



A Story of Fellowship in India

The Leaders We Need Are Already Here

by Nitin Paranjape



I educated myself in my own ways without adopting any given or traditional approach. This allowed me to take up every new discovery with enthusiasm and pursue the investigation of things I myself had come upon. I profited from the useful without having to bother with the odious.

– Goethe

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Foreword

In October of 2002, Manish Jain called me a walkout. I met Manish at a board meeting of The Berkana Institute, a nonprofit organization founded by Margaret Wheatley. A walkout, he said, was someone who was resisting the mainstream and "walking out" of conventional careers and schools. In order to initiate a path of his or her own making. I had recently walked out of my career as an executive in the high-tech industry, disillusioned by a work culture that sought to maximize control and glorified growth above integrity. I wanted to know what it meant to create *right livelihood*: a choiceful way of living that balances life-affirming values with economic need.

Manish and his colleague Nitin Paranjape were asking similar questions in India. They shared with me their beliefs that growing threats to our ecology, disruption of community social structures, and the rise of global consumerism have made it necessary to question many of the basic assumptions that have shaped the modern world. Today's youth are struggling to find their way

through schools that fail to create learning and jobs that suppress the human spirit. Manish and Nitin yearned to create an opportunity for young people to design their own life's path. A few years later, they dreamed up the Berkana Fellows program, the story of which unfolds in this booklet.

The Berkana Institute works in partnership with a rich diversity of people around the world who strengthen their communities by working with the wisdom and wealth already present in their people, traditions and environment. There is no universal solution for the challenges of poverty, community health or ecological sustainability. But there is the possibility of widespread impact when people working at the local level are able to learn from one another, practice together and share their learning with communities everywhere. We call that "trans-local" learning, and we believe that large-scale change emerges when local actions get connected globally while preserving their local culture, flavor and form.





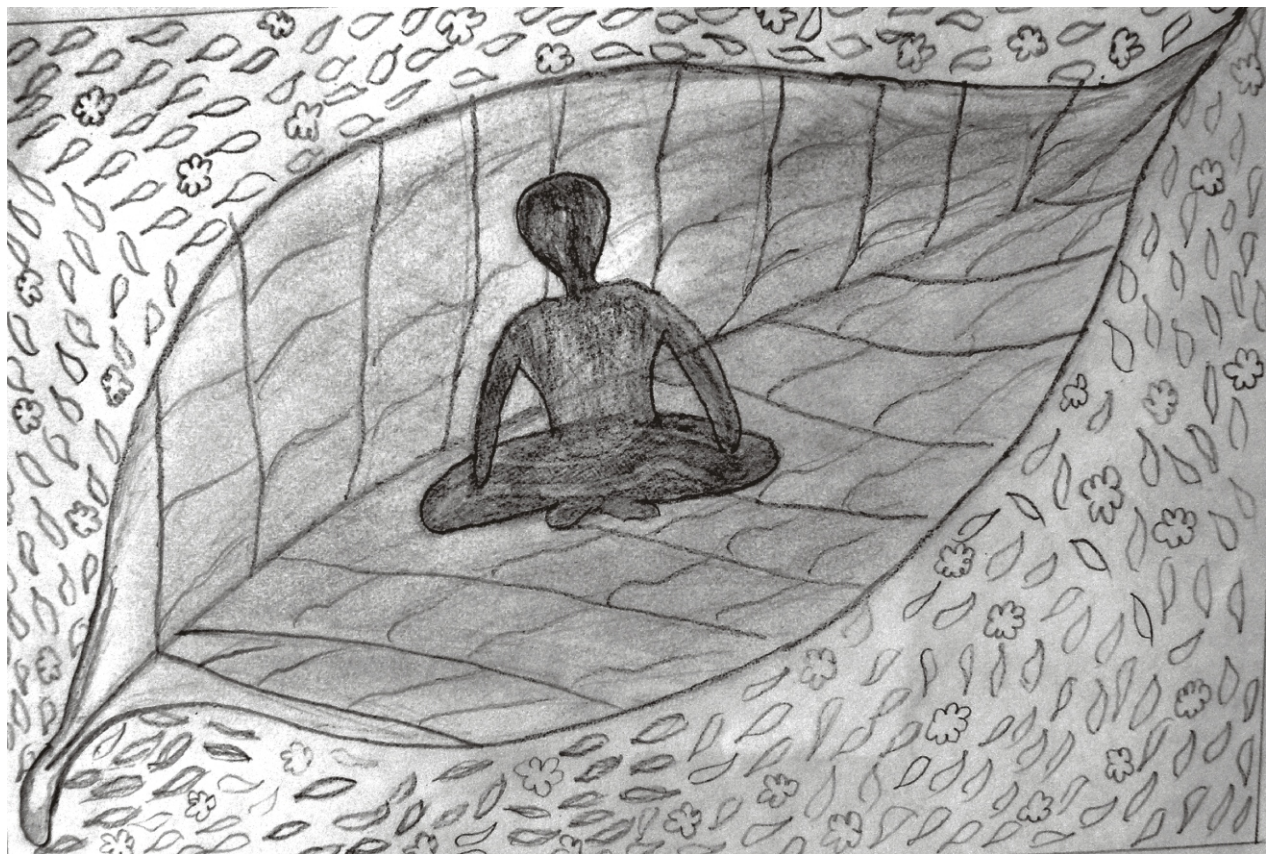
As members of the Berkana Exchange, Manish and Nitin pioneered the Berkana Fellows program among a diverse, international network of people who share their vision for self-directed learning that supports right livelihood. They shared their successes, challenges and questions with partners from Brazil and Mexico, Canada and the U.S., Greece, Pakistan, South Africa and Zimbabwe. For me, this is the possibility that trans-local learning represents: Collectively, we could invent powerful new ways of cultivating the capacity of younger leaders to create healthy and resilient communities. This booklet and accompanying film are an essential part of our commitment to inviting others into our learning and inventing new practices together.

I have met several of the Fellows over the past few years, including Mukesh and Sanjoy whose stories follow. What has been most remarkable to me about their journeys has been observing what happens when you begin to reject the readymade world—that is, the

pre-packaged systems we've inherited, whether they be pre-packaged food, education, healthcare or economic aspiration. Walking out of one system inevitably seems to lead to walking out of another and another and another. The Fellows who chose to practice organic farming also began homeschooling. The homeschoolers began to practice herbal medicine. The naturopaths also grew their own food. As I continue on my own journey, I inevitably find myself asking questions about where my food comes from, where my waste is going, who defines my state of health and where I derive my learning. What a privilege and joy it is to ask these questions in community—to share my reflections, insights and doubts with others who are challenging the illusions of the readymade world.

If you find yourself somewhere on this journey, please know that you have many fellow travelers.

*Deborah Frieze
Co-President, The Berkana Institute
Boston, USA*





Answering the Call for Self-Directed Learning

In 2006, Manish Jain and I decided that it was time to do something about the failure of schools to serve today's youth. Our organizations, Abhivyakti Media for Development in Nashik and Shikshantar in Udaipur, India, were both committed to creating self-directed learning opportunities for the many younger leaders who are resisting the lure of the mainstream and struggling to journey on a road of their own making. We believed that the desire to learn is simply part of human nature: Everyone is a natural learner, and if provided an opportunity, young people will spontaneously and effectively learn what they need to lead a meaningful life. We decided to create a fellowship program.

We began with three fundamental agreements: First, we didn't want to offer a readymade framework or pre-packaged solution; instead, we wanted participants to explore their unique path, grounded in their local realities. Second, each individual's inquiry had to be focused on creating stable and sustainable livelihood choices. Third, and

perhaps most important, the learning process would be about self-awareness and intrinsic motivation. This was based in our belief that long-term impact in the external world demands that we transform our inner universe.

In partnership with the U.S.-based Berkana Institute, Shikshantar and Abhivyakti piloted the Berkana Fellows program in 2006 as a self-organizing, collaborative enterprise among a cohort of younger leaders who would gather, journey together and dialogue in order to strengthen their local initiatives, raise questions about right livelihood, and enhance their learning through collective sharing. The fellows were invited to challenge conventional modes of research and study and to follow their inner wisdom and learning together. They took on an incredible array of projects, from creating biogas and rethinking how to use waste as an asset, to offering herbal medicine and reviving the practice of traditional song as a means of communal expression.

