others is an important component of a universal ethical code, but when it comes to education, it is also the manifestation of altruism and knowledge uncovered. It is the culmination of leading an ethical and principled life. It is through wishing to serve others that education perpetuates itself.



# Circle of Love: An Instrument to Help Childhood Development

## An Experiment with Children from 2 to 4 years

By - Andressa Ayres Pelanda & Liana Perozzo dos Santos

### 1. Introduction

A deep and alarming deficiency in emotional intelligence is seen as one of the causes of the current world disorder, which also appears in the child's world. Signs of this crisis have become evident in the increasing problems of attention deficit, hyperactivity, and depression in children, violence among children and adolescents, and drug use starting in childhood.

Faced with a range of explicitly poor results, we see the need for major changes in education, since schools and homes have not been able to wisely solve the challenge of developing an "emotional education". In other words, education for guiding humanity towards a goal of life, taking emotional development into account, is lacking.

Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (1921 - 1990), Indian philosopher and spiritual master, used to say that the daily nourishment of our Spiritual Being is as important as the nourishment of our physical body. When we focus only on education in the physical and intellectual levels, we consequently limit our understanding of life and the multiplicity of our relationships. Understanding the unlimited, spiritual thirst of children, in particular, we increase the possibility of their having better personal balance and a higher purpose in life.

Thus, for children to have healthy and appropriate emotional development at school and, consequently, in social environments, positive interpersonal relationships should be established, including aspects such as acceptance and support, learning to collaborate and to live collectively in society, and to enjoy oneself and others. Based on this, education will be able to create in each individual child a feeling of love and unity with all beings [1].

#### 1.1 A new proposal in education

In this context, an important alternative today is Neohumanistic Education. Based on the philosophy of Neohumanism developed by Indian philosopher P. R. Sarkar, it is a balanced and harmonious synthesis which aims to help every child to develop his or her highest potential. Its basic principles are: to teach children to respect other people and themselves; to promote mental expansion; to develop the spirit of unity; to awaken universal love – a potential to love all forms of existence; to be based upon universal ethical concepts, like truth, love, simplicity and solidarity; and to emphasize the importance of relationship with nature [2].

Circle of Love, being mainly oriented to children in kindergarten, is a collective and playful activity that fits nicely in the Neohumanistic educational agenda. Integrating ancient wisdom with modern science, it offers a simple and effective program to build character, restore emotional balance, and strengthen emotional ties in order to help children to open their hearts. In a world threatened by destruction of all kinds, it is essential to achieve healthy living, mutual understanding, and universal peace.

The Circle of Love program has been formulated by psychologist, anthropologist, and yogic nun, Dr. Susan Andrews. She was born in the United States, but now she lives in São Paulo, Brazil, where she conducts various social service projects including running an Educational Center "Espaço CreSer".



### *From a small town in Brazil to an International Conference in Italy*

*We live in a small town in south of Brazil – Pontal do Paraná - where there are a lot of problems with drugs, violence between children and adolescents and absent parents and dysfunctional families. Inspired by the love that exists inside the kids, worried about the existing education system and noticing that Yoga is the best and most complete solution for humanity, we decided to do a post-graduate study on Pedagogic Yoga. We chose the practices of 'The Circle of Love' as our research theme. For 3 months, we went every morning to the Public Early Childhood Education Center 'Água Viva' to teach the Circle of Love curriculum to the children.*

*The good results of the Circle of Love on the children's behavior could already be noticed during the first days in all aspects evaluated. And this improvement was even better over time. Given these results, we could prove 'scientifically' the importance of affection and the encouragement of positive emotions in the school environment, making the ideals of the Circle of Love indispensable in early childhood education. The Circle of Love is an important educational tool for developing more humane, happier and healthier children with a feeling of unity and equality with all beings (Neohumanism), consequently, creating a better world!" We decided to spread the idea around the world and sent an abstract about our experience to the International Conference 'The Future of Education' ([http://www.pixel-online.net/edu\\_future/](http://www.pixel-online.net/edu_future/)) that will take the place in Florence, Italy, on June 2011. Our paper was accepted by the conference organizers and they also invited us for an oral presentation! Now, we are working to raise funds to be able to present our findings at the Conference. Below is the paper we submitted. <andressa.ap@gmail.com>.*

Circle of Love is also part of several kindergarten programs in Brazil and around the world [3]. It consists of a series of songs that speak about love, compassion, respect, joy and God, a “God” who has many names: Mother Nature, Mother Earth, Lord, Supreme Being, etc. The Circle also incorporates creative movements, psychomotor exercises (yoga for kids), visualization and stories, all to encourage in the children a sense of unity and empathy with the world around them. In this wave of affection, alternating exciting moments with reflective ones, the children can feel their loving connection to the Universe, with each other and with nature – all together encompassing a Large Family [4]. The epidemic that is spreading in our society is not only stress, but also the deep sense of loneliness, emphasizing the need for the power of love and empathy for the health and quality of life.

The Circle of Love is an activity guided by the principles of yoga as it deals with the whole child: mind, body, heart and spirit. It is a form of holistic education, which helps the child in the harmonious development of one’s body and emotional and mental skills for a healthy, integrated and happy human [5].

The yoga postures, also known as psychomotor exercises, included in the Circle of Love are practiced in a simple and smooth way, and even little kids can do them, preparing the body for an integrated development of intellect and feelings, harmonizing the secretions of the endocrine glands to balance the emotions. Besides that, these exercises contribute towards flexible joints, massage the internal organs, stimulate circulation, and channelize the nervous energy of children, making them calmer and focused, even those considered hyperactive [4].

Another important aspect of the Circle of Love is meditation. When practiced regularly, it activates new areas of the brain, helping to build the basis of mental focus and spiritual sensitivity. The meditation may offer new opportunities for development of hyperactive children or those with learning disabilities, as well as in children with average mental level or mentally gifted [6].

