

Multiworld

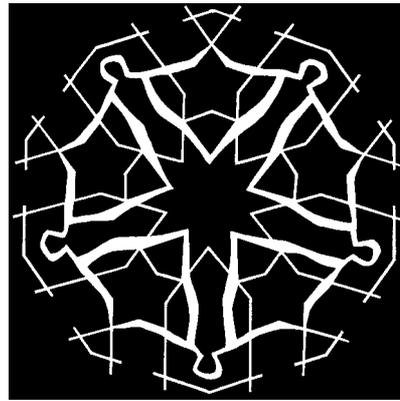
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Educating for Slavery or Freedom?

Recent proposals to clone human beings—creating duplicates from an original—are alarming because we find the prospect of factory-made copies of individuals an affront to nature and to what our sacred teachings tell us.

The outcry against biological cloning, however, is completely hypocritical when one sees that fairly significant sections of human beings in our part of the planet (Asia, Africa, South America) are already little more than mental, cultural or spiritual clones.

How did this become possible? Through an ubiquitous institution called 'modern education'—a much glorified project that facilitated the successful copying of people much before a cloned Dolly sheepishly crawled out of the lab.

We are raised from early age as clones in laboratories called schools, colleges and universities specifically installed for the purpose by our former political rulers. We are programmed to think, to imagine, to talk, to teach, to consume, to debate, to dress and to conduct ourselves as carbon copies of what are assumed to be successful originals located and living in the most admired societies of the world: Europe and the USA. We merely implement the programmes their intellectual communities decide as worth doing.

We appear to have nothing really significant of our own.

The formal education system represented in millions of schools and like institutions all over the planet is the single biggest catchment from which minds are recruited, homogenised and harvested today by the commanders of globalisation. It is quite disturbing therefore to see that while globalisation has provoked rebellion from millions, education has remained for some reason out of the raging debates and street battles. We continue enthusiastically to send our children—our most precious God-given gifts—to school and college even though they will have no option but to serve globalisation's merciless agenda.

Those who have had the good fortune (it appears) to escape these regimented institutions are labelled 'uneducated': their deep indigenous knowledge and experience are brushed aside as of little worth. Those who, having tasted something of what these institutions have to offer, bravely decide to 'walk out' are called 'dropouts', or other bad names. Those who stick it out

but are unable to make the grade are dubbed 'failures' — some even kill themselves. The only ones declared successful are those who blindly and devotedly 'by-heart' the system. In turn, with great dedication and conviction and at vast expense, they contribute to the churning out of more clones.

Gandhi warned of *countries* getting themselves cloned. He denounced, for instance, the move to turn *Hindustan* into *Englishstan*.

Those who, having tasted something of what these institutions have to offer, bravely decide to 'walk out' are called 'dropouts', or other bad names.

In grand sympathy with Gandhi on this issue were other remarkable individuals like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Ananda Coomaraswamy. Tagore parodied the imported, western schooling system so effectively in plays and short stories that those exposed to them rarely went to school again.

It is now an accepted fact that schools are 'negative learning environments'. That colleges and universities in Asia, Africa and South America teach and certify knowledge of doubtful validity and utility. That they actively assist to disconnect people from nature. Their basic task appears to be nothing more than simply training people to fit smoothly as unthinking, obedient cogs within the global production machine.

For long we have desperately needed a dynamic *coalition* of individuals, institutions and organisations that will assist individuals and communities—proud of their not-English, not-European identities, languages, life-styles and culture—to resist efforts, howsoever well-intentioned and well-meaning, to turn them into clones. Indeed, the globalisation project can only be successfully taken down by undermining its recruitment agenda currently ruling our educational institutions.

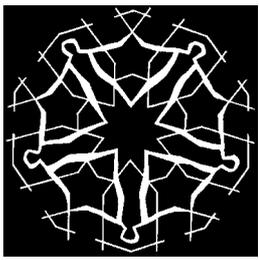
Welcome to the Multiworld Network. You now know what lies ahead.



January 2003 - Issue No. 1

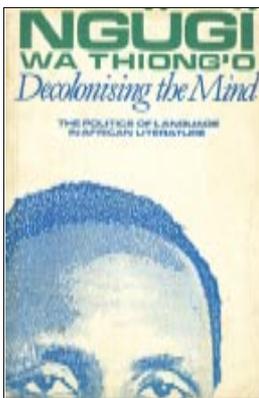
The Multiworld Network's Newsletter

Kamiriithu
UN MUNDO EN QUE PAMUCHOS MUNDOS



The design of the Multiworld logo is based on a typical Islamic tessellation. Tessellations are complex geometrical patterns constructed entirely out of polygons of various types. Used throughout the world in architecture, handicrafts and textiles, Islamic tessellations present a perfect fusion of decorative art and mathematical science. It is said in Islam that such patterns in their harmony and unity, convey the infinity and indivisibility of God.

Here, five figures linked together with outstretched arms, represent the indigenous peoples of the continents of Africa, Asia, Oceania, North America and South America. They emerge from — and yet remain integrally a part of — the base tessellation. The base tessellation, incorporating sun and star forms represents the cosmos, and also the vast 'knowledge-universe' of these peoples.



Decolonising the Mind was written by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o as his farewell to the English language. Since then, Ngũgĩ has written only in Gikuyu, his mother tongue.

If you cannot locate a copy of *Decolonising the Mind* — which actually pioneers many of the themes that have led to the installation of the Multiworld Network — you can get it from us.

Ngũgĩ has been maintaining contact with the Multiworld Network and supports its objectives.

And, of course, he is very pleased that the Multiworld Network Newsletter is named after his village in Kenya and the revolution he started there when he turned conventional notions of theatre and education upside down.

The Multiworld Network: Beginnings

In most of our countries, it is considered normal (and even desirable) if children — commencing from the time they are two and a half years old, up to the time they reach the age of 21 — are kept for long periods of time imprisoned within schools for the almost exclusive purpose of being drilled to memorise things that are supposed to assist them when they become adults.

Many of us who teach feel we are being forced to spend the best part of our lives teaching or learning sterile, mostly borrowed material, bereft of life, cut off from reality. Worse, we are mechanically engaged in these tasks within institutions that were expressly set up decades ago to destroy our creativity and our identity; to make us to doubt our innate abilities to interact with our environment, to question our inherent sense of worth and, finally, to discard reliance on indigenous intellectual traditions, knowledge systems or cosmologies.

Modern education is based on the conviction that those it wishes to certify would not be able to function or perform better unless they are de-linked from their own personal experience, their own traditions, their own histories and myths, and inborn abilities to think freely.

Thus, what passes off as an 'educational system' today — and its higher culmination, the college and university setup — has become a cruel trap in which millions of young people unwittingly find themselves.

The present day educational system is not only an imposition (requiring mandatory at-

Multeworld's principal aim: to attempt to generate and support, in the place of the present 'educational system', better, diverse and more effective learning opportunities that would respect freedom and would stimulate, rather than suppress, the inherent creativity of human beings and ensure lives of individual dignity.

tendance and compliance at every stage), but it also demands implicit allegiance to the homogenising values and objectives of globalisation. As such, it is a means of preparing the spirit of people to unquestioningly accept the presently entrenched (and actively expanding) model of development and globalisation even when the latter requires deeper entrapment and bondage.

Jalal Al Ahmad called this expansion 'occidentosis: the plague of the West': the urge to condition all children and young people to accept and conform to a perception of human beings that was profoundly anti-nature, anthropocentric and individualistic to the point of being anti-social.

While educators throughout the world gallantly promise in their grand theories that education is designed to make

people free, the institutions to which people are invariably sent to learn turn out to be prisons and boring reform houses (from which a few courageous human beings manage to flee or walk out at the earliest possible opportunity). Even those passed off as 'successes' remain for the rest of their lives on some kind of parole and in constant need of 're-training' and refresher courses.

The Multiworld Network proposes to organise programmes and campaigns around these issues. It was launched by Citizens International, a trust headed by Mohamed Idris, in Penang (Malaysia) in February 2002 with one principal aim: to attempt to generate and support, in the place of the present 'educational system', better, diverse and more effective learning opportunities that would respect freedom and would stimulate, rather than suppress, the inherent creativity of human beings and ensure lives of individual dignity.