Since the program's launch, two cohorts have passed through the

"The process of fellowship and the way it has been facilitated has been very meaningful. We had freedom to structure our work and learning. We had the choice to decide on the process of our learning—the how, where and what of learning was in our hands."

*Sanjoy Singha,
Berkana Fellow*



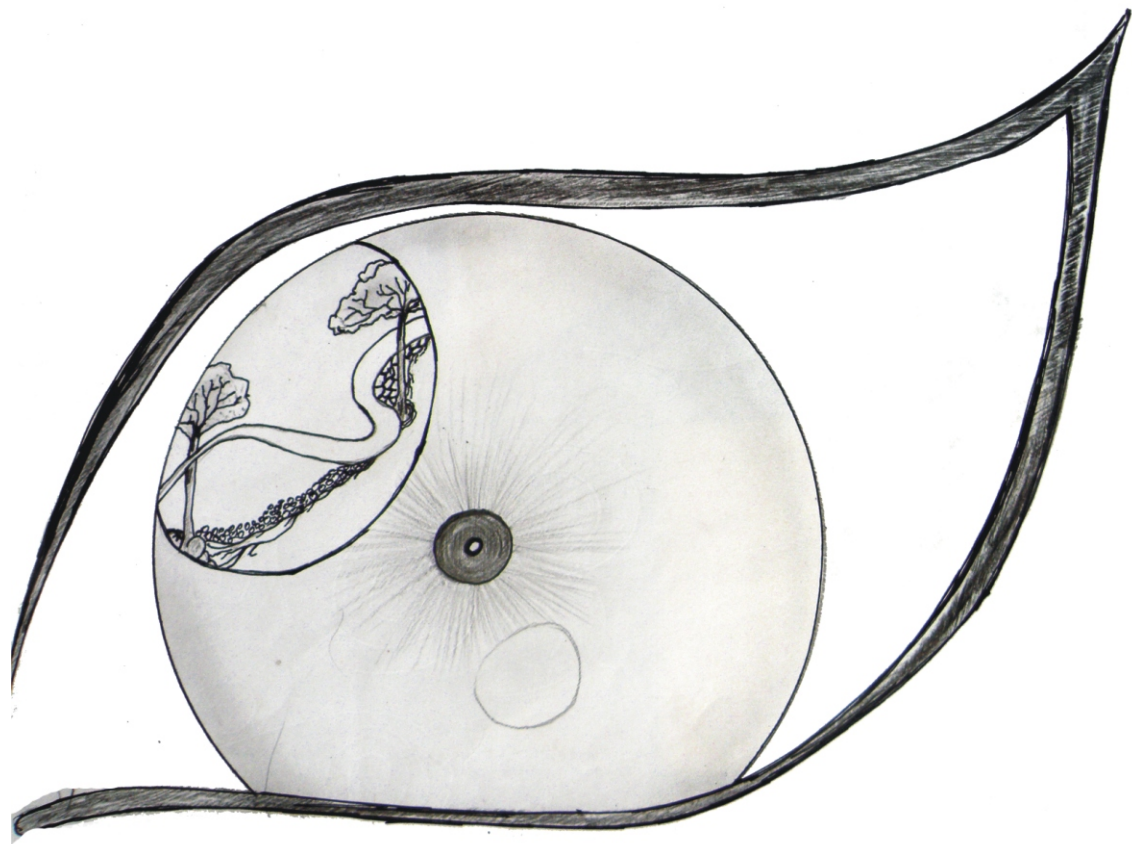
yearlong fellowship (see *Resources and Tools*), and for every participant—including Manish and myself as guides—the journey has been transformative. At bi-monthly gatherings, participants reflected on their self-learning processes and built camaraderie. We traveled together on harrowing and exciting learning journeys to Ladakh in Kashmir and to Auroville in Tamil Nadu. These experiences contributed to the collective process and deepened the fellows' commitment to one another. Each had to explore, define and fine-tune his or her learning process, navigating the freedom to chart a unique course. Mostly, the fellows were their own guides, and so the walk oftentimes seemed lonely. But they each integrated their family, friends and community into the experience, and this gave them the courage and patience to challenge their anxieties and take risks.

What follows are the stories of three fellows who stepped forward to create a new future for themselves, their families and their communities. Along the way, they had to unlearn

much of what they knew, confront their self-doubt and deepen their faith in their dreams. As you read their stories, we invite you to listen for the following patterns, which we'll return to in the section entitled, *What We Learned*:

- We make our path by walking it
- Learning unfolds in its own time
- We rely on our hands and feet
- Family helps us realize our dreams
- Home is a space for engaging community
- Start anywhere, follow it everywhere







One-Cow Wonder: The Story of Mukesh Jat

Mukesh Jat started with one cow. Kali, a black Jersey cow, provided milk and hope to the Jat family in the small town of Anjad in central India. Mukesh had recently left his job with a documentation centre and withdrawn from his leadership in the *Save the Narmada* Movement to return to his village to raise his family: his newlywed wife Sangita, one-year-old daughter Sejal, his mother, and, of course, Kali.

Things were not going as smoothly as Mukesh had hoped. The milk business was not enough to sustain a family of four, and Indore, the commercial capital of Madhya Pradesh, was beginning to look promising. Mukesh's brother had opened a small dairy and sweetshop there, and he could do with some help. Indore had already lured many youth from neighbouring villages and towns, and Mukesh had spent time working there previously for a local water company. "The profit was good," Mukesh said. "I earned about 800 rupees [\$16] per day, but my heart wasn't in it. I yearned for village life. In cities, there isn't much time for the self. I was occupied with work and earning money, but I

wasn't really in it." Even so, in late 2005, Mukesh was ready to give up his dreams of village life and return to the city, when he was granted a yearlong fellowship with Berkana.

We were eager for Mukesh to join the fellowship because we had seen his determination to stand on his own feet and to explore alternatives for working in his community in a sustainable way. The invitation of the fellowship rested on one core premise: to engage locally in a self-directed learning process that would create greater health and resilience for the fellow's family and community. The fellowship would offer Mukesh the freedom to learn, to develop knowledge and to expand his web of relationships throughout Anjad. He noticed that, like other villages throughout India, Anjad was plagued with agriculture that relied on heavy doses of chemical fertilizer that were costly and toxic. Mukesh had observed the negative impact of industrially farmed wheat on his own land, and after many conversations with friends and family, Mukesh decided that he would learn to produce



Mukesh Jat

How might the resources of family shape learning and livelihood in a way that benefits community?

organic manure.

His house had a small courtyard. Kali, the cow, had a small corner. There was cow dung available, and soon, Mukesh constructed a small biogas plant. The biogas flowed into Mukesh's kitchen and into his uncle's house on the first floor. With the biogas unit, Mukesh had taken steps towards self-sufficiency. He was freeing his family from dependence on market forces that kept fuel pricing unpredictable and availability uncertain.

On top of the biogas pit came the vermi-beds. Vermi-composting is the use of earthworms to accelerate the breakdown of organic matter into nutrient-rich, organic fertilizer (see *Making Biogas and Vermi-Beds*). Mukesh erected a shed and vermi-wash unit out of discarded materials. He struggled to find sufficient water for cooling the vermi-beds, and had to resort to using the village drainage water. "The water was very dirty. It used to smell," Mukesh recalled. "For four months while making the 10 vermi-beds, I used this water for cooling purpose. I was determined and was ready to bear

all this." Soon after, he was able to dig a borehole to access fresh water. He also faced difficulties sorting the manure until he designed a spinning wheel from scrap metal and a net to clean the manure of pebbles.

After three months, fresh organic manure was ready for use on the Jat farm. Soon, another lot had been produced which was sold to local farmers. "We felt Kali was giving us more than we had asked for," Mukesh said. "She was giving milk and *gober* [cow dung]. We were getting gas, and soon we also started getting organic manure. Seeing this, I felt optimistic for the future. Kali had done wonders."

Yet Mukesh still had doubts. He was plagued with questions, such as whether the fertilizer would be acceptable to local farmers. Other people in his community had attempted vermi-compost production and failed to create viable businesses. Would he also fail?

Apparently not. One neighboring farmer said, "I had heard of the

organic compost production by Mukesh. My elder brother knew him; I didn't. But we used to say hello occasionally. Once I started farming, I began going to Mukesh for advice. I told him to put the compost in as many acres of my farm as he thinks fit for the wheat."