Among many benefits, meditation helps children to be more kind and loving and increases self-confidence, inner peace and happiness. It is a science of mind that helps not only the development of spirituality but also intellectual and social development.

A practice that leads children to control the restlessness of the mind and focuses the attention should be encouraged starting in the earliest school years, thus creating a human being with less stress. Thus, the child can develop the wisdom of selfless love and compassion to bring harmony in all aspects of life, removing every barrier that separates people from each other and uniting the human society as a world family.

Given the current situation of children and adolescents (hyperactivity, drugs, depression, violence, etc.) and the probable effectiveness of the Circle of Love in restoring emotional balance and strengthening affective ties, this study aimed to add the practice of “Circle of Love” in the daily activities of the Municipal Center for Early Childhood Education “Água Viva” – Pontal do Paraná, Brazil, in order to evaluate its influence on emotional, cognitive, psychic and social development of children 2 to 4 years.

The ultimate goal was to prove that a more loving and humanist education, with activities that focus on love, compassion, respect and spirituality, and with exercises that stimulate the control of emotions (yoga), would be an excellent antidote to the challenges of the current society.

## 2. Methodology

The Circle of Love was performed in the early childhood education center every morning during about 60 school days (sep 26th, 2010 to dec 20th, 2010). It was the first activity of the day, after breakfast, and it lasted around 30 minutes. In this case, the Circle of Love was conducted with children from 2 to 4 years, 36 students in total, accompanied by the teachers.



The activities of the Circle usually followed a logical order of songs. Starting with the most active and exciting music, the intensity was gradually lowered, leading up to a time of silence with a guided visualization. The children sang and followed movements while sitting in a circle on the floor, where everyone could see each other. Some songs were done standing with stretching.

The children periodically practiced yoga postures along with the stories that they helped to create. There were also puppet shows, theater and circle dances; everything always dealing with educational topics that were loving, encouraging respect and compassion for oneself, with others and for animals and plants. Besides that, the practice incorporated collective massages and relaxation.

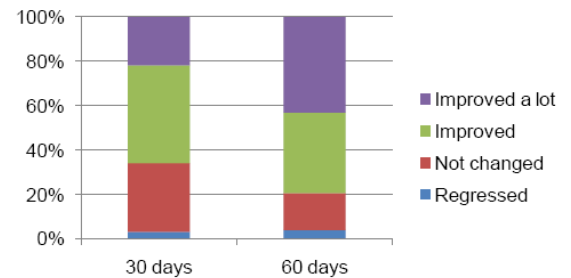
After 30 school days of application of the Circle of Love, questionnaires were distributed to the teachers in order to evaluate any possible behavioral changes of the students with the practices. And the same questionnaires were redone at

the end of the project (60 school days after the beginning). Each teacher answered an individual questionnaire for each student of her group.

The questionnaires were composed of closed questions grouped into four aspects: Affective, Cognitive, Psycho and Social. For each question, the teachers answered if the child has regressed, not changed, improved or improved a lot in that regard.

### 3. Results

The questionnaires that were completed 30 days after the beginning of the Circle of Love were compared with those answered at the end of the project (60 days after), observing the progress of children during ongoing activities. After 30 days of activities, it was possible to perceive an improvement in children's behavior. As shown in Graphic 1, about 44% improved and 22% improved a lot, averaging between all aspects. After 60 days, one can observe an even greater improvement, with 36% of children improved and 44% improved a lot.



Graph 1: Comparison of the two questionnaires applied after 30 and 60 days since it

Cases of regression were minimal and can be caused by external factors, is difficult for the teacher to evaluate the family situation and the type of education that children receive at home.

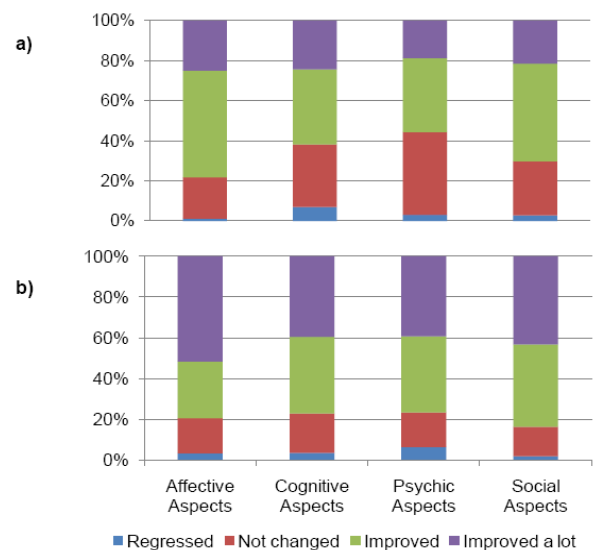
It is also evident, the increment of improvement with the continuation of the project. It is likely that the practice of the Circle of Love throughout the whole school year will bring even more positive effects at school, obtaining better results even with the more "difficult" kids.

As mentioned earlier, questions were grouped by the following behavioral aspects: affective (kindness, loving, giving and receiving affection), cognitive (concentration, animus, creativity); psycho (aggression, annoyance, joy, expression, fear, shyness) and social (respect, cooperation, participation, interaction).

Graphic 2 illustrates the effectiveness of the Circle of Love in early childhood education in all aspects analyzed in this research, with more than 50% of improvement and / or lot of improvement in all cases. However the affective and social aspects were those where the children most progressed, as in the evaluation of the questionnaires as in the observations of the researchers and educators.

Given these results, it is worth emphasizing the importance of affection and the encouragement of positive emotions in the school environment, making the ideals of the Circle of Love indispensable in early childhood education. Negative emotions have a considerable influence over the whole of our intellectual and cognitive functions, and the best way to manage these emotions is by increasing positive emotions [7].

Thus, in an affective, happy and safe environment, the students become calm and secure, build a positive self-image, participate effectively in the proposed activities and fulfill the educational objectives. Moreover, when aggressive attitudes in children are eased and interpersonal relationships are favored, then the children become benevolent with all beings that surround them.