Today, with the pressure of globalisation and WTO regimes pushing down our backs, the education system is getting even more skewed in the direction of diverting the resources of societies to produce workers for the global mega-production machine. As the tentacles of the modern education system spread to even the remotest villages and tribal hamlets and compulsory education to children under 14 is offered as its gift to the people, there is an urgent need to rethink this programme of total enslavement. Now or never.

Kamiriithu: What's in a name?

The Multiworld Network may have originated as a joint initiative of intellectuals and educators from India and Malaysia, but it aspires to connect with similar initiatives also underway in Africa and South America as well, where we find an equally strong history of resistance to the continuing disease of colonial education.

So when we needed a name for the Network Newsletter, we decided to opt for Africa and found our inspiration in Kamiriithu.

The Kamiriithu Community Education Centre was an unusual institution set up by African writer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, in a village of the same name in Kenya. You can find more details of it in Ngũgĩ's classic book, *Decolonising the Mind*. In brief:

The theatre scene in Kenya, even after independence in 1963, was dominated by theatre companies and groups largely led by expatriate Europeans, performing English plays written by English authors. The trend of using English as the medium of expression continued even with

the emergence of Kenyan playwrights. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o himself at first wrote several plays in English.

All this was to change, however, when a woman from the village of Kamiriithu approached him demanding he do something for their education. As Ngũgĩ himself lived near the village, he agreed, and with others, set up the Kamiriithu Community Education Centre.

Ngũgĩ saw theatre as a medium of learning. He disagreed with conventional imported notions that theatre had to be 'taken to the people'. Theatre had always been part of African culture, playing an important role in village rituals and even everyday life. Ngũgĩ sought to create a form of theatre that gelled with the lives of the people participating, be it the performers or the members of the audience.

The performing space, more by accident than by design, was an open air auditorium. This entailed auditions and rehearsals being held under the public gaze, open to anyone who wanted to watch or offer his or her comments and criticisms. They were again timed so that they would not interfere with the day to day life of the villagers.

The script was completely dissected and constructed by the performers and villagers, often with the interpolation of lines and situations from their collective experience.

The play was eventually staged after seven months of rehearsals and was a great success, with people coming from faraway villages and towns to watch it. The Kenyan Government, disturbed, soon withdrew the licence granted to perform. This was the first in a series of government interventions, leading up to the incarceration (without trial) of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o for more than a year. The Kenyan Government thereafter demolished the open air auditorium used by the Kamiriithu Centre.

Ngũgĩ thereafter fled to the US where he has continued his writing and teaching career. Who knows, he may now return to Kenya since his old political opponents have this year lost favour with the electorate.

Kamiriithu, also the village in which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o was born, thus aptly symbolises Multiworld and its dreams.

Mohamed Idris inaugurates *Multiworld* in Penang

The world system has perfected a method of training and selection that enables it to recruit for its needs apparently the brightest and the best, and after selection, to use such recruits against the interests of the rest. Called 'quality education', the method invariably involves pitting thousands and millions of aspirants in a vastly unequal race among themselves to literally fight, by means fair and foul, for the really few places displayed as available for those who succeed. Success is understood as achieving close conformity and adherence in all respects with the requirements of modern life, or the rituals of bourgeois civil society. It also involves a sacrifice, a self-deprivation of one's inherent right to question, to revolt, to dissent, to create, to be free.

The creative energy of children and youth, from the age of five till the early twenties, is first frozen by schooling, and allowed gradually to atrophy till it appears to disappear completely from their normal life. This exercise is conducted ruthlessly, I might add, in all societies in the industrialized world. It has the sanction of parents, the State, the ruling classes, whether political or intellectual. It eventually earns the sanction of the victim as well, when he decides that this is the most attractive option available to him if he desires to have recognition and approval of the self.

The method through which conformity in ideals is achieved is not even spectacular, on the contrary, it is fairly tedious if not revolting. For a minimum of fifteen years, when the mind functions the best and the spirit wishes to soar, the victim is compelled to read, process and

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memorise lifeless texts on the grounds that such texts represent science, truth, correct pictures of the real world. The victim is, as a rule, forced to discount and distrust his own experience. Every once in a while, the victim is subjected to certification procedures, in the form of examinations, during which he or she is assessed for their ability to recognize such texts correctly or repeat them from memory even if they do not understand their meaning.

Some of these texts are then taken overseas and regurgitated, cut, manipulated, rewritten allegedly for the benefit of people there. Thus, we know that Macaulay laid the basis for the creation of India's education system. Its purpose was overtly stated to be the recruitment of persons of Indian origin to assist the colonial State in the exercise of its power. Similar projects were installed in other enslaved countries in Asia and Africa as well.

This substitution or subversion of education with training violates the spirit of all that is good with the human race. It violates religious codes, civilisational conduct, and can only be seen as a sign of active degradation of the human spirit. Therefore, we conclude, the so-called modern 'education' system must be shaken at its foundations, in very much the same manner as

earthquakes are known to shake foundations.

The issue is how should this be done? Can it be achieved by asking questions? Like whose knowledge system is this? What is its purpose? If we did not create it, how can we be asked to claim it as our own? How do we reject our own knowledge, result of centuries of experience and valid, for such knowledge? What are its various assumptions? Have these been scrutinized by any of our intellectuals, secular or religious? What about our own knowledge? If it is valid here, why is it not valid elsewhere? Is our knowledge valid only if re-investigated or patented within the perspective of the modern system?

These are important questions to ask. We need to demand answers. But whether the answers are forthcoming immediately or not, at the moment at least we are convinced that we cannot continue to function as human beings with borrowed knowledge. Borrowed knowledge can only enable us to lead borrowed or inferior lives. Gandhi said that anyone guilty of the sin of propagating European civilization should be sent to the (then) penal colony of the Andamans. What punishment can we mete out to educators and parents who commit the indefensible crime of destroying identities, patronize homogeneity

and suppress creative freedom?

It is required of us, however, as self-respecting, intelligent human beings to carefully examine the politics of knowledge generation and dissemination in our academic institutions; to dissect the assumptions behind the sciences we call sociology, psychology, history, political science etc. We should give ourselves the freedom to choose freely, accept after consideration and reject where necessary, particularly all those intellectual disciplines where we may not find the assumptions acceptable to our view of the universe.

Let us draw up concrete plans, if possible, right down to the last detail, of how we can take down our present universities, instigate students to rise against the tyranny of dreams pushed by corporate machines and organize workshops to encourage faculty to rebel against the domination of Western academics and create their own creative academic discourses.

The *Multiworld Network* must support these plans everywhere, like a banyan tree: plans for the dismantling of borrowed knowledge, the rejection of unwarranted assumptions, the restoration of our absolute right, as human beings, to our own knowledge; the right to learn, not from texts, but from being and from doing, and from simply being ourselves, as God made us.

— From the speech inaugurating the *Multiworld Network* in Penang

Who are in the *Multiworld Network*

Council of Elders

Nelson Mandela (Proposed)
The Dalai Lama (Proposed)
Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer
Haji Mohamed Idris, President,
Third World Network
Pujya Hitrudivijayji Maharaj,
Jain monk
Dharampal, historian

Advisory Council

Haji Mohamed Idris (Chairperson)
Samdhong Rinpoche
Haji Mohideen Kader
Anwar Fazal
Ashis Nandy
Vinay Lal
Shilpa Jain
Ngugi wa Thiong'o
Claude Alvares (Convenor)
Munir Fasheh

Participating Individuals (first list)

Pawan K Gupta, India
Sunil Sahasrabudhey, India
B S Chimni, India
Makarand Paranjape, India
Sailen Ghosh, India
S.N. Nagarajan, India
Rajiv Vora, India
Sangeeta Sriram, India
Jessica Hutchings, Aotearoa
Zakir Kibria, Bangladesh
Vivek Bhandari, India
Yusef Progler, UAE
K.B. Jinan, India
Avijit Pathak, India
Mohamed Iqbal Asaria, UK
Manish Jain, India
Gustavo Esteve, Mexico
Fathima Idris, Malaysia
Ziauddin Sardar, Pakistan/UK
Wasif Rizvi, Pakistan
Mashhood Rizvi, Pakistan

Marianne Knuth, Zimbabwe
Coumba Toure, Mali
Charles Otieno, Kenya
Isaac Ochien'g, Kenya
Arjuna de Zoysa, India
Han Deqiang, Beiching
R.K. Joshi, India
Rajesh Kasturirangan, India
Venu Govindu, India
Venkatesh R. Iyer, India
Madhu Suri Prakash, India
Arvind Gupta, India
Nitin Paranjpe, India
Anita Borkar, India
Raj Sethia, India
Zaid Hassan, India/UK
G Nammalwar, India
Lisa Aubrey, Ghana
Prashant Varma, India
Sundara Raman, India
Sanjoy Damyanti, India
Vidya Patwardhan, India
Japan Pathak, India
Ramaswamy Selvam, India

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shikshantar@yahoo.com
Citizens International
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Poison Free Food Trust
Erode, Tamilnadu
thulir@rediffmail.com
Society for Integrated Development of the Himalayas (SIDH)
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Email: sidhsri@sancharnet.in
Partners for Urban Knowledge Action and Research (PUKAR)
Mumbai, India
kshekhar@bol.net.in

Multiworld Network websites

multiworld.org

The Multiworld Network is not a centrally directed project, but will eventually comprise several continent- and country-based nodes that will be linked through the project. The main Multiworld website is: multiworld.org

We are therefore encouraging educational activists in every country within the South to have their own Multiworld chapter and site, operated by their own core group. Naturally, several of these will be in their own national, regional or local languages, with crosslinks to the main Multiworld page.