The results were positive, and everyone in the Jat family was engaged with the work. His mother and wife hesitated at first, but they began to participate in their own ways. Even his young daughter tended the worms. The effort had meant long hours of drawing milk from the cow, cleaning the cow shed, collecting dung and depositing it in the biogas pit, stirring the pit, providing Kali with good fodder, watering the vermi-beds and maintaining the vermi-shed.

Ten months later, the scene has transformed. Three big cows stand next to Kali. They have given birth to four young ones. Mukesh's backyard is growing, and so is his fledging enterprise. He has connected one more kitchen to the biogas plant, as well as the new home toilet. A cousin has leased him

another plot of land. There, 90 more vermi-beds stand with loads of cow dung. The demand for Mukesh's organic manure has risen among local farmers. The net yield from the 90 beds of organic manure is going to fetch Mukesh and his team more than 100,000 rupees (\$2,500 USD) annually, easily enough to sustain them. Mukesh has cultivated a network of relationships with the farmers, many of whom are starting similar projects in their own homes and farms.

"When the farmers started showing interest in the produce, thoughts of big business and prosperity started circulating in my head," Mukesh said. "But later, while discussing my future plans with the fellows, I heard a different perspective about helping other farmers start their own production units, and I realised where my priorities lay. Instead of starting a business enterprise out of self-interest, I understood the advantage for our community if more farmers began production themselves—and what role I could play."

The fellowship has long ended, and



a small initiative has taken root. As it blossoms into a sustainable livelihood, new questions continue to arise for Mukesh: What kind of relationships should he have with his new workers? Would his initiative inspire others in the region to start their own enterprises? What about Sejal's future – will she leave this vibrant learning environment and join a school instead? Mukesh and Sangita have worked hard to create a home that nurtures diverse relationships in community, with the land and trees, through manual labor and mutual responsibility. How will that change as Sejal gets older? The family is conscious of the rich potential of their venture and is making efforts to sustain it.

The Jat home has been transformed into a fertile learning ground for everyone – Mukesh, his wife and daughter, mother and uncle, friends and fellow farmers. Kali is pregnant. So is this new learning center with infinite possibilities.

Making Biogas and Vermi-Beds

Armed with his ready supply of Kali's dung, Mukesh invested about 8,000 rupees (\$200 USD) to build a small biogas plant. On top of the biogas pit, he built vermi-compost beds. The worms Mukesh chose were an Australian variety, preferred over the local variety because of the speed at which they consume cow dung and reproduce. With initial capital of another 12,000 rupees (\$300 USD), Mukesh added nine more vermi-beds. (When Mukesh later expanded to build 90 additional vermi-beds, he used brick, rather than concrete, which required an investment of only 30,000 rupees, or \$750 USD.)

Then came the *jugaad*, also referred to as upcycling, which is the practice of making useful things out of waste. Mukesh erected his shed using such discarded materials as a broken pot and leaky tank.

When the cow dung first enters the biogas plant, the

methane is extracted. The biogas is piped through to Mukesh's kitchen and to his uncle's house on the first floor. "No more standing in queue for the LPG gas cylinder," Mukesh reports. "I don't have to be among those who struggle for their cylinders to be delivered."

The slurry from the plant is then collected and deposited into the vermi-beds, which are chock full of fresh worms. The beds are rectangular concrete blocks. This structure allows the worms to move from one bed into the other, after they finish devouring its contents. In three months time, fresh organic manure is ready.

A spinning wheel has been set up to sift through the manure and remove worms from it. Little Sejal, now three, works with pride in the plot of land with 90 beds. She lovingly picks the worms and puts them back in their "cool homes." If you ask her to give them to you, she refuses. She says, "They look nice in the vermi-beds!"



Mukesh's daughter Sejal and spouse Sangita create art out of waste



Mukesh's mother operates the spinning wheel.



Top part of bio-gas plant



Vermi-beds behind Mukesh's house

Healing Hands, Herbal Lessons: The Story of Sanjoy Singha



When Sanjoy Singha first visited Umariya, a village in central India, to learn about herbal medicine from a *guni* (traditional healer), he thought it would be only a daytrip. After all, he was a postgraduate student—he could learn anything quickly, especially from someone with no formal education. But as soon as Sanjoy started talking to Guni Jagannath, he realized he was in the presence of immense knowledge. Sanjoy put aside his notebook and began listening.

For more than two decades, Jagannath had been preparing and dispensing herbal remedies. His experience was vast. It was then that Sanjoy realized that to become a *guni* would require an enormous amount of dedication, discipline and passion. His postgraduate degree and note-taking skills were not going to be of much use. Instead, he spent three days with Guni Jagannath and began his foray into the world of herbal medicine. They visited the forest together, where he saw firsthand how the master went about his task picking the necessary

herbs. Sanjoy returned home, committed to the long learning journey ahead.

Soon after, Sanjoy met another *guni*, Shri Keshavlal Kevat, who had been cultivating medicinal plants and remedies for nearly 20 years. Keshavlal had walked out of formal education in the seventh grade with a belief that schooling was inculcating laziness and dependence in students. Keshavlal learned about herbal medicines by practicing and experimenting on his own. Sanjoy spent many days with him, observing how Keshavlal prepared the mix for diabetes, piles and fever. He witnessed the sensitivity with which the plants were treated and how their natural environment was protected and maintained.

“I have been learning the skills of herbal medicine from elders who are its practitioners,” Sanjoy explained. “There is lot of diversity of knowledge—we have to sustain this knowledge. Then young people like us have the responsibility to learn it. Even after learning skills, it will not necessarily be sustained. For that to



Sanjoy Singha

What wisdom is already present in your community?

happen, we have to practice. We have to include our family members and those who are connected to them."

Sanjoy had been curious about naturopathy since his youth, when his grandfather took him to an Ayurvedic healer to cure a severe bout of jaundice. Throughout his childhood, his grandfather inspired him with stories of the freedom struggle against colonial rule. These dialogues on *swaraj* (self-rule) helped give rise to Sanjoy's decision to pursue Gandhian studies and to serve in several different Gandhian institutions.

Damyanti, Sanjoy's wife, shared his Gandhian values. The couple wanted to live a creative and productive life, practicing *swaraj*—not just serving in one development organization after another. As they were exploring their next steps, the Berkana Fellowship invited the husband-and-wife team to pursue something close to their hearts. For Sanjoy, it was time to start making herbal medicines. "The first time we attended a Berkana meeting, I had to make a choice of

my learning interest," Sanjoy reported. "I chose herbal medicine as it was connected to my life. There were two important questions for me: How would I develop skills in herbal medicine, and what were the livelihood opportunities?" The fellowship would enable him to pursue his passion and learn how to generate a sustainable livelihood.

Sanjoy and Damyanti moved to Jabalpur because the small city offered many learning options. He began visiting *gunis* who lived in the forest area of Mandla and Umariya, where the Baiga and Gound tribal communities had practiced with herbal medicines for centuries. "My learning process has not been easy," Sanjoy said. "My mother-tongue is Bengali, and while I can comprehend and speak Hindi, I am unable to understand the different dialects in the Hindi belt. I was able to recognize the various herbal plants which I wrote down as I heard it spoken by the practitioners. Another challenge was to win the trust of the traditional practitioners of herbal medicine because they don't usually share their knowledge. They have

doubts and have been exploited by outsiders."

Sanjoy had his first chance to practice his new knowledge when Damyanti became pregnant. She was advised to increase her intake of iron and calcium. Instead of taking tablets available in the market, Sanjoy prepared a mix of *shatawari* and *aswagandha* powder, known as a *churna*. He gave her this daily, along with grape juice and green leafy vegetables. Her hemoglobin blood count became normal and remained so throughout her pregnancy. He felt a sense of accomplishment with this success, and with the other small mixtures he was trying out on himself and his close circle of friends.

Gradually, he began reaching out to more friends and neighbors. He began making many *churnas*, *kadhas* and other powders. One popular *churna* made from the bark of Arjun trees strengthened heart conditions; another was an effective tooth powder. He offered morning juices—carrot, tomato, wheatgrass, lemon. The response was encouraging. More people began

approaching him for consultations. He was now making quite a range of tonics and medicines for stomach ailments, gas, acidity and pain-relief. His confidence was growing, as was his capacity to take action when needed.