Graph 2: Comparison between the four aspects of behavior - a) 30 days, b) 60 days.

Another form of contribution of the Circle of Love is the practices of meditation, relaxation and yoga. Such activities have a positive impact on the emotional state of students and also on feelings of belonging to the One.

Briefly, this project was really a proof that the Circle of Love is an important tool for the educational system fostering more humane, happier and healthier children who have a feeling of unity and equality with all beings (Neo-humanism), consequently contributing to a better world!

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# Ananda Marga Primary School Hetauda, Nepal

By Didi Ananda Radhika and Didi Jyoti

The Ananda Marga Primary School at Hetauda, Nepal has six classes from grades 1 to 6, plus a Kindergarten I class and a Nursery class. The school, with Didi Ananda Radhika as the principal, has at this time about 80 students. Hetauda is a smaller town situated in the south of Nepal, approximately 3 hours from the border with India.



## Didi Ananda Radhika

When I took over the school 7 years ago, it had hardly any playground or boundary wall and no plastering on the school walls. The school has developed bit by bit in appearance, decoration and standard of teaching. The teachers are constantly being guided on the lines of Neohumanist Education". It has seven teachers and serves the children of families from the village areas at the edge of the town. All the teachers are students themselves, studying various educational subjects when they are not teaching. Nepal has many village areas where there is need to open more schools. Often you can find that children cannot attend school at the proper age and attend grade one at an older age. The school building with eight classrooms resounds in the mornings with the chanting of learning the sounds of Nepali and English letters. It is

amazing how children study to speak, read and write in Nepali as well as in English, learning all sounds and letters from an early age on.

At our school the children have assembly time with meditation every morning. It's a colorful picture when they assemble in the school ground outside. The playground with a bit of garden at the edges is a great plus for the school. Along with their studies the children have time for games, hide and seek and running etc. The students also get art training and physical education as per the standards of Neohumanist Education. This was demonstrated when only last month the school won a prize for their physical education. It won the 3rd prize in the District Level Parade Competition where 15 other primary and secondary schools participated. The event was inaugurated by the District Education Officer and was carried on in the presence of other honorary guests.



## Didi Jyoti

I came for 2 months to Nepal in January to do some work in Didi's school. I was welcomed open heartedly and Didi fit me into the school's schedule. Besides teaching English conversation, grammar and some essay writing I practiced with the children English songs, circle rhyme songs with movement and some arts and crafts. Mostly I was teaching in grades 2 - 6. We added more creative activities into the curriculum like painting, collage and making mobiles out of bark, paper and cloth. The artwork was hung up in three rooms of the school. Under the motto: "I draw myself" children drew pictures and we decorated the walls with them also. A member of Ananda Marga and homeopath, Krsnadeva from Sweden, donated money to the home and school. From this we bought various supplies like wall paint, school shoes, art materials like brushes and paints, a notice board and still Didi Ananda Radhika has money left to purchase parts for her sound system in order to be able to amplify sound for cultural music and performances.



At the end of my time I painted some school room walls with the help of the Didis and the entrance gate to the school. I was glad that I found that I could contribute something to the school's program. In Nepal there is something called "Sharing the Silence". I found that people here are self contained (especially when I met some Nepali members of Ananda Marga), following Santosa (contentment) and know when to speak or not. The nearby mountains also provide a good place for Sadhana (meditation).

If anyone wants to work as a volunteer in the educational field in the Hetauda School please write to Didi Ananda Radhika at: [anandaradhika@ntc.net.np](mailto:anandaradhika@ntc.net.np). You might like to combine this with a visit to the Mt Everest region, because it is a beautiful and famous area.

# AMSAI Activities Cirebon, Indonesia

By Didi Ananda Vratti



Every month we have a day for a field trip. November 10<sup>th</sup> is Hero's Day in Indonesia. So, on 24<sup>th</sup> November we brought the children to Heroes' cemetery in Cirebon, as an outing activity.

December 22<sup>nd</sup> is Mother's Day in Indonesia. We had a competition for everybody on the 21<sup>st</sup> December, with the play group, Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B, as well as their mothers.

Play group : They had to find their mothers' sandals and bring them to their mother.

KG A: They have to find, arrange and paste number from 1 to 10.

KG B: They have to find, arrange and paste the Alphabet from A to Z.

Mother and child: Together they decorated an earthenware jug.

The next day, the children had a performance (dances, read poems, etc.) on stage for their parents, and we gave out the mid year term reports.

April 21<sup>st</sup> is known as Kartini's day. It was the birthday of Raden Ajeng Kartini. She was the first lady who fought for women's right. In the olden days, women stayed at home doing house work only. They didn't go to school, and couldn't

work outside of the house. Because of Kartini, Indonesian women can go to school, and can work outside of the home now. In order to remember her courage and her merit, we celebrate Kartini's day every year. We celebrate it by having "traditional dress competition" for the students, and for the mothers we have a "group singing competition". In the competition, the children wore so many kinds of traditional dresses such as Javanese, Balinese, Minangkabau, Malay, etc. as you can see in the photos.



renovate our school. We replaced the termite eaten wooden roof with steel. We elevated the floor of the offices, so we don't have to worry when there's heavy rain and flooding. We put down tiles in the aisle in the front of each classroom, so it's become the multi-purpose room for asanas, meditation, exercises, playing indoor, etc. We repainted the school as well.

We are so thankful to the Didis of Manila Sector and the donors. We would have not been able to do this without your help.



By Grace and through the Manila Sector Didis' fund and some donations from members of Ananda Marga, we were able to





# Arts at Lotus Children's Centre

Accra, Ghana

by Carolyn A. Karpinos, Volunteer from USA

As a volunteer at the Lotus Children's Centre in Accra, Ghana, I have had the great pleasure to spend the last six weeks working with the Director of the School, Didi A. Shanta, and the lead teacher at the Lotus Nursery School, Angela Boddaa, to incorporate a series of various basic art projects into their school curriculum. The nursery school students here at Lotus Children's Centre range in age from two and a half years to six years, and we have found that the art projects have given the children not only a great deal of joy but have also provided outlets for expressive play heretofore unimagined and have given many young ones a chance to shine.