The main website will host discussions in the principal languages of the South: Hindi, Chinese, Swahili, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi etc.

We are also envisioning separate Multiworld sites on specific issues like the WTO, debt, international law, etc. Any person volunteering to set up and run such sites for us is welcome to do so. Please keep us informed so that work is not unnecessarily duplicated. If you come across interesting sites that should be linked with the Multiworld page, please inform us.

Multiworld.org, for the moment, also hosts the Multiversity webpage and the webpage dealing with the teaching and implications of (colonial) international law.

There are crosslinks that will take you to other multiworld sites, including those dealing with schooling (taleemnet) and organic agriculture (indiaorganic). We are also providing linkages to several other sites which are working in similar directions.

The multiworld.org site is being updated every week commencing January 1, 2003. We welcome contributions to the multiworld webpage from sympathetic colleagues and friends in Asia, Africa and South America.

taleemnet.org

This site is exclusively for reporting on discussions and experiments dealing with education outside school walls or outside the framework of 'factory schooling'.

Educators, parents and even students are encouraged to visit the site to learn about what damage is done to children and learners through the coercive schooling process.

After reading the critique, parents may be interested in knowing what other parents are doing in different parts of the country and abroad.

The site features stories of children who have done better out of school than if they had continued with it.

Links are provided to significant home-schooling movements within the industrialised countries where there is an even greater mental anguish about the negative impact of schooling on personality development of children and youth.

indiaorganic.org

This site deals exclusively with the field of organic agricultural science. For the moment, the information available relates largely to the organic farming movement in India and Malaysia.

The site provides linkages to several organic farming sites within the country and abroad.

It reports on intellectual work carried out by farmers and innovations in the area of restoring soil fertility, improving the micro-community of soil species and organisms, homemade inputs, etc.

The main activities of organic farming are carried out under the rubric of Vazhviyal Multiversity which is located in Tamilnadu.

The first major activity of Vazhviyal relating to such teaching activities is already underway. Come early February 2003, three experienced and articulate organic farmers will leave for Malaysia to guide Malaysian farmers in the theory and practice of organic farming.

multiversity msn page

Yusef Proglar from the UAE runs an independent Multiversity website which also features exciting new discussion material, rare articles and reports on Multiversity themes.

Proglar is editing a series of short essays by important scholars who have attempted to challenge in a fundamental way Western academic culture and its various associated components. You can access the site at:

<http://groups.msn.com/multiversity>

Join the discussions there. The site is frequently updated and the discussions way out. Everything relating to the regime of Western academic studies is being challenged with determination, verve and imagination.

Multiworld Teachers

The Multiworld Network is arranging for organic farmers from India to visit Malaysia, but eventually the Network will recruit a wide spectrum of experienced teachers who will visit and teach wherever they are assigned to by the Network.

The Network is inviting people who have great skills (whether in writing novels, or raising earthworms or education through theatre) to volunteer their services to this initiative.

After Multiworld has evaluated their skills, it will assign them for short creative teaching assignments in any of the three continents. Please register your name with the Network in case you wish to participate in the programme.

An Invitation to Join

The Multiworld community began small, but is steadily expanding, as more and more individuals and institutions decide to opt out of the facade (or farce) of making a living out of disseminating the work of other people's brains, in this case, those belonging to Western academics and educational pundits.

By April 30, 2003, the Multiworld Network will have more than 500 educators, academics, intellectuals, creative artists, children, linked with each other as part of an international community spreading exclusively across Asia, Africa and South America.

This new network will systematically take up issues of intellectual independence, decolonisation of academia, generation of knowledge and categories outside the framework of 'white studies', and the design and implementation of locally controlled, locally relevant learning societies.

Individuals and institutions that subscribe to Multiworld's objectives and goals are not only welcome to join the growing Network, but invited to set up their own circles in which carefully thought out strategies for independent learning, decolonised thinking and creative ideals are discussed and given political space.

As its name felicitously declares, Multiworld is not necessarily to be headquartered in one single central location on the planet. We welcome the active creation of Multiworld Chapters in different countries in Asia, Africa and South America. These Chapters, we hope, will support and patronise each others' work and exchange indigenously created materials.

Access to the Multiworld Network is through its webpage and through *Kamiriithu*. We welcome communications but these may be addressed to the Multiworld Network office in Goa, India.

Subscription Form for Kamiriithu Newsletter

Yes, count me in on this enterprise. I want to deliver a mortal blow to globalisation's designs on the minds, spirits and lives of children and young people everywhere.

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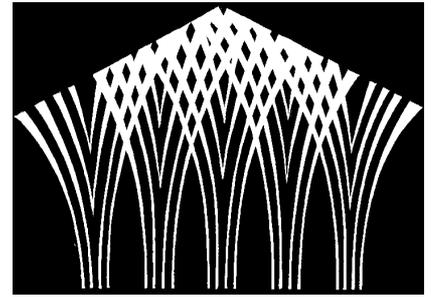
E-mail:
miversity@goatelecom.com

WEBSITES

<http://www.multiworld.org>
<http://www.taleemnet.org>
<http://www.indiaorganic.org>

In Buddhist, Hindu and other worldviews, the tree is associated with knowledge and wisdom — for example — the revered Bodhi tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

In this design, five tree-forms connect together to suggest the confluence of the ideas and knowledge-systems of the indigenous peoples of Africa, Asia, Oceania, North and South America. The spaces between the trees suggest entrances — the doorways of the mind and spirit that are opened through the process of a holistic education. The roof-form suggested by the intertwining lines continues the architectural metaphor, representing a house or institution of learning.



The Question of 'White Studies'

An American Indian, Ward Churchill, as far back as the early 1980s, provided a most significant denunciation of what passes off as knowledge even today in our schools, colleges and universities. Churchill placed all higher education in American universities under the label of 'White studies'.

He observed that American Universities had no qualm about setting up departments for African studies, American Indian studies, Mid Eastern studies, etc, but nowhere could he find any catalogue description of White studies.

Churchill reasoned that if American universities could create separate disciplines for the study of specific non-American societies, there was no reason why there should also not be a separate department for White studies. The reason for not having any White studies in any curriculum, he concluded, could only be because *all* higher education was nothing but a form of White studies. These studies originated with and reflected the worldview of the European knowledge system and they simply assumed that this knowledge system, though born within a specific cultural framework, was universal.

The crux of the White Studies problem, then, cannot be located amidst the mere omission or distortion of matters of fact, no matter how blatantly ignorant or culturally chauvinistic these omissions and distortions may be. Far more importantly, the system of Eurosupremacist domination depends for its continued maintenance and expansion, even its survival, upon the reproduction of its own intellectual paradigm — its approved way of thinking, seeing, understanding, and being — to the ultimate exclusion of all others. Consequently, White Studies simply cannot admit to the existence of viable conceptual structures other than its own.

It was this very framework of White studies that came to be expanded across the globe through the colonial education systems set up to deal with people of colour, whether in Africa or Asia.

While the Europeans may claim reasons for assuming the superiority of their own knowledge system, we are yet to understand how people in our parts of the globe could have swallowed hook line and sinker, not only the content but the outer framework of White studies and credit it with universality.

We could of course excuse our own behaviour if we had continued to operate under the colonial rule of Europe. But this regime ended more than half a century ago! So how come we have continued to remain faithful to the teaching, interpretation, and implementation of White studies in our own countries? What explanation do we have for simply assuming that only White studies could be the basis for a universal education system, from school to university?