In the small backyard of his Jabalpur home, Sanjoy began farming. He planted cauliflower, carrots, tomatoes and spinach, and also experimented with growing neem, acacia, lemongrass, *tulsi*, *aswagandha*, *isabgol* and *kalmegh*. He composted the kitchen waste daily. Soon enough, his daily vegetable needs were met through his kitchen garden.

Sanjoy was reclaiming control over his body and health. The commodification of today's health systems, he believes, has removed us from nature, imagination and experimentation. Now, Sanjoy found himself moving closer to nature, engaged in growing vegetables, herbs and fruits; working with his hands and body; and preparing herbal medicines. "Herbs are not necessarily medicinal," Sanjoy explained. "Herbs are local





vegetation. When we consume them, the medicinal value affects us. There is an entire system of food based on seasons that is in tune with nature. Today, the naturalness associated with food has been severely compromised, resulting in illness."

Sanjoy continued learning through relationships with his family and community, with *gunis* and *vaidyas*, and by reflecting on his own practice and results. The costs of farming and making medicine were minimal, much cheaper than market prices. One of his and Damyanti's core Gandhian values was coming true: their dependence on market forces was decreasing.

At the end of the fellowship, Sanjoy received an offer to manage a Gandhian centre in Chattarpur. The old centre was mired in bad land deals and poor management, but what drew him to accept the offer was the vast amount of land it held. Sanjoy had begun harboring a dream: to start a learning centre that would support community members in creating self-directed initiatives in herbal medicine, organic farming,

yoga and naturopathy.

Since taking over in early 2007, Sanjoy, Damyanti and their tiny daughter Srija have turned the center into a thriving hub of activities, aligned with Gandhian principles—and tapping into the *gunis'* wisdom. When some patients demanded that the centre start providing services to their homes, Sanjoy refused. Instead, he urged them to start growing their own wheatgrass and other herbal remedies at home. The best cure, he believes, is one that is grown and prepared by our own hands.

Herbal Cures for Stomach Ailments

1. For digestive gas, mix a small spoonful of rock salt in warm water; add lemon juice and drink.
2. If gas trouble is chronic, then have one spoon of ajwain (carom seeds), Ilayachi (cardamom) and dalchini (cinnamon) in equal measure before lunch.
3. For constipation, boil 60 grams amaltas (Cassia Fistula or laburnum) pulp in a glass of water. When a quarter is leftover, sieve it and take before sleep, which will result in smooth bowel function in the morning.
4. Another cure for constipation is to have 1.5 spoonfuls of harda (terminalia chebula) powder mixed in warm water.
5. For curing indigestion, take equal measures of harda, amla (Indian gooseberry) and behada (terminalia belerica).



6. Another cure for indigestion is to make a powder of 3 to 4 cloves and mix with warm water.
7. To cure vomiting, chew lemon sprinkled with sugar.
8. For stomachache, apply hing (asafoetida) mixed in cow's ghee (clarified butter) on the navel.
9. To eliminate stomach worms, mix 5 to 7 papaya seeds in water and drink for seven days.
10. Another cure for the worms is to chew the raw leaves of the date tree.

Song and Soul Connections : The Story of Sangita Jadhav



Sangita Jadhav is a typical Maharashtrian girl. She grew up in Nashik, a fast-growing city just three hours north of Mumbai. Her parents struggled to make ends meet; her younger brother was involved in a youth movement. Sangita, too, wanted to usher in social change, but her ideas were typical of other young Indians who want to empower people through *development*—that is, "fixing" others, particularly poor folk, by providing them with programmes and services to make their lives meaningful and better. Filmmaking became her tool of choice as a means of intervening in community life, and she took a job as a community media activist at Abhivyakti.

When she moved into her husband's small mud house in the village of Makmalabad, outside of Nashik, Sangita became aware of the reality that existed in the village. She experienced poverty and thought of her village as under-developed, lacking in socio-economic and cultural resources. She and her husband shared the house with her in-laws. Her father-in-law was a

tailor who operated out of the home. He lived with minimal needs and meager resources. Like many urban residents who look down upon rural communities, Sangita viewed her family and neighbors with disinterest. Her mind was busy devising strategies for developing and transforming her village.

There was one practice in her village, however, that captivated Sangita's attention. This was the folk songs that the women used to carry themselves through their tasks.

Folk songs abound in rural India. They vary from village to village and are sung at marriages and festivals, and while working at home and in the fields. One form is *ovis*, which are sung mostly at home while grinding grain in the wee hours of the morning. *Ovi* means that which is woven together. The grind mill is an intimate space where women gather to grind flour. The space allows women to vent their feelings and frustrations about life in a patriarchal system. Unable to voice their hurt and dejection elsewhere, the grind mill becomes a place to unwind and connect with other



Sangita Jadhav

What if everything we needed was already there?

women. Singing also makes the hard work of hand-grinding flour less strenuous. Work gets accomplished while creating couplets about their experiences, and the circle of women help to refine and embellish the couplets. These songs express the hardships, pressures and aspirations that rural women experience daily. As one popular *ovi* soulfully narrates, "O family life! First burn your fingers, only then will you get the bread!"

Sangita was fascinated by these community songs and decided that she would make a film about them. She felt if she could learn the songs, she could use them to change and empower others. So she started interacting with the village women, attending their functions, listening to their stories and songs. "The women were amused," Sangita recalled. "They would tell me that it was not possible to teach me using school methods. They told me to learn on my own. The folk song tradition is an oral practice."

The women were hesitant at first. They doubted Sangita's interest and ability to learn their songs. But

Vithabai, one of the women from her village, invited her to a gathering of women, and Sangita began her learning journey. The gathering was magical. Women from homes near and far had come and were singing songs Sangita had never heard before. The variety was amazing.

On Vithabai's insistence, Sangita sang her first song, one that came from the oral traditions of the past. She felt odd, thinking the song was old-fashioned, and cursed herself for agreeing to sing it. The song was about the celebration of a village wedding. Though she started reluctantly, soon Sangita got into the rhythm of the song. It enveloped her, expressing the love parents have for their daughter, what it means to raise her and to give her away in marriage. As Sangita practiced, she became overwhelmed by the song's emotional tapestry, by its connection to the women, and by her own identity as part of the community. She felt the song was a gift from Vithabai and an initiation into the rural women's world.

"Every year during marriage season, women of the village would come

together and sing for hours and days together," Sangita explained. "Different kinds of songs filled the air, and I was able to savour their rhythms, tunes and beats. Sometimes I would hum these songs on my own. These traditional songs became part of my life."

Sangita swiftly passed from judgment to appreciation. It was as if someone had held a mirror to her own life. She saw in her family a husband who labored as a daily wage earner but who was a dutiful son; in-laws who were untouched by the lure and glitz of the consumer world; a father-in-law leading a life of integrity. The dolls he made from discarded cloth pieces for her daughter Manu now seemed more valuable than gold.

Sangita felt a new source of energy within her and took the pen into her own hands. Her rich experiences provided the source for her poems, and she began sharing her creations with her newfound friends. Her life, now felt incomplete without daily exchanges with other women. "I made an effort to understand the women, to strengthen my

relationship with them," Sangita said. "Now I feel they have become a part of my life. It is because of this intimacy that I began my creative journey. They were instrumental in drawing out the 'me' that was inside."

Back at work at the community media center, Sangita was teased about her efforts as a budding poetess. Her colleagues doubted her new zeal. But whenever an opportunity arose to offer her gift, Sangita didn't hesitate. She composed songs at the spur of the moment and sang them impromptu. Her activist colleagues were stunned. Encouraged, she began composing and singing songs on different occasions: at family functions, within the charmed circle of her women's collective, at community and organizational events. It filled her with a sense of power and creativity. Her relationships with others began to deepen. Her confidence rose.

"The fellows used to question me about my learning project, and it upset me a lot," Sangita said. "From their questioning, I realised that I



hadn't been clear about my learning. That's when I decided to focus my attention on learning the traditional songs."

The yearlong Berkana Fellowship was a discovery of herself and her community. Sangita connected to her soul, heard its many-nuanced layers and textures, and found the courage to bare it in front of her own people. Her songs became the means to express herself and to give something back. She started listening more deeply to the issues confronting the community, and she weaved what she heard into her songs. The lyrics became personal insights into social dimensions. They celebrated the power of the people and their rich traditions as a source of inspiration and change. "Now the songs spring from my lips with natural ease," Sangita said. "I feel the songs have a lot of potential. Themes of environment, zero waste and other issues could be easily woven into these songs." As her songs began inviting people to believe in their capacity to solve their problems, her relationship with her community shifted. Her women's

group became the hub of many activities—informal conversations, cultural ceremonies and collective songs with social messages.