In my time here working with the children, we have focused on doing some art or drawing work every week. One of the first projects was a very basic one for the Ghanaian Independence Day celebrated here on March 6th. The Ghana flags allowed us to talk about color, spend some time on ordering colors and discuss star shapes. It was a basic project but the children exhibited a great deal of pride in their finished projects as the attached photograph taken on the Friday before Independence Day exhibits.



Some of the drawing and art projects have been specifically constructed undertakings – one specific series focused on weather. Though we are not yet in the rainy season in Ghana, we had a surprise storm one night in late February, and the next day we all made umbrellas. More appropriate to the beautiful [and very hot!] weather we have here most all of the time at the present, the children also made big suns and, thinking ahead, rain clouds for the upcoming rainy season, which should begin in earnest in mid-May. Finally, they created rainbows that allowed a focus on color and shape as well. We displayed the entire “weather” series in our library for a week and then allowed children to take them home. We have heard news that there are rainbows decorating bedrooms and the sleep areas of some homes in our neighborhood!

In addition to constructed projects, we have given the children some time every week for “freehand” drawing, not something that is generally part of the home educational experience of many of young African children we teach here at Lotus. We have been delighted and surprised with the results, finding some hidden talents in quiet children and, of course [as you can well expect with a group of young boys in a class of children this age!] have seen many pictures of trucks and motorbikes! Letting the children have time to explain to you what they have drawn has been a valuable vocabulary exercise for young students who are just beginning to learn formal English.

We have also done a very basic music project – again, attempting to focus on things that the children here in Ghana know well. Drumming is a significant part of the musical scene and an important tradition here in the music community of Ghana, and so we have begun some ensemble work with a simple African drum, some shakers, a tambourine and a snare drum. The children sing and play with great energy and enthusiasm and we are planning a small musical presentation for the last day of our school term.

Finally, we have worked with the children to do some very simple dramatic play, again not something that is generally part of their preschool experience either at home or in many schools here in Ghana. In the attached photograph, the children are calling each other on telephones to discuss some “banking” and then “travelling” to town to deposit some peswaks, our local currency here, in our “bank.” We have found that the young children respond wonderfully to these pretend play exercises, and that these exercises have been helpful in expanding English vocabulary and also basic counting skills.



As children go to public or private schools here in Ghana after the age of six, much of their curriculum is focused on letters, numbers, basic math and writing, all of which is presented in a traditional and focused setting. And while preparation for these activities in a structured setting is part of what we do every day, all of us here at the Lotus Children's Centre have found that the addition of very basic arts concepts into that curriculum has enhanced days of learning.



# Bluebird House

Michigan, USA  
By Karen Haynes



Bluebird House is a school in my home for children 3-6 years old. I think it is an ideal place for young children to expand their world beyond their small family and for parents to get the support they need in those crucial early years. Bluebird has the comfortable smallness of a home setting and a full pre-school/kindergarten program; the best of both worlds. I am currently licensed for 12 children and have a three day program with the option of full or half days. This program runs from September through June. I also have a parent-tot program one day a week, where parents can come in with their 0-4 year old children for 2 hours. We have a circle, bake bread, play in and outdoors and do seasonal crafts. I have articles and DVD's for the parents and we learn and practice good parenting skills. This way I really get to know the parents and they learn skills it would be hard for me to convey in a parent-teacher conference. They learn to understand and value how we work with the children and the children get comfortable and make an easy transition to the three day program.



I also do 8 weeks of summer camp in the summer, offering three full or half days. This gives some continuity to the children and offers an opportunity for new children to come in and fill in the enrollment, if needed. It also gives some employment to my assistant over the summer.



Having a school in one's home is simpler in many ways than having to manage a center in another building. There is one garden for home and school, the children can help with composting, caring for our cat, many healthy activities without the difficulty of managing two places. There is always a heart beating here, and the children feel it. It is easy to engage the children in daily and weekly work that is not fabricated. Planning is also easier, not having to travel to another building to set up activities, etc.

Licensing for the program was quite easy in Michigan and the people are very pleasant and supportive. Many restrictions that centers have are not required in the home. They love my program and rarely cite me for anything when they come to inspect. They are flexible and really have the children's' welfare in mind. It seemed like a lot of hoops to jump through in the beginning, (fingerprinting, furnace inspection, carbon monoxide detector, fire extinguisher, radon gas test, TB test, background checks, first aid/ CPR training, proper exits, measurement of space available for the children, etc.) but once things are in place, it is not really much to maintain. There are also tax advantages to working in the home. A percentage of home repairs, utilities, etc can be counted as a business expense.

Several parents have attended meditation classes, some taking up the practice seriously, and attending weekly meditations and other meditation programs. The parents appreciate it when I bring yoga and meditation to the children during circle and having a place like Bluebird House to help them through the crucial early years of their families.

All in all, I love having the school in my home. The form you give your program can fit into your lifestyle. I would like, someday, to have a drop-in option for parents who meditate to come in and do their practices while I care for their children. There is also the possibility of doing night care, if there is a need in your community such as a hospital near your home where nurses work the night shift.

Please visit my website at [bluebirdhouse.net](http://bluebirdhouse.net) to see pictures and find out more details about the program. Feel free to contact me if you want to explore this idea and have questions. [karenerichaynes@msn.com](mailto:karenerichaynes@msn.com)





## RAWAFest: Fair for Neohumanist Living

Viamão-Porto Alegre, Brasil

By Bhaeravii Shakti (Paola Andrea Tejada Leytón)

Renaissance Artists and Writers Association, (RAWA), was founded by Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar in India in 1958 in order to restore art to its true role as an instrument for social and spiritual awakening. He envisioned a New Artistic Renaissance where artists and writers would unite and inspire society to move forward in a progressive and spiritual direction.