The Multiversity would like to ask these questions now, for it is necessary to find answers for what otherwise appears to be a fairly indefensible activity and one that has gone on brainlessly for far too long.. Ask sociologists, psychologists, grammarians, historians or any other academic in any university in Asia, Africa or South America why they teach disciplines that are nothing but White studies, and they really have no

White studies has made possible the emergence of a species of human being who knows no traditions except the restrictive intellectual tradition of Europe. Whether we teach sociology, philosophy, ethics, history, anthropology, or whatever, we teach nothing of our own.

We teach only borrowed material, cooked in other people's brains, often in languages we do not even speak or understand, and we call all this activity 'higher education'. It could be better described as 'lower education' instead.

answer. The easiest reply given is that they went to university, studied these subjects, were trained to discourse on the main concepts, and never at any time thought the assumptions of the knowledge system ought to be thoroughly examined, let alone rejected. They never thought their role as academics or intellectuals demanded anything more than simply implementing what they had been themselves taught to accept as universal science.

The entire structure of academia today whether in India or Malaysia or Kenya is nothing but a frank reflection of White studies. The curriculum in countries as disparate as the United Kingdom or the Philippines is very much the same. White studies has made possible the emergence of a species of human being who knows no traditions except the restrictive intellectual tradition of Europe. Whether we teach sociology, philosophy, ethics, history, anthropology, or whatever, we teach nothing of our own. We teach only borrowed material, cooked in other people's brains, often in languages we do not even speak or understand, and we call all this activity 'higher education'. It could be better described as 'lower education' instead.

According to another notable Native American thinker, John Mohawk, colonized peoples have three choices. They can remain 'good subjects' to the colonial system and not question any of its precepts or how it is distributed; they can become 'bad subjects' of the colonial system by accepting most of its precepts but questioning its distribution, or, to truly become liberated from Western colonialism, they can escape the system of White studies altogether and operate as 'non-subjects' by thinking and acting in ways beyond the reach of the narrow set of assumptions embedded in the White Studies model.

Churchill's work is a good start at helping teachers and students alike to move from their present status as good subjects toward a temporary station of being bad subjects by questioning or subverting the system from within. However, the overall goal is to become non-subjects of the still existing and powerful colonial order by abandoning or dismantling the system altogether and seeking habits of mind that are independent of the colonial order and its local proxies.



BRINGING COLOUR BACK INTO ACADEMIC STUDIES

The University as a Mimic Factory

Why call this 'higher education' when it is neither higher nor education?

For the past couple of centuries, the European modelled university has been replicated *ad nauseam* in every nook and corner of the globe with the noble intent of spreading a uniform perception of nature (based on modern science) and therefore a similar method of research and training across the world. The widespread assumption of the universality of modern science and – and by association naturally – the alleged superiority of other aspects and products of American and European culture, have provided the sanction for this diaspora.

The actual knowledge generating centres naturally are located in the West, and they continue to supply the categories and terms for all intellectual debates. We play along. They remain the center, while we keep ourselves (or are kept) at the periphery. They create; we copy and apply. We do not challenge the underlying assumptions. We blandly copy because these disciplines are apparently 'well-tested' and 'scientific', an officially-recognised body of knowledge. Replication is safer.

In such a situation, studies and research are considered best if done within the framework and 'guidance' of Western institutions. We have no felt need to go beyond the settled 'white' disciplines of sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, etc. Yet, these 'sciences' only retain value within the precincts of the academic world. Even within this world, there is hardly any true belief in their premises or assumptions.

Today, we may think that it absurd that one culture should become the norm for all others, to the extent that diverse majorities around the globe would seek to destroy their own identities and communities in the misguided drive to imitate or replicate the main features of the dominating culture. But this depraved belief in homogenization has remained the basis of development theory for the past five decades.

University education in the South was thought by some to be a benign project, designed to



The Multiversity must have, of necessity, a credible agenda for decolonising the mind, decolonising knowledge and asserting our complete intellectual independence.

Such an agenda will help open up new possibilities for creative, collective action. Even after a trial of more than a hundred years, Western modes of perception have proved incapable of being drafted or accepted as a truly universal way of understanding Nature or interacting with it.

impart a 'liberal education'. But, as in the case of schooling, the content of that higher education came in the form of printed texts wholly imported from the so-called developed countries, and rarely related to experience in our own societies. The ultimate purpose of the mind-numbing exercise was not intellectual freedom but spiritual servitude.

From its early origins several centuries ago as a respected and autonomous institution that hosted a community of scholars and students who met to discuss specific issues, the university today has almost wholly surrendered itself to the supremacy of texts and all that this implies – particularly the tyrannies associated with the various hierarchies of interpretation that such texts require. Scholarship has degenerated into a skill of text recognition, text replication, and a dis-

play of the names of the manufacturers of key texts.

The crisis in the system, caused by the over-production of thousands of 'paper' graduates, has driven young people to seek additional certificates, in order to narrow down the numbers against whom they may have to compete. So one goes for an MBA or other additional courses (diplomas in computer science are also a rage), or pays extravagant sums for a 'brand-name' education to enable one to stand out of the crowd (or the mob) for the few places available as high quality employment (which, the world over, remains as elusive or insecure as low quality employment).

The scale of the injustice facing young people is mind-boggling: millions must submit to the tyranny of performing well at memory tasks, so that the best of them can be chosen for further

training. This leaves the majority, who may not get high marks, as 'failures'. A system of education, which practically dismisses the bulk of its young people as failures, should have been banned long ago.

This deadly circus has gone on for more than 150 years. The Western educational system, far from being competent to guide the rest of the world, is itself in a profound state of crisis. It is unable to figure out the new direction in which it should go. Therefore, this is as good a time as any, to strike out in fresh directions on our own. There are no teachers available to guide us in which direction we must move. We must be our own teachers.

If we agree that this is the challenge facing us, we can set out to propose a counter set of assumptions which would better reflect what we are, where we live and also take account of our indigenous intellectual histories. We may take a critical stand on various aspects of such histories, but it cannot be our position that all of them are 'absurd', 'humanly unacceptable', 'predated', 'irrational', 'invalid' or 'unscientific'. Before this statement is even remotely identified with the political claims of groups like those, for instance, promoting Hindutva in India, it is important to clarify that the violence, intolerance and regimentation associated with such forces is similar to the violence associated with conventional schools. The drive to indoctrinate and disempower is a cardinal feature of both.

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Dictionary Project

Vinay Lal, an Indian historian at the present moment located within the US, has commenced work with Multiversity associates on the preparation of a dictionary which will explain key words in circulation in normal discourse, with details of their political meanings.

Lal has welcomed widespread participation in the project and can be contacted at:

vlal@history.ucla.edu

For more details, check the multiworld.org site, where sample entries are provided.

Multiversity Tracts

You can get access to Ward Churchill's historic essay, *White Studies*, either through the Multiworld webpage or in printed format, through Other India Bookstore.

In 2003, the Multiversity proposes to publish a series of similar, important essays which challenge in a fundamental way the manner in which present day conventional academic scholarship sees the world. All these essays and pamphlets will originate exclusively from intellectuals from the South.

The aim of the new series is to have a set of readers that can be circulated through seminars and workshops in select universities in Asia, Africa and South America that wish to do more than just award paper degrees.

Multiversity is also commissioning critiques of existing White studies disciplines like sociology, economics, psychology, history, anthropology, etc. Scholars from Asia, Africa or South America who are interested in writing such critiques are welcome to get in touch with us.

WHITE STUDIES

Ward Churchill
THE INTELLECTUAL
IMPERIALISM OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

REPS
Radical Essentialist Pamphlet Series

CITIZENS INTERNATIONAL

One of the principal reasons the Other India Bookstore (OIB) was started in 1986 was because if you visited any bookshop in the country, you couldn't get books from Africa.

Or for that matter, books from Malaysia or from Singapore, or from the Philippines. Or even from France or Sweden or Finland or Germany.

Likewise, Indian books could not be purchased in any of these countries either.

It's a grim reality even today: if you go to any of the book shops in Manila or Thailand or Delhi or any other city anywhere in our part of the world, you'll find that about 85-90% of the books on sale are either from American or UK presses. There's nothing in the United Nations charter which says that we all have to read only books produced by these blokes.

