

## The Learning Network Newsletter

### Dear Reader

Welcome to the second newsletter of the learning network. "Chiguru" which means 'new growth' signifies our energy and enthusiasm for seeking new perspectives! Our newsletter features updates on activities in the past few months, announcements for upcoming events, articles by members and profiles on new network members

We welcome your contributions to make this newsletter a medium of sharing and learning. We invite all of you to send your experiences and perspectives. We welcome new sources of information, articles, review of books and materials, programs & seminars, your opinion on current and new trends.

We would also like to invite you to send your suggestions for the web based virtual resource center - <http://www.learningnet-india.org>. Please send your input via email to [info@learningnet-india.org](mailto:info@learningnet-india.org) or write to the postal addresses given in the "Contact Us" section.

Thank you and best regards,  
Reshma Madhusudan  
(On behalf of the Newsletter Team)

### Resolving Conflicts

#### - The role of schools

The Learning Network and Avehi-Abacus jointly organized a meeting at Delhi on Nov 8-9, 2003, to look at ways in which schools and teachers can help identify stereotypes, deal with them and resolve conflicts in peaceful ways. Participating groups included Pravah, Ankur, Nirantar from Delhi, Avehi-Abacus from Mumbai. Monica Wahi who has worked extensively in Gujarat since the 2002 riots shared her experiences as well. Each group presented their work in this area in removing biases based on religion, class, caste, culture, gender and other diversities. The topics included various forms of conflicts impacting children; how schools/materials propagate stereotypes; role of the teacher; discussion and resolution of conflicts. Discussions included developing and using techniques/material that address various inequalities, social skills and citizenship building.

The groups look at situations of potential conflict and identify them through stories, case studies, local history, writings, literature etc. Once these are brought up the groups use plays, theater, discussions, group activities, role plays, games or individualized activities to help resolve them. Summary of these discussions with contact information of the groups can be found at [www.learningnet-india.org](http://www.learningnet-india.org). Two of the organizations that participated, Ankur and Pravah are also profiled in this newsletter along with their contact information.

#### Feedback from the meeting

"The meeting was useful in getting acquainted with the Learning Network, Abacus, Ankur and Nirantar. Meeting other groups that are involved in similar work gave moral support and a sense of solidarity. Also, the

concept of learning network is great and a very important one. I hope that we can carry out our idea of pooling in our resources and make them available for us and everyone else involved. We could have had each group facilitate their workshop (style/methodology) on the participants of the workshop. That way we would have gotten even more familiar with each other's work. Visual and hands on experience would have helped in understanding our initiatives and also figure out ways to apply it nationally or across NGOs" – Mridu of Pravah

### About the Learning Network

*The Learning Network explores various approaches towards holistic learning. This network will help learn about and share new perspectives, strengthen existing efforts and be a resource for interested groups, educators, and parents seeking meaningful approaches to education. Members include groups and individuals seeking alternative ways to solve problems in conventional systems.*

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## Learning Network

### - North Andhra Pradesh Meeting

A meeting of groups and individuals interested in the Learning Network was organized in Hyderabad on Aug 30, 2003. Participants included Ananda Bharathi and Paacha Saale (featured in this newsletter), Haritha Ecological Institute (an ecologically sustainable alternative in education and rural technology in Khammam dist), SAKTI (Search for Action and Knowledge for Tribal Initiative, East and West Godavari Dist), Mr. Suresh of Manchi Pustakam, Mr. Sajaya of Likhita Press. They all shared their work experiences and discussed possible interactions. Ananda Bharathi and Paacha Saale are featured in this newsletter. Details of the minutes of this meeting can be found at <http://www.learningnet-india.org>.