Sangita's appreciation for her community of rural women was profoundly transformed. She began to see how they made life worth living, even under immense stress, by weaving together unforgettable relationships through song. The women she had underestimated have become her friends, her confidantes. Sangita now feels ready to re-invest herself in her community. "Now I am one among many whose contributions and insights are valuable in nourishing me and my community, She reflected " She no longer wants to change her community, but rather feels her community is in a position to chart its own future course because it has enough resources, wisdom, experience and knowledge.



Expression, by Sangita Jadhav

Stringing the myriad beads of words
We gather together
The women of my village
community.

Heartily singing as they work on the
grindstone, bonding, the closeness
engulfing.

The flood of feelings gush
Notwithstanding the lips tightly
bound by tradition

Cuddling the fond memories of my
maternal home

Longing for the warm embrace of
my mother, my fluttering heart soars
high. Where to, I wonder?

My feminine quest surges within.
The magic of the grindstone!

One ovi can spring open deep
recesses of my heart

Blind I was to its existence til I
paved my own learning path and
journeyed along with others

To celebrate this magic deeply
embedded in the fertile land of
community media.

(translated by Anita Borkar)

अभिव्यक्ति

शब्दा शब्दाचे गुंफित मणी,
मैफिल जमते राणीवणी.

बाया आमच्या गावातल्या,
जात्यावर गाणी म्हणी.

जशी केळासंगे सालटी, तशी ओव्यामधुनी नाती
सांगती.

भावनांचे बांध व्हटामधुनी ओसंडुन वाहती,
माहेरच्या आठवणीत हे का मला घेवुन जाती.

माउलीच्या भेटीची आसही मला लाविती,
फुलपाखरासारखे मन आकाशात भरारी घेते

पुसता मनाला जवळ हे का मला खेचत,
माझ्यातील बाई मी गाण्यात शोधते,

बसता ठाण मांडुनी ह्या जात्यावरी
एक तरी ओवी येई ओठावरी

उघडाया बाईच्या मनाचे कवाड

दगडाच्या जात्यालाच आहे केव्हाही सवड,
हेच गुड उघडाया लागे मला एक सालभर.

म्हणुन केला संग बरकानाबरोबर.

स्व शिकण्याच्या आवडीने एक झालो सवडीने
वेध घ्याया लोकांतील माध्यमांचा

— संगिता जाधव.





What We Learned

The fellowship was a bold experiment in self-organized learning—an experience we wanted to offer to young people who had walked out of formal educational institutions. Through the fellowship, we intended to legitimize learning spaces beyond the reach of formal institutions in an effort to support the emergence of healthy and resilient communities. It was in service of our vision of activating the margins of society, the edges beyond the mainstream that are blurred by distance and disinterest. Much happens in the margins. Resistance movements rise and fall, sometimes arousing the centre with unmatched energy and inspiration. But these movements often lack consistency and connection. We wanted to shift focus from the centre to the periphery—to understand the margins on their own terms rather than through the lens of the mainstream.

The fellowship process has been rewarding for me personally. It invited me to reflect on my own

life, and to better understand my fears and anxieties. A frequent theme in our cohort discussions was exploring the state of our inner world. I discovered that mine was being pulled in different directions. The allure of our consumer culture with its glitzy array of products and services was constantly being tested against my real needs. Questions surfaced: What are my needs? How do I meet them in a way that gives me energy to pursue my purpose? How do I strengthen my self-awareness and alignment with my values?

As I came into relationship with these young leaders, my aimlessness began to evaporate. Just as they explored the power of leading lives free from institutional control, I, too, became aware of my longing for greater control over my own life. The experience of facilitating the fellowship has given me courage to take risks in pursuit of meaningful, life-serving possibilities. It has illuminated a path for me to walk with renewed interest and commitment.

The yearlong process was not about





managing others, or teaching, or planning, or trying to get it right. It was about allowing our learning to unfold naturally, in its own right time. It was about making our unique gifts visible to ourselves and each other. It was about listening and building connections. And it was about inviting those of us standing in the margins to become stronger by staying right where we are.

Through sheer determination, hard work and support of one another, the fellows began to shed self-doubt and to chisel out a new future.

Mukesh's vision of self-reliance for his community of farmers, Sanjoy's trust in herbal cures as alternative medicine and Sangita's soulful creations that strengthen community ties are acts of courage and leadership. As these fellows nurture their dreams, they are serving their local communities for years to come. Learning centres are springing up organically in nearby homes and neighborhoods. They are connected to webs of support comprised of wise and experienced friends from India and beyond who are also exploding the story of what it means

to be marginalized in our society.

We know that there are many others like us, experimenting with new forms of self-directed learning that can bring greater health and resilience to the communities in which we live. As each fellow learned by sharing with each other, so, too, we wish to share our lessons with others who are struggling to journey on a road of their own making. Here are a few patterns that emerged for all of us:

- We make our path by walking it
- Learning unfolds in its own time
- We rely on our hands and feet
- Family helps us realize our dreams
- Home is a space for engaging community
- Start anywhere, follow it everywhere



The path of self-determination is not the prerogative of the elite; rather, it is available to anyone willing to confront their uncertainty and fear

We make our path by walking it

The fellowship was a self-designed and self-governed endeavour. In the absence of any centralised authority, the fellows were in a position of self-authorship. They had the freedom to experiment and to fail, and thereby to learn. They chose their steps carefully and in consultation with their family members and their peers, turning to one another to boost their self-confidence and courage. They swiftly realized that the path of self-determination is not the prerogative of the elite; rather, it is available to anyone willing to confront their uncertainty and fear as they walk their own path.

Learning unfolds in its own time

Learning is a unique personal journey. As the first fellowship concluded, it became strikingly clear that self-discovery has its own rhythm and pace. Each fellow had the freedom to allow his or her vision to unfold naturally, in partnership with family and community. In traditional schooling, the rate at which we are meant to learn is unified for all and imposed

by external expectations of advancement. For the fellows, the only expectation was that they would share thoughts and questions with each other. They had the time and flexibility to reflect, experiment and chart their own course of action based on the local culture and ethos. They exchanged ideas not only about their projects, but also their lives, inviting one another into critical introspection. Sanjoy, who was learning herbal medicine, started composting. Sangita applied zero-waste thinking in her home. Mukesh began exploring homeschooling for his daughter. By creating together a convivial environment of trust, friendship and freedom, the fellows broadened the scope of how learning could be integrated into life.

We rely on our hands and feet

For a long time now, educators have recognized the power of multiple intelligences—learning modalities that recognize the value of the interpersonal, kinesthetic, spatial, musical and more. And yet, traditional schooling persists in elevating cognitive development

over all else. The fellows' work with their hands and bodies was an essential part of their learning process. When Mukesh designed a slurry-filter from scrap material, he began to believe in his capacity to solve entirely new challenges. Sanjoy immersed his hands in plants and herbs, giving him the courage to provide therapy to his community. Sangita started to write her own songs based on old tunes and found occasions to sing them. When we elevate learning about language and logic above all else, we limit our capacity to develop healthy and whole families and communities. Community life is a tapestry of work, art, play and relationship.

Family helps us realize our dreams

One strong theme that emerged for the fellows was to appreciate the critical role family played in realizing their dreams. For each fellow, the family was supportive of his or her ideas and enthusiastically got engaged in the learning process. This was especially meaningful for children, who took interest in their

parents' experiments. Sejal, the three-year-old daughter of Mukesh and Sangita, developed a special relationship with the cows in the courtyard and the worms in the compost; Srijia, Sanjoy and Damyanti's three-year-old, began taking interest in plants and herbs; while Manu, the four-year-old daughter of Sangita and Dinesh, started singing and making toys with her own hands from waste material alongside her grandfather. Noticing the impact of intergenerational learning on their children, each family started a dialogue about ways that children learn and whether school serves them well. The self-directed learning process of the fellowship clearly demonstrated to the family and community the value of taking control of their own learning.