To remedy the situation, OIB staff made trips to all south Asian countries. They went to Sri Lanka, even to places like Uganda and the Zimbabwe International Book Fair at Harare (where they discovered that much of Africa's publication industry by still controlled by whites).

Eventually OIB started importing books from Africa, from the Philippines, from Thailand. Through the bookstore, books from the Third World Network titles and Consumers' Association of Penang also got into the Indian mainstream.

And the most unusual thing to report is that all the imported stock got sold. Whatever stocks were bought from Africa, they were all sold. OIB is now a fairly well-established commercial success.

The Other India Bookstore Story



The common person on the street is not subjected to that kind of tyranny and he would be curious and ready to read a book about, say, Singapore if the subject looked interesting. An academic on the other hand would discount reading the Singaporean writer's work even before he looked at it because he would feel unable to quote from it if he were to write for some European journal.

Where did these books sell? Among the public at large. Common people are probably far more venturesome than professors in universities: the latter have to submit to the prevailing intellectual fashions of the time. If, in a conversation or seminar, a scholar is not able to mention either the name of some Germany philosopher or a French Marxist, his peers look on him as uneducated.

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But if one were to get over these prejudices, it is easy to see

that no country whether European, Asian or African really has a premium on original work. By and large, about 80-85% of intellectual work in any country is largely regurgitation or each one quoting the other. But there is original, interesting or exciting work in Africa, in the Philippines, in Egypt just as there is in New York or England. One has to simply look for it, a job that OIB does.

One of the things we found, interestingly, effective in the functioning of the bookstore — that's why it's called the Other India Bookstore — was very strict enforcement of the 'exclusion principle'. We decided at the very beginning to exclude from distribution and sale any title printed and published in either the USA or the UK, our traditional monopolists.

Some objected: what about all those people in the West who are

very critical of Western society, shouldn't we include their voices, their books, in our catalogues? What about those publishers in the UK like Zed and Pluto who publish a large number of writers from the South? Shouldn't we distribute their books as well?

Everyone said that it would not be possible to run a bookstore in this way. Now when people come to our bookshop, they're really amazed, because the books that they find there, they can't find in any other bookshop, so it's become the *Other India Bookstore*, because when they ask you why the name, and then they go into the bookshop, we don't have to do any explaining after that.

For the bookstore it was a very strategic decision, because with the type of intellectual climate that's prevailing in the country and elsewhere, everyone wants to read books still published which are looking fancy, which carry all these themes of 'construction', deconstruction', 'sites', all those sort of words and phrases. And it's very easy as a book seller to sell all the literature that's coming out on the Third World alone from London presses: there are a lot of people who are willing to pay a high price for their suffering.

And, have we gone down? No, not at all. We've not only survived but thrived. We've helped other bookstores of this kind to come up as well. Intellectual diversity is as crucial as biological diversity and OIB's 15 odd years of existence is living proof that it can be protected and served.

Revolutionising agricultural science

Western inspired agricultural science, based on the use of synthetic chemicals and toxic pesticides, special seeds and thirsty plants, has taken over large areas of the South through the agency of intellectually bankrupt governments. Though the development has been passed off as a 'green revolution', it is already threatening to turn vast areas into brown deserts, as the modern practices not only destroy the soil, but also lead to ecological imbalance.

Indian farmers are steadily deserting such anti-ecological farming practices. On September 11, 2002 at Thanjavur, south India, Mohamed Idris inaugurated a new organic farming institution called the Vazhviyal Multiversity, which is to become the focal point for undermining official agricultural science and replacing it with ecological farming.

The Vazhviyal group has successfully tried out several new procedures for raising crops of different kinds outside the conceptual framework of modern agricultural science and its inputs. They have rediscovered several important traditional insights

dealing with soil fertility and the control of pests. They are credited with the invention of a locally-made microbial brew (called Panchakavya) which has helped them solve a basic problem that organic farmers face: temporary declines in productivity during the period that they convert their fields from chemicals to organics. With the help of the brew, they can now convert their fields into organic farms without loss in production and yields within a year itself.

Confident now of the success of their procedures, the organic farmers have taken a decision to start their own learning and teaching centres, not only for existing organic farmers but for those who wish to convert from chemicals to organics. These centres will offer practical training without certification and will operate completely outside the formal academic agricultural science framework.

The exercise brings in a fresh, additional orientation to the Multiversity so that it does not remain exclusively focussed on schooling and higher education. Check the website at: www.indiaorganic.org

Multiversity's Aspirations

I like to define our venture as an effort to unencumber the coming generations. This removal of encumbrances, of surplus emotional and cognitive burden, requires not only a different way of looking at the global knowledge system, but also a certain healthy scepticism, certain robust doubt about it, at least a suspicion that the dominance is not the sign of finality.

The thing that holds us back is a growing, continuous fear of people that colours our systems of education, our systems of knowledge, our professions.

It is our fear of that chaos and the anarchy of plurality which often prompts us to opt for the dominant systems. I do not think it is purely the love of the Western systems in all cases. We are often looking for something which many of us feel will give some coherence and meaning to an otherwise unmanageable, ungovernable multitude of diverse communities and people.

There is also a fear of chaos, a fear of plurality of thought.

I do believe that Multiversity, whatever else it might do, cannot but challenge this built-in fear and anxiety about thinking. The

world is increasingly being dominated by categories, not by institutions. It is categories that have won over our children and I hope they won't win over our grandchildren as well.

Our children are forgetting to dream, they are forgetting to envision the world for themselves.

While the reality component of the dominant systems of knowledge is poor, the reality component is poor but the fantasy component is poorer. I see very little imagination, very little scope for dreaming. The present day dominant system in fact proscribes dreaming by third world societies. You cannot have a vision of your future. Your future is expected to be no different from the contemporary West. By the time we become contemporary West, the West will be somewhere else and we will always be Johnnies-come-lately. Presently, that's our vision of the future. Our present is the West's past and our future is the West's present. So in some sense our present and future have both been hijacked.

— Ashis Nandy

Could we learn something from the Maoris?

In India, for example, we prefer to remove any traces of Indianness or Indian culture, language or tradition from texts and curricula because our education makes us often feel backward about ourselves.

But the Maoris, original inhabitants of Aotearoa (colonial name: New Zealand), appear to have a far greater zest for leaning on their own indigenous knowledge systems than our defeated intellectuals have here. We could learn from some of their intellectual achievements.

Jessica Hutchings reported the following at the Multiversity meeting in Penang:

We have a range of subjects that are taught in universities in Aotearoa. You can do Maori business, you can do Maori science, Maori resource management, Maori art and so the universities have become a place where young Maori students, sixteen-seventeen years old can go to university and be able to reclaim their culture. They might have come from families where parents have not spoken Maori at home because it was made illegal in the generation that they grew up so they weren't brought up with that willingness to speak Maori at home. So these children have lost most of their culture, and university for them has been a place where they can regain and strengthen and feel strong and proud of their identity to be Maori.

At the same time the university has been developing we've

also got a whole total Maori driven, Maori run education system which is really exciting. We have Maori preschools, Maori primary schools, Maori high schools, all taught in the medium of Maori language. Presently, they are (unfortunately) teaching main stream colonial curriculum but we're working on that and soon it will change. We now have three Maori universities in Aotearoa, where you can go into degrees and where you may do tribal studies. So you may do a three year degree and though you may never have been back to your tribal location, that degree will be based on your tribal area, at your madai, at your tribal meeting house and so it's a way of taking people back to communities, of linking people back with families and of giving people some identity and helping to retain some of that knowledge that has been dying out.

That's a really exciting initiative for us in Aotearoa, Maori universities. And maybe that's something in individual countries, that people can think of doing, the curriculum's totally derived from Maori thought so it's outside of colonial processes. We have relied on government funding but they haven't had much impact in terms of what's taught so you can also do three year degrees in Maori cultural performing arts or learning how to use our traditional Maori attire or weaving. So it's really exciting, as it is a little bit outside of the square in terms of what we think academically. Pretty amazing.

I think what we are faced with is having to unlearn a whole lot of propaganda and colonial rhetoric: one, about who we are as Maori, and two, about the impact that the Crown has had upon us.

The Teaching of International Law

The teaching of international law in Asia and Africa is a classic example of the way in which the colonial inheritance is preserved.

Writes B.S. Chimni of Jawaharlal Nehru University:

At the present moment, we have ten fully established branches of international law: environmental law, trade law, air law, space law, human rights law, intellectual property rights law etc. You have these branches, and all the rules of these branches are essentially rules which have been dictated to the Third World by the West.