Art has the capacity to awaken social consciousness and lead a person towards spiritual self-realization. The RAWA Festival started more than three years ago, with the intention to create a social movement that could introduce in a subtle way progressive ideas such as PROUT, Neohumanist Education, Yoga and Meditation through the medium of the arts.

We are living a time of change preparing ourselves for a New Era that will establish spirituality into the whole planet. The movement of the RAWAFest is also to serve as a platform for all social alternative movements, to connect to each other and form a network to unify forces for the future generations.

On September of 2008 the idea of the First RAWA Festival came to my mind, but at that time it was not very clear. It seemed more like a small gathering of artists promoting their arts through their own spiritual experiences. I was in a long fast trying to find a way to bring Shrii P. R. Sarkar's ideas into the public in a more efficient way. After weeks of intense meditation a vision came to my mind, showing me the picture of what was going to be the future plan. I got excited with the idea and since I love Arts, this was the best way I could serve at that moment.

We had a little more than a couple of months, myself and Jorell Lynn Mahler (Jayasrhii), an American woman who was working as a volunteer at that time at the Ananda Kiirtana Master Unit. We didn't know exactly how the whole thing was going to turn out; we didn't have any money or means to start the project, not to mention that there was not even a telephone or computer or any transportation to go to the city available at that time. Anyhow we managed to put ourselves on the road and started working. The whole experience was like walking into another dimension of complete surrender towards the Great. The doors started to open everywhere, people started to appear from here and there to help us and suddenly one day out of the blue what was supposed to be at the beginning a small gathering of artists became the first RAWA Festival.

In two months the doors were open to more than hundred artists that came to the Festival to share the beauty within them. We got all the support through different public and private entities that supplied food, infrastructure and transportation for all that was needed. There was a good receptivity from the local people and the Master Unit started to become more and more popular in the area, giving us the chance to do social service work during the event for the people with financial difficulties. Government representatives, social activist and holistic therapists started to appear more and more as the Festival grew.

In the second and third year the perspective of the impact of the first Festival that brought around 200 people, got expanded. The following years we received the visit of artists from other states of the country, approximately more than 250 people each year.

The PROUT presentations were always present, showing and inspiring the people about the possibility to live a sustainable spiritual life in harmony with nature. Coincidentally through that platform people that were already working in different spheres for the welfare of the planet got to know each other and formed a network to maintain their communication to see how they can help to increase the consciousness on the planet through an alternative sustainable way of life where they realized that education is the key point to establish PROUT and spirituality into the world. Through the years many people and movements got chance to participate like musicians, dancers, singers, theater actors, PROUT and vegetarian activists, NGOs working for the welfare of animals, holistic therapists and of course our Neohumanist schools showing and teaching to the people a new alternative for education.

We had yoga classes during the days, meditation, different kinds of workshops in arts and music, speeches, alternative films on sustainability and social economics, raffles of prizes such as paintings, books and ayurvedic treatments, and delicious vegetarian foods and snacks offered at accessible prices.



This year the Festival in its fourth year, will take place in the south of Brasil at Ananda Dáksina Master Unit in Viamão-Porto Alegre, the 24th and 25th of September. We are expecting more than a thousand people to participate in this event. Many schools are invited not only from AMURT that will actively support the Festival, but also the schools from nearby communities.

The Federal Deputy Cherini from the government, President of the Commission of the Environment and Sustainable Development and a Holistic Therapist as well, is working actively to establish alternative healing into the whole country and not only is supporting the RAWAFest this year, but he is also very excited with the idea of PROUT and wants to establish it in Brasil. On March of this year we got invited to participate in a National Holistic Encounter organized by the deputy himself. We got the opportunity to exhibit our project, sing Kiirtan at the opening ceremony, and invite the thousand people or more to come to the Festival, most of them composed of alternative therapists and natural healers from all over the country.

One of the objectives of the Festival beyond serving as a bridge for a new consciousness is also to generate the funds to support social service projects in Ananda Marga. This year we hope to generate enough funds to establish the WWD project, a Center for the Rehabilitation and Woman's Welfare in Brazil, that is being coordinated by Didi Ananda Sushila.

The RAWAFest is open to all artists, giving them a platform to share with the collectivity their own expression of spirituality that at some point in their lives got manifested through their art from the deepest pure essence within themselves. We believe that this kind of approach will bring up the human mind into higher levels of understanding, and through a proper education and proper inspiration, the artists will create art for the self-realization and service to all, expanding the horizon of human potentialities towards the divine.

There are many people involved in this process, working selflessly to make this event successful. It's about using arts and literature to bring progressive ideas into society, and a medium to teach and offer to the people different kinds of tools for human elevation such as yoga and meditation at a social, economical, political and spiritual level. We invite you all to participate in this event, contributing with your art, your presence or sending a donation for the WWD Project "Center for the Rehabilitation and Woman's Welfare". You can contact us via: [www.rawafest.org](http://www.rawafest.org), [rawafest@anandamarga.org.br](mailto:rawafest@anandamarga.org.br)



*Though separated by many countries, many states, many religions, many communities, or by many languages, the human race is an indivisible entity. Every human mind is but the diversified individual manifestation of that same indivisible Cosmic Mind. Today we look forward to the advent of the artist, that writer who will convey this truth to the hearts of humanity in a still sweeter language, still more strongly and deeply. Shrii P.R. Sakra (Abhimata, The Opinion,77)*



Blending neohumanist themes with captivating stories and beautiful drawings, Wise Heart Books helps children look deep within themselves to discover their true nature, to experience their connectedness with all beings, and to find the joy of sharing and helping.

Visit our website at [www.wiseheartbooks.com](http://www.wiseheartbooks.com) to learn more about us. Join our **Wise Friend** network and earn money selling our books. All proceeds from our books support neohumanist schools around the world.