Home is a space for engaging community

Beyond the impact on family, the fellows' choice of using their homes as a learning space had a direct and powerful impact on their local communities. The home is a strong and vital centre of power and action.



By creating a shift in their relationships to their own homes, the fellows invited others into conversation about new possibilities. Mukesh's bubbling backyard aroused the curiosity of his neighbours, who were inspired to start something themselves. Nearby farmers showed interest and turned small patches of their fields into vermi-beds. Word spread and attracted many others, boosting confidence in the local community about the possibility of any individual stepping forward to create a different future. The fellows believed that creating the world they wished for began in their own homes, and by dint of their hard work, was becoming possible. Change was rooted in the local and relied upon the interest and support of family and community—and the fundamental belief in each person's self-worth. And while the fellows' initiatives were important acts of entrepreneurship, they were not self-centric or individualistic modes of action. They looked to community members as partners who had the potential to start their own enterprises, thereby increasing the

health and resilience of the community overall.

Start anywhere, follow it everywhere

Most international development programmes suffer from the crisis of scale: They assess impact based on the capacity a program has to be replicated extensively. The fellowship programme does not subscribe to such criteria. We believe that home is a starting point from which we move learning into community through conversation. We believe that the leaders we need are already here, if we trust their efforts to follow the path of change they want to create. The simple initiatives of these young people are giving rise to the recognition throughout their local communities that each of us has the capacity to transform our future. This can happen anywhere in the world.

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The fellowship process has been a source of inspiration for me. Seeing the tremendous freedom the fellows had to learn and act on their own values filled me with a deep sense of purpose. It not only demonstrated that self-directed learning is possible, but also that it is an essential practice of our time. All over

the world, individuals and communities are walking out of stifling educational institutions in favor of new experiments that are a rich source of originality, creativity and local knowledge. The fellowship is certainly a small initiative, but when many people take small steps together, we generate the capacity to create enormous change. Our stories remind us that the margins are vital and alive—the doorways, perhaps, to a new world of learning and community change. The time has come to celebrate the diversity of our many experiments. They are the harbingers of hope.



Sensing Local Knowledge, by Manish Jain

In my participation in the Berkana Fellows programme, I witnessed the power of *lok gyan*—knowledge and resources that belong to and are used by local people. Though I had read about "traditional knowledge" systems while at university, I first came face-to-face with *lok gyan* through interactions with my so-called illiterate grandmother many years ago. I learned many skills from her, including various herbal and natural remedies and how to upcycle waste. I learned about healthy relationships, self-discipline, and life and death. I came to understand that diverse ways of knowing exist outside the world of big institutions and experts, and I stopped seeing local communities through the deficit lenses of the development industry. *Lok gyan*, as opposed to traditional knowledge, is not static or frozen. It is living and vital to the health and resilience of local communities.

Through the Fellows programme, we created time and space for youth to meaningfully reconnect with *lok gyan* and make it relevant to their modern lives. I was excited by the

incredible energy (witnessed in the stories in this booklet) that was released when young people moved beyond the world of textbooks, exams and classrooms, and stepped into the world of informal, local and de-institutionalized knowledge. The quality of youth leadership that started to emerge over time was palpably different than I had seen in the past, as was the quality of relationships these young people began to develop with their own communities.

Our interactions with local healers, farmers, artisans and artists were intense—both challenging and inspiring at the same time. I remember one of our fellows' gatherings in the village of Gagardu, near Ajmer, Rajasthan. We all worked for four days with a local artisan to build a one-room mud brick house. His knowledge of architecture and building technologies was totally sustainable from an environmental as well as economic point of view. As we layered brick upon brick, we reconnected to the intelligence in our hands and to an ancient wisdom



of aesthetics, resourcefulness and well-being. In what many organizations would have written off as a poor village, we saw the richness of possibility.

Accessing these local knowledge systems with a spirit of deep integrity, curiosity and creativity is key to replenishing and evolving them in our own communities. I have learned that is not enough to study them or document them, rather they must be lived in our everyday choices, expressions and relationships in order to survive and flourish. In this way, each of us evolves our own local knowledge system based on our experiences, feelings, intuition and search for meaning. *Lok gyan* is then no longer something outside of us but very much part of us. I do not believe today that any serious effort to support ecological sustainability, poverty alleviation, deep democracy or happiness can move forward without a strong grounding in *lok gyan*. It calls us to see and appreciate the resources that exist both within ourselves and our local communities. And it invites us to

imagine new more nuanced possibilities—beyond the generic market-based, governmental and non-governmental frameworks—for creating community-led solutions to our most pressing problems.

Unfortunately, our modern systems of education, at best, neglect or humiliate *lok gyan* and, at worst, destroy or commodify it. Our experience with self-directed learning in the Berkana Fellows programme points to another way for youth to engage with peoples' knowledge in a spirit that is mutually nurturing. The most exciting part for me has been the organic weaving of *lok gyan* with three domains: personal transformation, entrepreneurship and community service. The tapestry that emerges from this is right livelihood. I have seen that *lok gyan* is not only relevant to my grandmother but also to my own life. I feel a real urgency to explore this further as I painfully witness local knowledge systems in my community and all over the world rapidly disappearing with the onslaught of development and global monoculture.

Besides deepening my clarity and conviction, the Fellows programme has surfaced some exciting questions for me, such as:

1. What is "right livelihood"?

What kinds of enterprises can help us bring our personal lives and larger systems into harmony, inspire our families and communities, and replenish the earth? How do we maintain our integrity in establishing these enterprises while living within a larger system that encourages corrupt behaviour?

2. What organizational forms best support self-directed learning processes for more learners?

Can we create forms that are rooted in *lok gyan* and are financially accessible and viable?

3. How can we strengthen communities of practice, *lok gyan* and our learning commons?

How can we bring different communities of practice into deeper dialogue with each other to open up new possibilities for integrated thought and action? How do we create greater harmony and collaboration between *lok gyan* and expert knowledge?

To further explore and experiment with some of these questions, we are launching an evolution of the Berkana Fellows programme: Swaraj University. This alternative university will seek to build a model of youth leadership that will draw from and replenish *lok gyan*. It will support youth in generating green enterprises with a vision of regenerating healthy and resilient local communities. We will emphasis right livelihood as both a form of resistance and regeneration.

The question of right livelihood is something that I personally have struggled with ever since I walked out of UNESCO 12 years ago. I have been searching for some work that I am talented at; work that creatively engages my head, heart and hands; and work that helps to strengthen the cultural and ecological resources of my community. I have had many conversations with my family on how we can live a good life of voluntary simplicity and gift culture. But there are still some basic expenses to cover. How can I generate this income without compromising my

values? During the course of the Fellows programme, I discovered my passion for healthy cooking, organic farming and slow food. Slowly but surely, with experiments starting in my home, I have been trying to weave these into a right livelihood. The struggle and dedication I have witnessed from the Fellows has helped me stay motivated in this pursuit. I am certain that my involvement in Swaraj University will help me continue my journey towards right livelihood.

We have learned that there is a tremendous need for community support during the radical path of walking out and walking on. Swaraj University is an invitation to many friends to collectively create that web of love and support. Join us in pioneering this learning programme: www.swarajuniversity.org

Manish Jain,
Co-Founder,
Shikshantar, Udaipur, India





Resources and Tools

Who we are

The Berkana Fellows program was launched by two Indian organizations—Abhivyakti, based in Nashik, and Shikshantar, based in Udaipur—in partnership with the U.S.-based Berkana Institute.

About Abhivyakti

Abhivyakti Media for Development is a Nashik-based non-profit organization engaged in fulfilling the media and communication needs of grassroots organizations and strengthening their leadership abilities. Abhivyakti has been in existence for the past 20 years and has extensive experience facilitating change through collaborations, partnerships and networking.

Nitin Paranjape is one of the founder-members of Abhivyakti. For more than 20 years, his passion has been around supporting community media for deeper personal reflection and social dialogue in local communities. He also serves as the South Asia steward of The Berkana Institute.

About Shikshantar

Shikshantar, a non-profit movement, was founded to challenge the monopoly of the culture of schooling and its institutions of thought control. Shikshantar is based in Udaipur and is committed to creating spaces for individuals and organizations to dialogue on finding alternatives to some of the fundamental models of education, development and progress.

Manish Jain is the founder-coordinator of Shikshantar, which has been significant in shaping the larger unschooling movement in South Asia. His passion is in the areas of organic farming, healthy cooking, zero-waste living and community media.