The increasing web of these rules, especially established in the last two decades alone, are strangulating the Third World. And right now, we don't even possess the necessary breathing space.

The more mundane issue is how these western rules, legal structures are legitimised in the Third World, in the law schools, through the education process. The situation here is no different from what the situation is in other disciplines.

We recently did a survey through which we tried to look at the text books that are used in order to teach students in different parts of Asia: we found that practically all of them used either British or American text books!

Then, of course, there is the colonial structure of the courses which is never even questioned.

For example, there is this division of international law into the law of peace and the law of war. If you go through the substance of the courses, it is the law of peace, as it is described, which

was predominantly used to colonise the Third World. But it is described as the 'law of peace'.

Even the nomenclature has not been questioned, it continues to be used in large parts of the Third World.

In the matter of law journals, the situation is almost desperate.

Out of every hundred journals, ninety are produced in the United States alone, another nine in Europe in percentage terms and probably one percent of the journals in this area are produced in the Third World, and the distribution of even that leaves much to be desired.

One of the many nodes being created within the Multiversity Network is of a formal group of law specialists and lawyers committed to the reform of the teaching of international law in the South, and to the fight for equity in international legal frameworks.

One of the primary aims of the group will be to stimulate bar associations and bar councils to take up seriously cases of violation of human rights by US and other regimes across the planet.

The group is also busy formulating the design and structure of a virtual Law School that will function as a resource for legal literature, attempt to exhume legal histories, critically analyse the imposition of Western law regimes in Third World countries, and also argue for changes in existing law curricula in law schools across the Third World.

Get in touch with B S Chimni at:
bschimni@hotmail.com

Hitherto, the knowledge we created or which we still create everyday, was suppressed or was simply ignored because it did not fit within the dominant paradigms. The present day output of books – that wield influence in the knowledge system being disseminated – is notorious for its lack of any works generated by intellectuals from the South. So one of the Multiversity's first tasks has been the rescue, airing and sharing of suppressed knowledge. To achieve this, the Multiversity has already initiated the following projects:

A unique Multiversity library comprising 500 of the best titles from Asia, Africa and South America. The list of titles already scanned includes the following:

1. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*
2. Edward Said, *Orientalism*
3. Rana Kabbani, *Devise and Rule: Europe's Myths of Orient*
4. J.P.S Uberoi, *Science and Culture*
5. Nsekuye Bizimana, *White Paradise, Hell for Africa?*
6. M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

7. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society*
8. Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality*
9. Ivan Illich, *Energy and Equity*
10. Sunil Sahasrabudhey, *Gandhi's Challenge to Modern Science*
11. Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One Straw Revolution*
12. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*
13. Claude Alvares, *Decolonising History*
14. Claude Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence*
15. Ziauddin Sardar, editor, *The Touch of Midas*
16. Winin Pereira, *Inhuman Rights*
17. Winin Pereira, *Global Parasites*
18. K.M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*
19. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*
20. Mohammad Kattami, *Islam, Liberty and Development*
21. D.L.O. Mendis, Eppawala: *Destruction of Cultural Heritage in the Race of Development*
22. Dharampal, *Collected Writings (5 vols)*

27. Just World Trust, *Dominance of the West Versus the Rest*
28. Just World Trust, *Human Wrongs: Reflections on Western Global Dominance and its Impact on Human Rights*
29. Orlando Fals Borda, *Knowledge and People's Power*
30. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
31. Orlando Albornoz, *Sociology and the Third World Perspective*
32. Renato Constantino, *Synthetic Culture and Development*
33. Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*
34. Roberto Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America*
35. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Center*

Eventually, the entire 500 titles will be written onto a single CD which will not be available for sale commercially. However, scholars and teachers from Asia, Africa and South America will be able to ask for copies for use in classrooms and for purposes of their own research.

Where permissions from authors or publishers is available, we shall also post the entire text of these books on the Net.

Multiversity is also commencing preparation of:

● An annotated bibliography of up to 10,000 articles written by intellectuals from the South and organised under various disciplines and which demonstrate creative work, new ideas, methodologies equal to or superior to what we have learned from the academic institutions of the West. Many of these articles will also be posted on the Net.

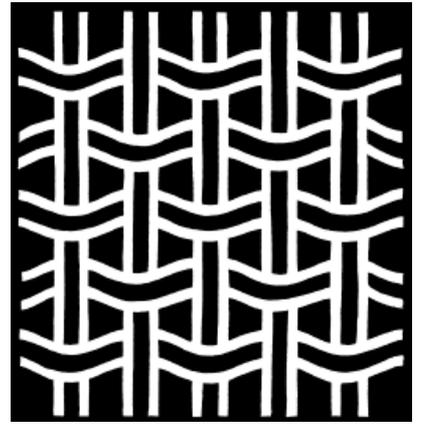
● A catalogue of journals from Africa, Aotearoa, Asia, Australia, South America, so that we can know how we are thinking in our circles, and to support others in the direction of the Multiversity and its values.

● An annual publication or Yearbook devoted to showcasing the best essays and intellectual output originating exclusively from the South.

Multiversity Library

For the indigenous people of the five continents of Africa, Asia, Oceania, South and North America, weaving has always been one of their most important economic, technological and artistic skills. Cotton, bamboo, cane, grasses and a variety of other natural fibres have been woven to meet their needs of shelter, clothing and day-to-day objects. As such, the idea of weaving is rich with cultural resonance and meaning to the people of these continents — as is evident in the medieval Sufi songs of the Indian poet-saint Kabir, who himself was a weaver.

The Taleemnet logo depicts the weaving together of the five straight and five wavy strands representing the five elements of the natural worlds (which are central to the ideas of philosophy, science and art), and the five senses with which we experience and interpret them. The interweaving of the straight and wavy strands symbolises the fusion of the rational and scientific with the spiritual and aesthetic.



Are schools producing asses?

The news is official. Schools are producing asses. After an average study of 12 years (sometimes, 14) in school, children are turning out duds. The schooling system in the USA, India, Malaysia, Africa, everywhere is producing largely unimaginative and boring products, lacking initiative completely.

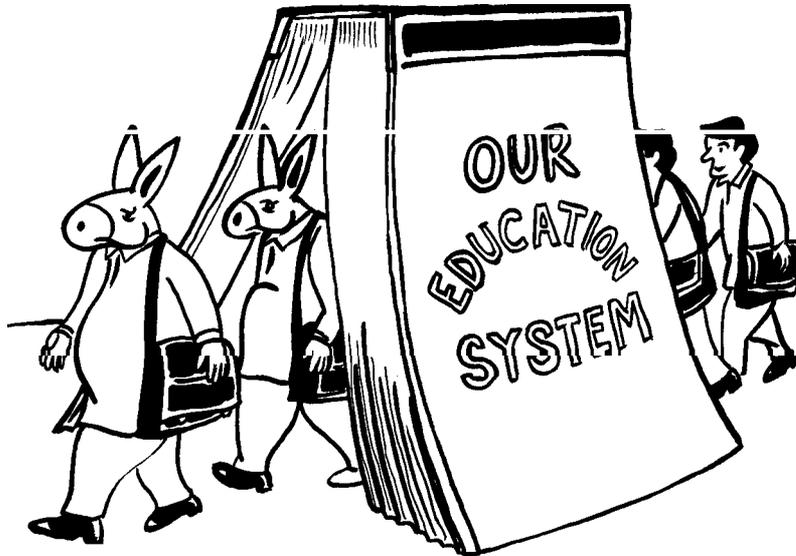
A recent Consumers Association of Penang booklet on *How School Affects Your Kids* lists the ways in which schools and their mug-mentality harm children. The school is perceived by children as:

- A world of silence and immobility;
- A world of uniforms, uniformity and punishments;
- A world cut off from life;
- A world of strange objects not found in the natural world;
- A world strewn with obstacles and meaningless tasks;
- A prison where students learn inferiority, submission and fear.

None of these are disputable facts.

Children themselves have drawn our attention to the fact that the school completely resembles a prison. It follows timings; food is bad or the same everyday; permission is required for everything including going to the loo; schooling demands that one sit in the same position for hours without exercise (even prisoners are spared this punishment). All children love intervals, just as prisoners look forward to the short breaks they are given out of their cells. Teachers are mostly wardens, since all they are really concerned about is discipline, uniforms, cleanliness, silence, obedience. Many of them are mean.