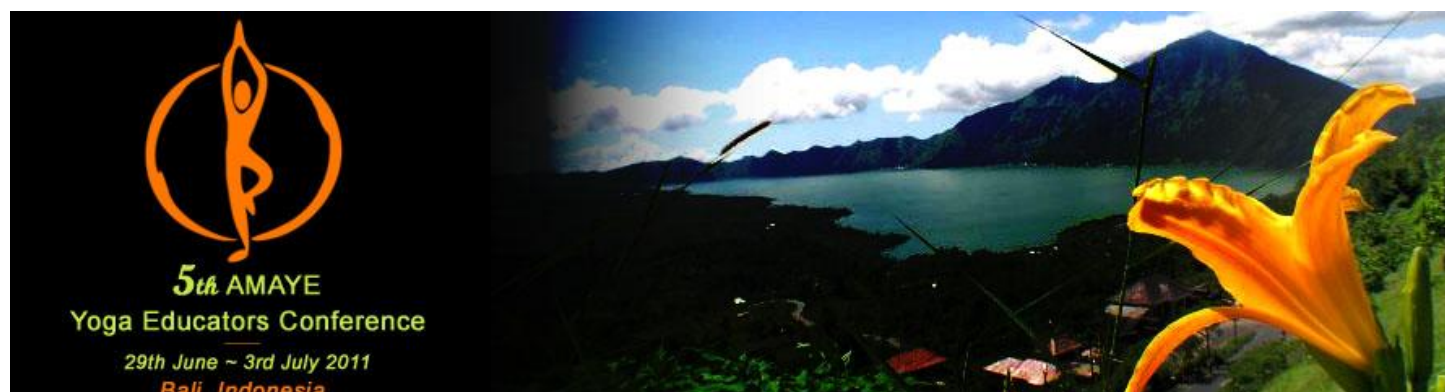




# 5th AMAYE Yoga Educators Conference

## 29th June to 3rd July 2011

### Bali, Indonesia



This year's conference will be held at the beautiful Landih Ashram on the magical island of Bali, Indonesia. Landih Ashram is located in the mountain area of Kintamani in the northern part of Bali about 2 hours by car from Denpasar International Airport. <http://www.landihashram.com/>

Kintamani is often cited as the top tourist spot in Bali for its promise of fresh mountain air and lush green surroundings. The fog will descend and blanket the entire area of Kintamani which may bring the temperature down to a cool 20 degrees Celsius. The nights may be even colder. Many tourists summit the volcano overnight in order to catch the breathtaking panorama of sunrise.

The Conference will feature experienced practitioners who will share their knowledge and understanding on Yoga & Natural Therapy, Anatomy of Asanas, Tantra Philosophy, and many inspiring topics.

#### **Confirmed Speakers:**

##### **Ac Dharmadevananda Avt**

Dada is today the founder of the AM Wellness Centre in Cebu, Philippines. His workshop will be revolving around the practical aspects of Naturopathy such as the hows and whys of mud-pack, steam-bath, enemas, etc. Dada's talks are known for being highly educative and entertaining.

##### **Kaomudii Yip (Malaysia)**

Kaomudii is an experienced physiotherapist educated in New Zealand. Her 16 years working experience from hospitals as well as private practices in both NZ and Malaysia along with many years of personal yoga practice make her a very sought after trainer. A must for all yoga teachers.

##### **Ac. Shankarsanananda Avt**

Dada is the founder of the Ananda Marga Yoga Academy in Singapore. His workshop will focus on basic principles of Yoga and Natural therapy related to the seven Dhatus and Sadhana (yoga practices)

##### **Trond Overland (Norway)**

Prabhaka, from Norway, has many years experience as a psychologist and yoga teacher. His talk will highlight Ananda Marga spiritual practices and lifestyle in light of modern scientific knowledge. He has written and translated several books on yoga and meditation.

The Resort has a maximum capacity of 120 persons so availability will be on a 'first-come first-serve' basis. Given this space constraint, all must pre-register to reserve a place.

**For more information and to register, please visit: <http://yec.rsvp2000.com/>**

You may also direct any questions to Dada Shankarsana'nanda at [shankarsanananda@gmail.com](mailto:shankarsanananda@gmail.com)

# GLOBAL NEWS



## NAIROBI SECTOR

AMSAI

Lusaka, Zambia

By Dada Pavananda

Three volunteers named Maniisha, Karla and Erica from Brazil, GT Sector came to our Amsai School in Lusaka, Zambia to volunteer for a few months bringing with them about 100 kilos of school materials including books, children's games, paints, brushes, maps, pencils, ball pens and many more gifts for kids. They also printed calendars with photos of our School children which were distributed to all 110 children including teachers, members of Ananda Marga and sympathizers.



They also managed to renovate three toilets and one kitchen and also put ceilings on them. The school play ground received a swing and new grass was planted covering the whole area of the play ground.

The children benefited with their participation in many activities including learning new songs, dancing, drama and stories.

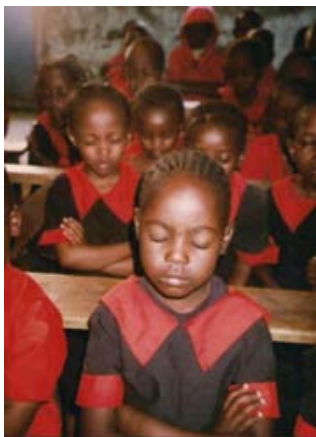


A farewell party was hosted for them and teachers, members of Ananda Marga and sympathizers participated. We played many competitive games and winners were awarded with prizes including T-shirts, towels, DVD's, CD's by the volunteers. It was a very exciting event and very interesting.



The visit by the volunteers was very fruit full and we hope that the volunteers will return back to Zambia soon.