About The Berkana Institute

The Berkana Institute works in partnership with a rich diversity of people around the world who strengthen their communities by working with the wisdom and wealth already present in their people, traditions and environment. Berkana and our partners share the clarity that whatever the problem,

community is the answer. We prepare for an unknown future by creating strong and sustainable relationships, by wisely stewarding the earth's resources, and by building resilient communities. Berkana was founded in 1992 by Margaret Wheatley.

Deborah Frieze is co-president of Berkana and pioneered the Berkana Exchange, a trans-local learning community based in a dozen countries. She is passionate about in entrepreneurship, self-organizing systems and new models of leadership.

Fellows Profiles

The first cohort of Berkana Fellows came together in 2006. It included:

1. *Sumi Chandresh* lives with her husband and two never-been-schooled children in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. She chose to learn about cooking oil-free food and making upcycled jewelry out of waste. Presently, she is exploring options to create a community kitchen in Ahmedabad.
2. *Vishal Singh* is a zero-waste practitioner who lives with his parents and extended family in Udaipur. He is associated with Shikshantar and is trying to make his neighbourhood a zero-waste zone.
3. *Sandip Chavan*, now a full-time urban gardener, began his fellowship by experimenting with growing plants in bio-waste on hard concrete floors in Nashik. He is expecting his first child and works in Abhivyakti.
4. *Mukesh Jat*, who produces organic manure, lives in Anjad, central India.
5. *Sangita Jadhav*, a community

media practitioner, lives in Nashik, Maharashtra.

6. *Sanjoy Singha*, an herbal medicine practitioner, manages a Gandhian Centre in Chhatarpur, central India.

The second cohort of Berkana Fellows kicked off in 2007 :

1. *Ravikant Shukla* took interest in learning about organic ways of living and soon became immersed in the interconnected systems of organic agriculture, compost, food preparation and zero-waste production. He is seeking to practice in his community near Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.
2. *Tarachand Pandey*, from Uttaranchal in Himalayas, took keen interest in herbal medicine and visited practitioners in North and Central India to hone his skills. He lives with his parents and family near Almora.
3. *Sukhmani Kohli* learned about organic farming by visiting farms and seeks to better understand organic growing methods. She lives with her parents who run a theatre organisation, CEVA, in Chandigarh.

4. *Kanha Ram* lives in Ajmer, Rajasthan, with his family and is practicing community music alongside other local youth. He makes herbal medicine and upcycled jewelry, and is a drummer.

5. *Rajesh Hirve* works with Abhivyakti on youth initiatives in North Maharashtra. He is also learning urban farming using bio waste, and is involved in turning his neighbourhood into a zero-waste zone.

6. *Nirmal Prajapat* is a learning activist with Shikshantar in Udaipur, and is keen to use his upcycled mosaic painting in his neighbourhood as a basis for community dialogue. He lives with his parents and siblings.

7. *Rakesh Khanna* is learning video and wants to set up a community media centre in his village near Indore, central India.

Resources

Here are a few of our favorite books, films and web sites that we came across during the Berkana Fellowship. They illuminate some of the themes and practices we explored in our work together. We hope you'll find these resources useful as you step onto your own self-directed learning path.

In particular, we invite you to view a short film about the fellowship entitled, "The Leaders We Need Are Already Here." You'll find it online at www.berkana.org/fellowsfilm.

Self-Directed Learning

Books

Freedom and Beyond, and ***Instead of Education: Ways to Help People Do Things Better***, by John Holt. Holt's books share his critique of modern schooling systems. He believes in the learning capacity of individuals to follow their interests and create a personal learning path. He also describes his vision of a community-based alternative for traditional schooling. ***How Children Fail*** and ***Learning All the Time*** are two other useful reflections on learning by Holt.

Education and ***Hind Swaraj***, by M.K. Gandhi. These books capture Gandhiji's philosophy on education and life. ***Hind Swaraj***, written a hundred year ago, defines the concept of "self-rule" in the context of modern society and raises questions about reliance on traditional educational institutions.

Creating Learning Communities, by Ron Miller. Miller shares models of new ways of thinking about teaching and learning in community. He claims that other experimental frameworks for education can deepen the learning experience.

Vimukt Shiksha, published by Shikshantar. This series was created to show alternative education practices. This group of authors and activists believe that we can develop learning systems that liberate the full potential of human beings. The electronic booklet is available at www.swaraj.org/shikshantar/resources_publications.html

Films

Accepted is a 2006 comedy film about a group of high school seniors

who, after being rejected from all colleges to which they had applied, create their own college. The film addresses the failure of conventional higher education in the U.S. www.acceptedmovie.com

Nai Taleem (Basic Education) is a film series produced by Shikshantar in Udaipur, India, that explores a range of themes connected to learning, organic farming, herbal medicine, art and zero-waste. Contact: shikshantar@yahoo.com.

Schooling the World: The White Man's Last Burden (2009) is a one-hour documentary by Carol Black on the politics of education and its connection to the global economy—at the cost of local culture, customs and resilience. <http://schoolingtheworld.wordpress.com>

Websites

Families Unschoolers Network provides support for unschooling, homeschooling, and self-directed learning. The primary purpose in unschooling is to keep alive the spark of curiosity and the natural love of learning with which all

children are born. The site hosts newsletters, articles, reviews, resources, web sites, books and more. www.unschooling.org

Learning Freely Network is a worldwide network of natural learners, homeschoolers and other families and groups who are "learning freely."
www.learningfreely.net

Re-cognition looks in depth at different paradigms of knowing and reconnecting with natural and authentic learning. Three topic areas include Paradigms of Knowing, Experiments in Crafts and Celebrating Childhood and Life.
www.re-cognition.org

Shikshantar hosts a treasure trove of reading material on learning and unlearning, among other stimulating topics. The web site provides links to articles, publications and other sites. www.swaraj.org/shikshantar

Organic Farming

Books

Bringing the Food Economy Home, by Helena Norberg-Hodge. This book explains the social,

ecological and economic benefits of local food. Norberg-Hodge argues that dependence on homogenised markets and centralised economies contributes to large-scale ecological and socio-cultural destruction. She makes a case for a shifting to a locally-based food and economy.

Plenty for All, by Shripad Dhabolkar. Dhabolkar discusses methods of farming that enrich the soil rather than deplete it, particularly on small tracts of land. He describes ways to lead a healthy and sustainable life by living in harmony with nature.

The Natural Way of Farming: The Theory and Practice of Green Philosophy, by Masanobu Fukuoka. Fukuoka shares his approach to farming in a natural way. The basis of his philosophy is that nature grows plants successfully without human interference; therefore, the most practical approach is to let nature be in control. While explaining his reasoning, this do-nothing farmer delivers a scorching indictment of chemical agriculture and the human assumption that we can improve on

nature.

Seeds of Plenty, Seeds of Hope, by S. K. Vijayalakshmi. This book describes the efforts of several grassroots NGOs in Asia that help farmers conserve indigenous genetic resources. It argues against the use of mass-marketed seeds on the basis that while they promise higher yields, they actually leave local farmers in a cycle of dependency and debt.

Organic Vegetable Gardening, by Subhashini Sridhar, S. Arumugasamy, H. Saraswathy and K. Vijayalakshmi. These authors focus on techniques for growing vegetables without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It is an informational guide to composting and also gives suggestions for natural pest and disease control for vegetables.

The Global Warming Survival Handbook, published by Live Earth. This handbook describes the ecological crisis, particularly concerning the growing threat of global climate change. This practical guide details useful skills to counter

the crisis or live through it.