The comparison should not be really surprising since the same people who designed the schooling system also designed the prison system.



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A world of uniforms, uniformity and punishments;

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A world strewn with obstacles and meaningless tasks;

A prison where students learn inferiority, submission and fear.

Parents who claim to love their children are willing to submit them to a 12 year torture learning things that everyone forgets immediately after the examinations are over.

Children who remain out of school do not lose anything since all human beings learn better out of school, given their natural aptitudes to do this. Thus, children can learn three to four languages before they are six without a teacher, but cannot speak or write a language if it is taught to them in school, even after six or eight years!

Taleemnet is providing a much needed platform for parents and educators who realise that although keeping kids out of school may initially seem risky, maybe frightening or even more of trouble, it will bring inestimable benefits in the long

term in terms of quicker learning, and better family ties as children have a greater opportunity to be with their parents, members of the community, relatives and friends — all of whom will contribute in one way or another to the learning process.

One of the first Taleemnet projects is a primer on how to unschool kids or help the present 'walk out' rates to increase, so that children have a better chance to be themselves and learn what they want to rather than having to submit to a programme of text book cramming that goes on year after year without respite and whose utility is not accepted by anyone including the teacher.



FREEING CHILDREN FROM THE TYRANNY OF SCHOOLS

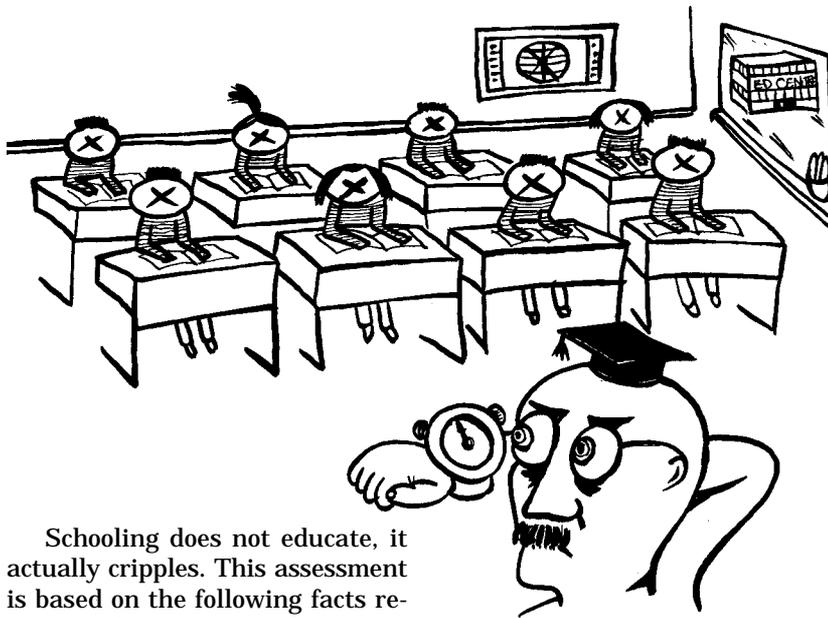
Why schools should wither away for good..

Every year we find the exercise of compulsory schooling — and the mental torment it creates — dutifully and mindlessly repeated in every corner of the globe: from the USA to Kenya to the Philippines. Whether rich country or poor, advanced or backward, it doesn't matter. Indeed, the scale of the regimentation is far worse in countries like the UK and the USA, where almost every aspect of what is taught and how it is taught is under centralised institutional control. Paradoxically, the children of the middle and upper classes suffer the regimentation the most; while the children of the poor at least have the choice of dropping out and keeping their common sense.

The universal and unquestioned allegiance to the enterprise of schooling is simply astonishing, if one peeks behind the curtains to find out what is really going on. Compulsory schooling is, in effect, the largest exercise in stultification being carried out in human history. Its sole intent appears to be to demoralise human beings, by convincing them of their need for almost lifelong tutoring. This tutoring is done by classes of people who themselves succumbed to being tutored under similar compulsions when they were children.

But the vast enterprise also has other undisclosed objectives. It blandly undermines the pupil's grasp of reality, cuts off her links with the natural world, successfully incubates within the victim a wholesale contempt for the history of her own people, their traditions or ways of being. It takes diverse, bright and inquisitive children and turns them into hesitant, timid and dull individuals by the time they reach puberty, continuously in need of additional training and at best available to service the global, consumer-oriented, profit-inspired mega-machine.

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Schooling does not educate, it actually cripples. This assessment is based on the following facts relating to its impact on children:

First, schooling destroys human creativity in fundamental ways, by constantly reinforcing the unwarranted idea that those who do not attend it are inferior. It promotes the notion that all people are born either empty or with rudimentary ideas and must therefore go through the grind of being 'finished' or 'polished' or 'certified'.

Above all, it promotes the conviction that only the official knowledge imparted in the school is knowledge: anything beyond that may well be interesting, but it is not valid. Reality, in fact, is to be discarded if it conflicts with what is provided for in the textbook.

In fact, schools today have no need for creativity. They do not either recognise or encourage it. In places where it is recognised, it still remains tightly controlled so that it does not interfere with the larger agenda of indoctrination and commodification. Those in

charge of education systems have decided that children only need to memorize predigested answers (prepared by faceless textbook writers, working in centralised educational institutions) in order to be deemed 'educated' and fit for society.

In examinations, the answer which most closely resembles the pre-decided 'correct response' will receive the highest marks. On the other hand, a creative answer which differs from the standard/accepted response is almost certain to be marked wrong. This humiliating brain-devouring exercise called exams is conducted fairly ruthlessly. What is more, it has the sanction of parents, ruling institutions, the corporate class, the State and most intellectuals and parents. Eventually, it earns the sanction of the victim too.

Compulsory schooling — now given legal sanction by draconian education Acts (such as the 93rd Amendment to the Indian Consti-

tution) that promise to punish parents that do not send their wards to school — is seen as the only option available to welfare States to force people to take up opportunities which will eventually enable them to come up in life and to be seen as equals of more privileged folk. Any move to criticise schooling is then perceived as an elitist maneuver to block the mobility of the poor.

However, experience of the schooling system in all countries has shown that it has more often than not helped maintain and reinforce inequality, rather than eliminate it. Aside from the obvious fact that rich people attend elite or public schools, and poorer folk go to poor schools from which they eventually opt out, 'quality education' available to the rich actually creates an additional layer of inequality in addition to those created by other social devices.

The second major problem, which we people in the former colonised territories exclusively face, is that the content of education contains largely negative perceptions of our local and national histories, cultures, languages and religions. This is a direct consequence of the success of attitudes represented so well by people like T. B. Macaulay. In this context, European ideas are considered the only basis for a proper schooling programme and for 'civilized' living. History textbooks in India, for example, still unabashedly hail the arrival of Vasco-da-Gama as a great event. Or repeat themes proposed by English historians like James Mill or even Karl Marx. Incorporating the intellectual corpus of Indian or other civilisations into the materials prepared for courses still provokes resistance from some quarters. Earlier, it had provoked penalties and punishments.

Ivan Illich Departs

The celebrated author of *DeSchooling Society* retired from Planet Earth on December 2, 2002, at Bremen in Germany.

Ivan Illich inaugurated the critique of emerging global tyrannies by his sharp analysis of the character of industrial societies. He used schooling as an example to show how industrial societies actually militated against human welfare. He was therefore immediately pounced upon as a critic of schooling. He generated a huge opus, comprising several books.

Illich followed what he preached. He succumbed to a cancer after suffering it for nearly 20 years. He would not get it medically treated because that would have meant succumbing to the very terrors that he had denounced in *Medical Nemesis* and in his preface to the *Tao of Cancer* (written by Manu Kothari and Lopa Mehta).

His departure is a loss to all men and women of goodwill and to those who continue to struggle against the human cancer called industrial civilisation.

Schooling Nature

Hey! All you butterflies!

You ought to carry schoolbags on your backs!

And you should not fly freely here and there, this way and that!

Hey! You beautiful rivers and streams!

Do not meander, but flow straight!

And do not make a noise either: flow quietly!

Likewise all you fishes!

Do not swim any which way you please.

Swim in straight lines,

As they do in swimming championships!