AMSAI Lusaka currently has children from Kindergarten through Primary Grade 4. For more information about the school please visit our web site: <http://lusaka.amsai.org/>. Please also visit my personal website to view (and purchase!) my water color paintings to support our school at: <http://pavanananda.avadhuta.name/>



## Nairobi, Kenya

These photos are from our Sadavrata in Kenya. On Sundays around 1000 mothers and 1200 children come in the morning and lunch time to receive breakfast, lunch, food to bring home and clothes. It has been going on for 20 years! Talking with some of them I got to know that many of them have to walk around 3 hour to reach



the place. The other photo is from our school in a poor area in Nairobi and their first experience with meditation.



Bucharest, Romania

Marius revisits the kindergartens after 12 years!

By Didi Ananda Devapriya

Our kindergartens in Bucharest have been practicing “inclusive education” since their inception 16 years ago – not only integrating special needs children within a the kindergarten setting, but also giving special attention to adapting the program itself to be accessible and welcoming for all. Neohumanist Education looks for opportunities to celebrate diversity and to adapt the program to respond to specific needs of individual children.



This year, both kindergartens dedicated several weeks to the theme of diversity with the annual “Many faces, one heart” program. Human differences, ranging from skin color, to ethnic minorities, to different abilities were discussed in a variety of creative ways and reflected in the story telling, crafts, paintings and activities during that period.

One of the highlights was welcoming a very special guest to the kindergarten, Marius. It was not the first time Marius had been to our kindergartens – in fact, he was among the first children with special needs to attend many years ago. Now he is a very positive, optimistic, sunny and inspiring 19 year old young man! He was delighted to revisit the kindergarten and enthusiastically participated in the program – helping the children make fruit salad and lemon cake, giving them rides on his wheelchair, sharing songs, games and memories from his kindergarten days and answering their questions. The children absolutely loved him and they were very excited to play with him.



The Rasarit kindergartens have found this approach of creating opportunities for the children to get to know people who are different in a friendly and natural context, as a very effective method of breaking down and preventing the formation of barriers that arise due to lack of personal contact with diversity. We create a safe atmosphere for them to ask questions and find out that indeed – even if someone looks different -they are actually a lot like me!



We have also been very happy to welcome two new children to our kindergartens with social disadvantages. AMURTEL recently signed a partnership with Department of Social Services to receive social beneficiaries free of charge – counting on the generosity of our supporters to help us cover the costs. Both little girls have young single mothers that are staying in a special residential shelter where they receive help integrating into the work force and taking care of their children. The girls are integrating well into the program and learning lots! We also have another child that has been attending for free for the past 2 years, as she also comes from a disadvantaged single parent family. Her mother volunteers in the kindergarten and has been very active and involved.

Helsinki, Finland

By Dr. Sauli Siekkinen

On March 25<sup>th</sup>, I purchased the old mansion called Notsjö Gård (translated as Seine Lake Hall). It is a large 960 sq. meters mansion built in 1822. It has been abandoned since the 1980's. My target is to renovate this building as a retreat centre and naturopathic hospital. We have registered a co-operative for alternative therapists called "Fountain of Life" and it is already part of the Ananda Marga Wellness Centres started by Dada Dharmavedananda. At the moment we are 15 therapists including two doctors, a nurse, psychologist and nutrition therapist. This hospital will also serve as the seat of the medical faculty of Gurukul University. The renovation will take two years and will be funded partly by the Finnish government and EU. The attached photo shows the mansion.





## Stockholm, Sweden

Dada Shambhushivananda presented at a seminar on Local Sustainability Conversion Sweden, the Swedish part of the international Transition Towns Network. It was attended by 50 persons. Transition movement, started in Totnes, England in the autumn of 2006 is a popular movement encouraging communities and neighborhoods to come together to meet the challenges posed by the combination of peak oil and climate change and to establish strong and sustainable local communities.



Henk de Weijer and Dhanjoo Ghista introduced Sarkar's theory of microvita at the international conference on "Toward a Science of Consciousness" held at Stockholm University from May 3-7, 2011. Henk de Weijer spoke on "Consciousness and Energy in an Evolving Universe" while Dhanjoo Ghista provided a unified theory of consciousness, matter and mind based on Sarkar's ideas on cosmology.

## DELHI SECTOR

### Madhepura, India

The AMURT sponsored NHE school in Madhepura which was started in March 2010, has since grown well with 135 students. In this short while the school has earned a good name in the town, due to its unique & holistic approach to education. Already five additional room accommodations located adjacent to the existing site of the school have been rented to accommodate the increased flow of new entrants.



The school follows the NHE curriculum. Regular Music classes are arranged for all the students. PT and parade is a regular feature with the school's own RAWA Music Band. All children practice meditation and yoga daily. Rhymes, Storytelling, Drawing and Gardening are a part of the daily routine. The school has already arranged its own auto vehicle which can accommodate about 10 children, to bring children from long distances.



The school is managed by a committee comprising of Ac. Kishan Sood, Dr. AK Bhaskar, Shrii Amarnathjii, and Shailesh Kumar as the Director cum secretary and Shrii OmPrakash as the treasurer.

### Simra, India

An Ananda Marga Special Academy School (AMSAI) has been started in Simra Village near Patna. The land and the building were donated by the efforts of Ac. Shuka Dev Dharmmitram. After his demise five years ago this place was abandoned with no body taking care of the institution. It was run by a village family for a period of time. We have now taken up responsibility for the school again and the NHE syllabus has been introduced and the teachers are receiving NHE introductory training. More intensive training will be taken up soon. A managing committee comprising of Ac. Kishan Sood, Shrii Rameshjii, Dr. AK Bhaskar, Shrii Girijaji, Shri Satyadev has been formed to look after the affairs of the school.



### New Delhi, India National Seminar

A one day Joint National Seminar on Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji's Contribution to Philosophy, Language, Literature and Science was conducted, at Vidyapeeth seminar hall, New Delhi on April 8, 2011. It was organised by Renaissance Universal (R.U.), an intellectual forum of Ananda Marga and the faculty of philosophy of the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth.