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#### **Narrations from Resolving Conflict conference...**

"In class 4 textbook, there is a lesson on kabadi, so there are a lot of male children etc. We did this with class 4 of government centers where we were allowed to. Apart from some of the questions that were added and also present in the textbook, they were asked to play kabadi amongst themselves, and then were asked to read out this lesson to a girl and ask her if she plays kabadi, why does she like/dislike the game of kabadi, if she does not like kabadi, then what is the game that she would like to talk about, where she plays her favorite game and to search for games that both girls and boys play. So you give them an activity, play the game, talk about their experience, so there is a possibility that there are some girls who are good at playing the game and can play. But the lesson sort of assumes that this is not something they will be doing. But you give them that opportunity and to go back to their community do similar activities." -Sharmila of Ankur

"There is a story where a king treats his son and daughter equally, gives them similar education. When the time comes to name his successor for his kingdom, he is unable to decide. Then there is a competition all that they have learnt between his son and daughter, in which his daughter wins and gets the throne. But the people of the kingdom feel – "how can she rule being a woman?" and overthrow her and instead make the king's son the successor. So then we raised the question – "Was this right? What would you do?" We then brought it to the village level by asking people to imagine this was the scene of panchayat elections in their village, and if you had to vote, whom would they vote for. So, many of their biases came out." - Poornima of Nirantar

## Travels in Andhra Pradesh

- by Shanmuga and Ravi Aluganti

Shanmuga and Ravi Aluganti traveled in Andhra Pradesh in August-Sept 2003 to learn more about alternative schools. Apart from some memorable and educative visits, their train journey too proved interesting! On the train, they met Dr Henry, a teacher, poet and artist, who teaches handwriting and calligraphy. They also met Dr.Sivaramakrishna of SAKTI, a cultural anthropologist. He has been working for the rights of the adivasis in East and West Godavari districts for the past 15 years. He has educated children about land, pattas and ownership records, etc., and trained them on disaster management that occur due to regular cyclones in the coastal areas. Here are some highlights of three of the schools they visited - Ananda Bharati, Center for Learning-Hyderabad, and Paacha Saale.

#### **Ananda Bharathi School**

This is an alternative school exclusively for girls from poor families. The school normally functions from 2:00 to 4:30pm since most of the older girls work as domestic help. The school has 42 children and 5 teachers. The school is in a rented building with three small rooms and a hall, all of which are used as classrooms. Children sit on the floor with low writing tables. The teachers also sit on the floor. The children address the teachers as 'Akka'. The school provides a space which they can call their own and gives expression to their potential. The children assemble in the main hall for a meditation session after which they go to their respective classes. The children are given personal attention and they learn at their own pace. When the teachers feel the children are capable of writing Class 7 exam they make them appear for the exam as private students. After 7th std, the children are sent to study in nearby high schools. The school also gives adequate tailoring lessons.

The school is seeking ways to address problems children face that originate at home and community. Janaki Iyer, the school's secretary said that more than money the school needs volunteers to for teaching, community organizing work, etc. She hopes that younger teachers can take active part in networking, teacher training and outreach activities.

*Contact Information:* Ananda Bharathi C/o NEEDA, 12-13-1173, Street No. 10, Tarnaka, Secunderabad 500 017  
Phone: (070) 27019315, 2715 0107, 2662 3828

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### Centre for Learning

CFL which started in 1982 as 'the place where learning is fun' is a co-education alternative education centre. It has children with backgrounds ranging from the economically poor sections of society to upper middle class. Currently 18 of the 30 children pay their fees, and 12 are sponsored children, who come from underprivileged backgrounds. Generally CFL has around 60 to 70 children between the ages of 3 years to 16 years. The fee covers the teachers' salaries, building rent, and large amount of arts/crafts, educational equipment and library books used by the children. The teacher-student ratio is maintained 1:15 to provide individualized attention.

CFL calls itself a "centre for learning" because it believes that most schools are not even places of learning let alone educational centres. CFL is an alternative educational centre that tries to educate the child and not school him/her. Education is defined as self-realisation in the Indian tradition. The attempt is to help children become self-realising, self-determined and self-disciplined people who strive for excellence in whatever field they choose to work/go.