Websites

Path to Freedom provides resources on permaculture, bio-diesel, graywater harvesting, handmade crafts, ecobuilding, and much more. Path to Freedom is a grassroots, family operated, viable urban homesteading project, established to promote a simpler and more fulfilling lifestyle and reduce one family's "footprint" on the earth's dwindling resources. www.pathtofreedom.com

Self-Sufficient-ish offers practical ways to approach self-sufficiency in urban areas. This is a website for anyone who wants to be more self-sufficient. We call it the urban guide to almost self sufficiency, a sort of urban homesteading site. www.selfsufficientish.com

Food Not Lawns is turning yards into gardens and neighborhoods into communities around the world. They envision a thriving human ecology, and embrace theories and techniques derived from permaculture, kinship gardening, ecological design, and biodynamics.

www.foodnotlawns.com

Willing Workers on Organic Farms is a worldwide network and international movement that is helping people share more sustainable ways of living. It offers ways to become a farming volunteer across different countries. www.woof.org

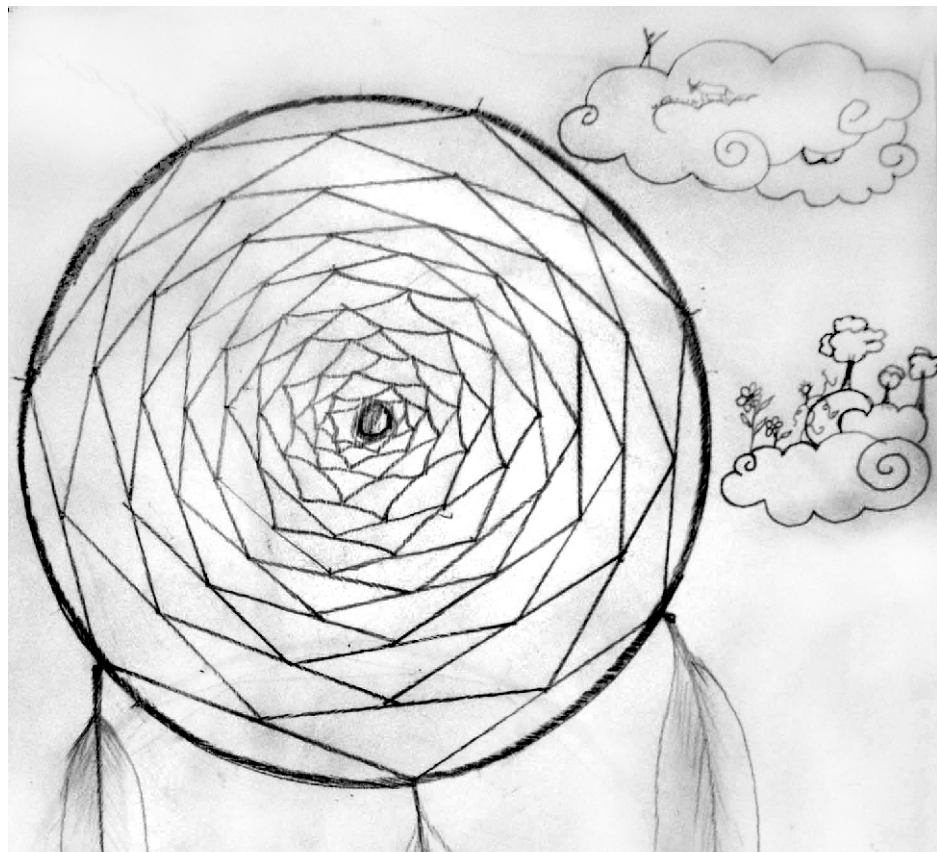
The Green Guide is a definitive green-consumer resource on taking steps to live in harmony with nature. It informs you about rainwater harvesting, organic gardens and avoiding plastics—among other useful information. www.thegreenguide.com

Films

We Feed the World (2005) is a film about food and globalisation, fishermen and farmers, long-distance lorry drivers and high-powered corporate executives, and the flow of goods and cash—a story about scarcity amidst plenty. With its unforgettable images, the film provides insight into the production of our food and answers the question what world hunger has to do with us. [\[world.at/en/film.htm\]\(http://world.at/en/film.htm\)](http://www.we-feed-the-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

King Corn (2007) shows how the industrialization of corn has all but eliminated the family farm which is being replaced by larger and larger industrial farms. This trend reflects a larger industrialization of the North American food system, in which decisions relating to what crops are grown and how are based on economic considerations rather than their impact on the environment or community. www.kingcorn.net

The Real Dirt on Farmer John (2006) is an epic tale of a maverick Midwestern farmer. Castigated as a pariah in his community, Farmer John bravely transforms his farm amidst a failing economy, vicious rumours and arson. He succeeds in creating a bastion of free expression and a revolutionary form of agriculture in rural America. <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/realdirt/film.html>



Natural Healing

Books

Agenda for Revitalization of Indian Medical Heritage, by Darshan Shankar, is a detailed and pragmatic overview of the richness of our traditional medical heritage. This book focuses on revitalization of local health traditions, developing different medical cultures and integrating these systems of medicine within our modern health system.

Vrkshayurveda: Ayurveda for Plants, by S. Sridhar, S. Arumugasamy, K. Vijayalakshmi and A.V. Balasubramanian, is a user's manual on the subject of Vrkshayurveda, an ancient Indian science dealing with all aspects of plant life. This book describes important farming practices and contains many recipes for treatment of diseases.

Fasting: A Unique Remedy for a Hundred Ailments, by Dr. Herbert M. Shelton, is an excellent treatise on the efficacy of fasting as a means to treat various ailments and maintain good health.

Plants that Heal, by Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems. These booklets highlight everyday uses of some common plants with extremely valuable properties. Each booklet contains instructions on the cultivation of the plant and its uses in agriculture, gardening, human and animal health. A set of references at the end of each booklet provides guidance on where the reader can look for more information. Plants covered in the series are turmeric, garlic, onion, kalmegh, ginger, custard apple, aloe, and malabarnut.

Are You Really Healthy?, by Radhika Kinger. Kinger writes in a simple, straightforward manner, laying out health and illness-related myths and showing them for what they are. The essence of the book is that we must listen to our bodies and trust "body-intelligence," for the body will respond and tell you what it needs.

Films

Leap of Faith, by Shammi Nanda is a documentary from India about three families in different locations

who are trying to resist the influences of an institutionalised world. The film shows the families' choices as they experiment with living in ways that are aligned with their hearts and minds, ultimately giving them a deep sense of healing. Email Shammi at shammi_nanda@yahoo.com

The Power of Forgiveness explores recent research into the psychological and physical effects of forgiveness on individuals and within relationships. This includes feature stories on the Amish, the 9/11 tragedy and peace-building in Northern Ireland, along with interviews with renowned Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, best-selling authors Thomas Moore and Marianne Williamson and others. The film shows the role forgiveness can play in alleviating anger and grief and the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that come with it. www.thepowerofforgiveness.com

Community Media

Books

Art and Swadeshi, by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, who was not only a pioneer historian of Indian art, a master-interpreter and one of the most versatile scholars of this century but he was also a universal man—one who urged Indians to be conscious of their glorious heritage. Coomaraswamy was the harbinger of Indian nationalism, but his outlook was neither parochial nor chauvinistic. It had universal appeal.

Annual Expressions is an annual journal produced by Abhivyakti, a media organisation based in India, which focuses on community media and localisation. Stories focus on what community media is and why we need to engage with a variety of media forms to activate community awareness and change. Email abhivyakti@sancharnet.in

Community, Culture and Globalisation, by Don Adams and Arlene Goldberg, tells stories from around the world about local identity, culture, resilience and community activism. The stories use theatre,

video, community media, and publications from around the world to activate a diverse range of voices that counter growing globalisation.

Websites

Theatre of the Oppressed was created by the late Augusto Boal of Brazil to deal with local and complex problems through expressive theatre. Through performances, individuals and communities bring out their perspectives to collectively solve their pressing problems. www.theatreoftheoppressed.org

Digital Storytelling Center is an international non-profit community arts organization rooted in the craft of personal storytelling. They assist youth and adults around the world in using media tools to share, record and value stories from their lives, in ways that promote artistic expression, health, well-being and justice. www.storycenter.org/stories

Social and Public Arts Resource Center is committed to socially responsible art and to assisting communities in finding their voices through public expression. www.sparcmurals.org

Video Activist Network (VAN) is an informal association of activists and politically conscious artists using video to support social, economic and environmental justice campaigns. The site lists films and books, provides tips on using video cameras and networking. www.videoactivism.org

Films

The Other Worlds of Power is a film that evolved from the Learning Societies workshops on self-directed learning and organic living at the World Social Forum held in Mumbai in 2004. The film is available from: abhivyakti@sancharnet.in.

The Story of Stuff, a 20-minute animation film by Annie Leonard, is a critical look at our production and consumption patterns. Annie Leonard's inspiration for the film began as a personal musing over the question, "Where does all the stuff we buy come from, and where does it go when we throw it out?" www.storyofstuff.com





www.berkana.org

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