## AMSAI Hetauda, Nepal

The AMSAI Dada managed school in Hetauda, Nepal has been running since 1996. At present from play group up to class 8 we have more than 250 students. In addition to the local government courses we teach Gurukula's moral lessons and Yoga. We now own our building. Adjacent to the school is the accommodation for the Children's home which has 14 boys. Our projects were recently visited by AMGK Kulapati, Dada Shambhushivananda. Our students performed well in interschool competitions and received 1st prize in the Marchpass event organised by the National Private and Boarding Schools Association. Our school is only one of its kind providing quality education having the lowest fees in the city. We are going to start a training course for High School students in Composite Medical Care (Naturopathy, Yoga, Acupressure, Music Therapy with Prabhat Samgiita and Herbal Medicine) as a vocational curriculum. The present Principal is Ac. Omkareshvarananda Avt. RAWA is also getting popular. The public has a good opinion of our projects and support us in our service activities of AMURT Nepal. RAWA (Renaissance Artists and Writers Association) is also getting popular. We hope for a bright future.



## MANILA SECTOR



### Laguna, Philippines By Dada Bodhaprajinanda

AMSAI Ananda Kuranga started two years ago in the year 2009. It's a community service project because most of our students are from below poverty line families and they can't afford to pay tuition fees. Our school is providing education

for them. Our schools is a kindergarten. For the smooth running of our school and continued support, thanks goes to Grace Chua and Alfred Gonzales from Manila. Our school is based on the Neohumanist Education system. Any assistance and support are welcome.



### Institute Ananda Marga Gurukula (IAMGK) Bali, Indonesia By Dada Mitrabuddhyananda

The Homeopathy Diploma Course of Bali was held from April 18-28th. There were 3 teachers from Singapore's Wisma Perubatan Homoeopath Tutorial. They taught an intensive course for 5 students of IAMGK; 2 students from Germany, (Mrs. Silke Weber, Mrs. Hegde) and 3 students from Indonesia. (Mre. Styo Jono Kartiko, Dr. Edy Wahjono, Mrs. Yeni Wijaya). This was the first course of our IAMGK Bali.

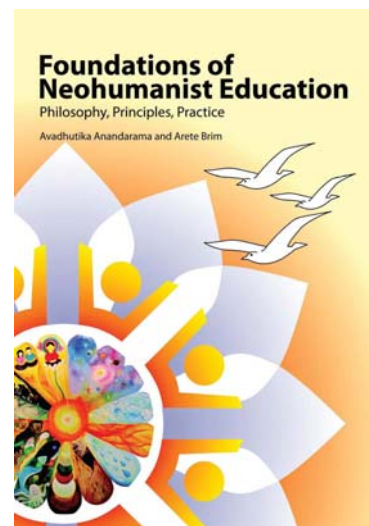




*Available Now:*  
**Foundations of Neohumanist Education**  
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This publication fills a long-felt void by bringing together Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar's seminal ideas on education in a coherent introductory book. Avadhutika Ananda Rama and Arete Brim have both been dedicated and passionate coordinators of the Neohumanist Education movement for over a decade and their love for the ideals becomes alive in this book. This book is written especially for aspiring directors and head teachers of Neohumanist Education. It includes the basics of NHE philosophy, principles and practice (child development, teaching methods, curriculum, learning environment and more).

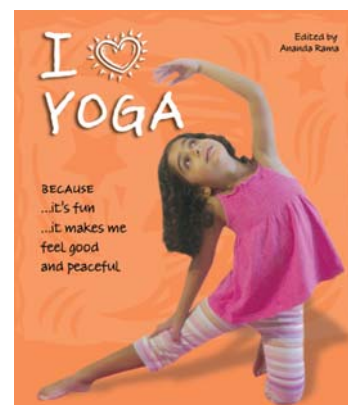
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**I Love Yoga**  
Edited by Didi Ananda Rama

This beautiful book contains a vast and varied collection of yoga poses especially adapted for children. Each posture is fully described and photographed to make it easy to teach and share yoga with children of all ages. This book also contains other useful sections including: Yoga Principles, Benefits of Yoga for Children, Science of Yoga, Yoga Methodology for the Developing Child, Breathing Exercises, Creativity in Yoga, Yoga Stories and Yoga Lifestyle Tips. All the suggested yoga activities are well tested in our classrooms. Mary Jane Glassman director of Morning Star Kindergarten in Denver, USA who is also a certified yoga instructor with experience teaching adults and children provided most of the text for the yoga poses.

ORDERING: [amgkpublications@gurukul.edu](mailto:amgkpublications@gurukul.edu)  
Softcover, 64 pages, fully illustrated US \$15



**The Golden Lotus of the Blue Sea**  
by Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar  
72 pages with full colour illustrations by Bhaskar

*The Golden Lotus of the Blue Sea*, by Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, is a masterpiece of responsible modern children's literature. In every sentence of this fairy tale there is a wonderful attractive power – a crystalline simplicity and an open-heartedness. Through the storyline the author conveys to the child how life should be lived with purity and straightforwardness.

The fairy tale is child-focused from start to finish. The story itself starts with the children's keen sensitivity to nature alerting them that something was not right. The wise king has the ability to listen and respond to the children's grievances with decisive steps and thus the children are empowered and given due respect. Throughout the story the human children, along with the animal children, remain loyal to the noble hero.

The role of simple poor people is given prominence by attributing magical powers to them that are used in the service of a good cause. The story introduces the real world of exploitative rulers and the peoples' uprising in response, all the time maintaining the charm and fascination of the fairy tale.

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Hardcover, 68 pages, fully illustrated, US \$20





# Neohumanist Education



At the Ananda Prerana School, located in Jarsuguda, a long wall inside the compound got the entire Yama and Niyama story, *The Fairy Flower*, painted on it recently. Story inside.

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