CFL does not believe in competition and emphasizes on cooperation as a way to motivate and bring out the individuality/talents of the children. While accepting the idea of different capacities levels of children in particular areas, the school tries to identify the children's varied natural abilities and interests and nurtures them in multiple directions. The school first accepts the child as an individual, without judging him/her. Children are grouped sometimes according to age and sometimes according to their ability. While the medium of instruction is English, care is taken to see each child is bi-lingual if not tri-lingual. Without forcing the child an attempt is made to ensure that the child does acquire basic literacy, numeracy and academic skills and concepts. As a result, the school has attracted the attention of many parents who do not like the regimentation, rigidity, predetermined curriculum or examinations system that go with schooling in formal, mainstream schools or whose children have been judged nonconforming in conventional schools. These children do quite well in CFL, because in most cases, the only abnormality was that the child didn't fit into preconceived notions in conventional school teachers and administrators.

CFL brings out 'Edu-Care' a quarterly magazine to discuss issues related to education. The articles are mainly from CFL team members as well as from readers. Discussion threads on topics from previous issues are also published. Subscriptions are Rs. 100/yr. CFL also organizes regular counseling and discussion sessions with parents of children studying here or elsewhere. CFL has a learners' club, where children and adults can together enjoy learning new skills.

For information on CFL contact Gurveen Kaur: Phone: (040) 2799 0529 (o) (040) 27790457 (h) For Postal Correspondence only: Centre for Learning, C-128, AWHO Ved Vihar, Subhashnagar, Secunderabad 500 015 Email: gurveenkaur@rediffmail.com

### Paacha saale - 'the Green School'

Paacha Saale was started in 1993 and is administered by Deccan Development Society (DDS), a well known social organization in north Andhra Pradesh.

What strikes the eye while visiting the campus are the unique red domes in which the classes are held. The campus has unique red domes or catenary structures, in which the classes are held. There are two types of domes - one cone-shaped (ten of them) and the other hemi-spherical (one of them). These domes are topped with fiberglass to provide lighting and are made of locally available rock-stones and mud-lime mortar. Because of the circular cross-section of the domes the blackboards, shelves, class arrangement are all circular in form. One of the domes is used as library with a large collection of children books and is also used for book binding. The library also has a children's magazine, - a collection of poems and drawings by the school children and informative news items collected by the teachers.

The classes from 1st to 10th std level are given names of birds ranging from chilka - parrot (lowest) to chakumuku - wood pecker (highest). This way children who are over-aged (most of the kids in this school are dropouts and child labourers) can go to appropriate classes without feeling inferior. When leaving chakumuku class, the children take 10<sup>th</sup> std board exam privately. There are 180 children and 15 teachers. The school starts at 9am with a prayer. The academic classes start at 9:30am and go on until 2:45 pm, after which the skills training classes which are a part of the curriculum start. Carpentry, masonry tailoring pottery, herbal medicine, para-veternary, permaculture, computers, book binding are the eight different skills taught at paacha saale. All children are expected to learn these eight skills at basic level before leaving school. Each child is also expected to master atleast one skill. The school makes its own note books, files, furniture, doors and windows and also takes outside furniture orders on commercial rates.

Contact information: Mr.K.B.Murthy, Paacha Saale, Machnoor village, Jarsangam, Medak district, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: (040)-27764722 (DDS tel in Hyderabad) or (08451)-281422 email: ddshyd@hd1.vsnl.net.in

## LEARNING SPOTLIGHT

Some highlights of organizations sharing their work experience

### ANKUR

Ankur was formed about 2 decades back in Delhi, with the understanding that the education system is a reflection of the inequalities existing in the society and that there is no relation between schooling and what is happening in the society. There was a fundamental concern of what the experience of schooling is and how it affects the future of those who are marginalized in the society. For the last two decades Ankur has been working with the urban marginalised to create alternative models of education that respond to vital societal concerns and strive for building a society that affirms dignity of life, sharing of resources, participation, dialogue and non-violence.

Ankur's activities are aimed towards a) Development of alternative curricula and teaching -learning material for children, adolescents and women. Curricula that address issues of conflict based on gender, caste, class, religion, nation; and connect personal with the social micro with the macro, local with the global, b) facilitation of processes that engage young people in conversations that explore their space in the city and challenge the dominant modes of thought. They create local history by documenting their unique history and modes of \_expression using sounds images and texts, c) Development of facilitators as reflective practitioners d) providing resource and training inputs to government and non governmental organizations and much more. More details can be found at the website [www.learningnet-india.org](http://www.learningnet-india.org).

Contact Information: Ankur - Society for Alternatives in Education, 7/10 Sarvapriya vihar, ND – 110016, Phone - 26523395, 26523417, Email - [ankureducation@vsnl.net](mailto:ankureducation@vsnl.net)

### PRAVAH

Pravah means flow- a free flow of knowledge, ideas, experiences, expressions among people to bring about social change. The flow represents the life journey of every individual from Self to society. In the aftermath of Ayodhya, Pravah was found in 1993 in Delhi, by a team of professionals from diverse fields, like management, development, psychology, media, education, theater etc. Pravah's team believes that instead of forever curing in the aftermath of a social debacle, we need to build a society which has the capacity to prevent these breakdowns from occurring in the first place. Their vision is to build youth change makers, because youths have the maximum potential to bring about change in society. The system will change if the youth's mindset is changed. Pravah believes one learns best by doing. Their methodology is interactive and engaging and uses theater, role play, games, activities, debates, discussions, films, documentaries, volunteering options with students and young people, campaigns and exposure trips.

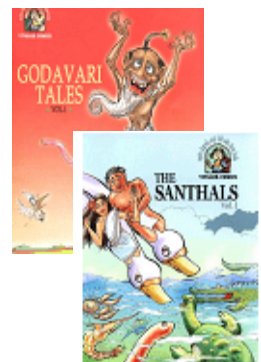
Pravah also conducts a 40 hour curriculum training life-skills and citizenship education with adolescents. There are 3 basic modules on it starting with self and moving to society - how you work on your self, how you are in a group, and therefore what are responsibilities on society and social issues. The organization also conducts a one year internship program, that is a 50 hour introductory workshop for teachers. Training is given on designing, developing and implementing the life-skills curriculum this LCE program for the students of their respective schools. The teacher training looks at their role as a teacher, their role in the larger social sector and how they can process conflicting situations. More details can be found at [www.younginfluencers.org](http://www.younginfluencers.org) and [www.learningnet-india.org](http://www.learningnet-india.org).

Contact Information: Pravah, 15/10, Kalkaji, New Delhi, Phone: (011) 26440619, 26213918 Email [pravah@vsnl.com](mailto:pravah@vsnl.com)

### VIVEKA FOUNDATION

The Viveka Foundation is a center for alternative perspectives dedicated to the quest, sustenance and promotion of viveka through its many activities. The primary tool which Viveka has employed towards this end is, called "alternative publishing" with a fundamental commitment to the quality of life, both human and otherwise. The Viveka Foundation brings to you **Vivalok Comics** with the wonder world of Indian myths, legends and folk tales of pluralistic societies. Well researched and beautifully illustrated, each volume contains ten stories, where the readers are introduced to a heterogeneous, diverse world of Indian folklore, infused with the spirit of local cultures and history. Each story in Vivalok Comics is relevant in its context with an accent on that area's history, geographical features and other local identifiers and local words. The culture of food, attire, life-cycle rituals and other practices are all evoked in the folk narratives.

Contact Information: [www.learningnet-india.org](http://www.learningnet-india.org) or The Viveka Foundation, 25C, DDA Flats, Shahpurjat, New Delhi 11004. E-mail: [comics@vivekafoundation.org](mailto:comics@vivekafoundation.org) Phone: 2649 7586 / 2649 7584



## EXPRESSIONS

Would your children or teachers like to share their writings?

Write to us.....  
info@learningnet-india.org

*Compughar, a project of Ankur and Sarai, Delhi. allows children of the community to register their lives and realities via writings. The project helps break the digital divide and introduces them to computers. The writings compiled as "Galiyon Se' comes straight from the children's hearts and have their language, not that of an observer or an adult.*

### My Enemy

– by *Shamsher Ali*

I have decided to leave school. Only I know how I passed the night. When it was morning, I opened my eyes, got off the bed and have just washed my hands and face. Ammi asks, the same as every morning, "will you go to schools or not? What do you want to do? Why don't u say anything? Do you want to study or not? Your father asks what you will do everyday". Do I have answers for all these heated-up questions? Or will I be able to say them? Lightening passes through me when I think of this. I look around flustered, and then quietly carry with me the spark which boils my blood.

I run towards my destination – the shore that will give me new life. But it was only a mirage nad once again, I lose my way in the labyrinth. With the disappointment of not having reached my destination, I reach the workshop. I sit there, quietly, consoling myself. In sometime conversations begin and carry on till nine, or half past nine. I am saved from that moment where I would meet my enemies. I feel my own thought is my enemy. Its time to take leave. And leaving my confusions and quandaries behind, I take off on the roads of the basti. Seeing its images, hearing its sounds I reach home. The house is peaceful at this time of the day. Papa has left for work. So has my elder brother. Three brothers and sisters have gone to school. I think just my mother, my younger brother and I are at home. I get ready nad leave home. There is a strange hesitation in this mood of the house.

Once again I make way through the streets, searching for my destination. I don't even realize that I have already reached the compughar. I enter looking at everyone and maybe smiling a little, and sit in my corner in the room.

## NETWORK NEWS

**Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi, Karnataka** is organising a state level education convention on 5th and 6th of February in Mandya. The two day convention will feature a lot of presentations on different aspects of education. There will be exhibition cum sale on educational toys, models and books. Interested organisations and individuals can register to participate for a delegation fee of Rs.150. Delegates will be provided food, accomodation, bags and other materials. Organisations interested in putting up stalls have to send in a fee of Rs.500. They will be given 10x10 space to exhibit their materials. Payment can be made by M.O or DD. favouring Bharat Gyan Samithi payable at Bangalore. Postal address: E.Basavaraju.Secretary, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore-12. Phone:080-2932395, 9448243496.

**Manchi Pustakam** is a hobby bookshop, soon to be registered as a trust. The interest is in translating, publishing and promoting books for children in Telugu. For more information contact K.Suresh, Manchi Pustakam, C/O WASSAN, 12-13-452, St. No1, Tarnaka, Secunderabad - 500 017

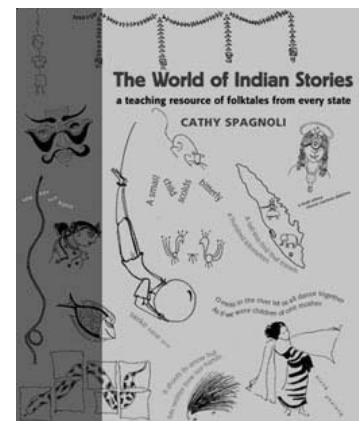
### The world of Indian stories

*- a teaching resource of folktales from every state by Cathy Spagnoli*

This new book by Cathy Spagnoli, a professional storyteller and writer, shows how storytelling be an ideal teaching tool for contemporary concerns. The book is backed with examples of stories from each of the 29 Indian states, and covers a wide spectrum of storytelling material – including an overview of Indian telling, tips on getting started, activities, a unique story map, replicable line-drawings based on folk styles, notes on tale types and further story sources.

For more details or to order visit [www.tulikabooks.com](http://www.tulikabooks.com)

Published by Tulika Publishers, 118 pages, 11" x 8.5", black & white, soft cover, English ISBN 81-86895-93-0, Rs 120.00





The Learning Network conference 2004, will be held at Dhyana Ashram, Chennai on February 19-22, 2004. We hope to have your participation in this conference. Attendance is by RSVP only.

Please send an email to [info@learningnet-india.org](mailto:info@learningnet-india.org) for more details or if you would like to help in organizing the conference.

### Contact Us

Email: [info@learningnet-india.org](mailto:info@learningnet-india.org)

[www.learningnet-india.org](http://www.learningnet-india.org)

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