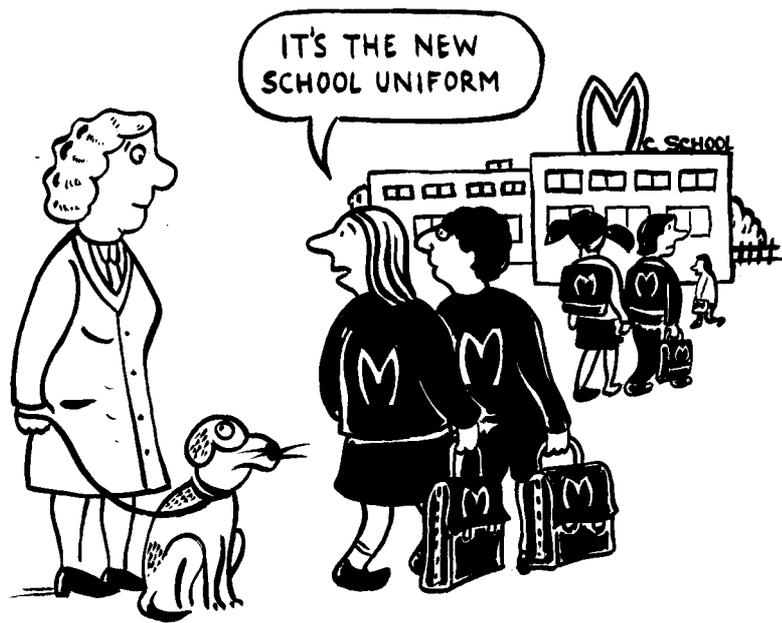
Hey! All you colourful flowers!

Wear the same colour, uniform and dress,

As they do in school!

Poem by Japan Pathak

Reflections on Schooling



Thoughts from the Multiversity Meeting in Penang:

This is an ideal time in history to be talking about education. There is a global argument going on now about education and this is an important time to interject new voices. The educational system that we are all talking about is basically a western educational system that came to us through colonisation in different times and places. The uniformity of this system is astounding, from India to the Arab world, to the United States, it's uniform but at the same time there's an uncertainty about the future of that uniform system.

Sometimes this system is called 'factory schooling'. Factory schooling was designed to produce factory workers. It thrives on fear, boredom and obedience, but now people are saying that factory schools are outdated, that we need something for a 'post-industrial society'. So now schools, under the rubric of being 'reformed', are adopting the ideology of consumerism so they are replacing fear and boredom with fun and games and they are replacing obedience with forms of disobedience, with the commodification of transgression as an educational act. Within this movement, there is a wedge being driven between the factory schooling system that we all know and love or hate and this new consumer oriented educational system, and no one is quite sure what the result will be.

My question is, why do we continue to follow these fads and trends when they come at us through distant experts, or through people who go to the West for training, when those in

the West are unsure of themselves right now. We could say the same thing about economics, we could say the same thing about science. There's an interesting period of time in the world right now where the West, which is really what gave us these things that we are trying to undo, is unsure of itself. And it's trying to retrench or re-define itself and get everybody else to join in, even though they don't know where they're going. It's an ideal time to take a detour, to slow down, to stop, to ask questions, to come up with something different.

In response to this consumerist kind of education we can see schools that are now emphasizing games, fun, toys, balloons, candy bars, cartoon characters, all in effort to do something about the excruciating boredom that the factory system foisted off on children for a century.

But now people are feeling that kids aren't learning anything with fun and games so now there's an attempt to say, 'Wait a minute, let's go back to the factory system, bring it back in.' But this time it is being called the new standards movement. It's coming out of the United States. OBE - Outcome Based Education - is getting adopted in places like South Africa, coming from Australia, Aotearoa, the UK, the United States, retrenching the factory system under a new guise called 'outcome based education'.

They don't know where they're going, maybe we don't either, but I think we should take this opportunity to build something different, make workable models on the ground like these people are trying to do.

— *Yusef Proglar*

The present system [of education] encourages fear. There is the fear of possibility, or fear of the unknown, or fear of uncertainty which emerges because of the whole system of conditioning. You are told constantly: 'There can't be any other way. This is the best system there is. There is no alternative.' So there is a complete shutdown of possibilities, a complete shutdown of uncertainties. And this is what Multiversity must successfully undo.

— *Shilpa Jain*

The Alternative Education Source Book

You are welcome to join the small but steadily growing network of parents and educators who feel children are best outside school. In fact, if you really love your children, you may want to examine why you are sending them to an institution like the school which intends to slowly kill them.

Much of the most rigorous critique of 'factory schooling' is being carried out through the Shikshantar Foundation based in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India. Get to their website: www.swaraj.org/shikshan-tar.

Shikshantar has much larger objectives than just the unchooling of society all across the globe. The Foundation brings out a printed journal called Vimukt Shikshantar which highlights many critical aspects of schooling and open learning processes.

Other institutions associated with Taleemnet include Other India Press, Abhivyakti and the Consumers' Association of Penang which have already brought out books and pamphlets on why it is healthy to stay out of schools (*Danger School; How School Affects Your Kids*).

Taleemnet is bringing out by March 2003, the first manual or source book for parents and teenagers on how to get out of school and remain out.

The source book answers questions like: Do parents have to substitute for teachers? Do unchooling students have to study the same syllabus at home as if they went to school? How does one get a job if one is out of school? etc etc.

The manual also identifies a

number of learning centres already being run in different areas outside the framework of 'factory-schooling' and reports on their insights.

The source book will not only include detailed stories of all experimental, open learning centres, which have emerged as an alternative to the formal schooling system, it will also provide details of other resources, including: lists of educators, discussions on alternatives to school and college, successful learning programmes that eschew certification and fees, etc.

Taleemnet will function as a global clearinghouse for the exchange of information that will assist the further decline of schools and other institutions of thought-control. It will carry on the publishing of books, journals and video films that will attack the legitimacy of schooling in effective ways (a task that is not difficult by any length of the imagination). Taleemnet will also ensure that good learning practices are circulated in a well-organised and systematic way for enhanced use across the planet, particularly among educators and parents.

Taleemnet will also prepare special programmes for parents, as in large parts of the world, they remain the principal agents responsible for demanding ever more educational burdens for their wards. Parents of children will hopefully become members of Taleemnet en masse, especially when they are convinced that it will enable them to protect their children's own unique identities and stimulate creative learning.

Taleemnet objectives

- Disseminate literature relating to the ill effects of schools and schooling.
- Visit, document and disseminate innovative learning experiences being conducted outside the framework of factory schooling.
- Document homeschool experiences from across the world.
- Initiate legal battles against compulsory schooling and state-directed education.
- Create infrastructure and opportunities for those who opt out of school.
- Conduct interviews with those individuals who have succeeded despite dropping out of school.
- Create political support for the use and development of the mother tongue.
- Create alternative certification schemes for those who say or feel they need them for any purpose including employment.
- Study the enormous amount of wastage of resources reflected in the years taken to train people who eventually drop out and do not use what they are taught.
- Help in the reform of existing schools, to mitigate at first their worst aspects, particularly those features that make schools like prisons.
- Examine the possibility of creating shorter duration courses so that children have to spend fewer years or hours compulsorily or otherwise in school.
- Study the impact of open schools vis-a-vis normal schools.
- Publish a major source book on alternatives to factory schooling which can be circulated in all the three continents of Asia, Africa and South America.
- Link up all major initiatives in this area through Taleemnet and Multiworld.

Once upon a time there was a bird. It was ignorant. It sang all right, but never recited scriptures. It hopped pretty frequently, but lacked manners.

Said the Raja to himself: 'Ignorance is costly in the long run. For fools consume as much food as their betters, and yet give nothing in return.'

He called his nephews to his presence and told them that the bird must have a sound schooling.

The pundits were summoned, and at once went to



the root of the matter. They decided that the ignorance of birds was due to their natural habit of living in poor nests. Therefore, according to the pundits, the first thing necessary for this bird's education was a suitable cage.

The pundits had their rewards and went home happy.

A golden cage was built with gorgeous decorations. Crowds came to see it from all parts of the world.

'Culture, captured and caged!' exclaimed some, in a rapture of ecstasy, and burst into tears.

Others remarked: 'Even if culture be missed, the cage will remain, to the end, a substantial fact. How fortunate for the bird!'

The goldsmith filled his bag with money and lost no time in sailing homewards.

The pundit sat down to educate the bird. With proper deliberation, he took his pinch of snuff, as he said: 'Textbooks can never be too many for our purpose!'

The nephews brought together an enormous crowd of scribes. They copied from books, and copied from copies, till the manuscripts were piled up to an unreachable height.

Men murmured in amazement: 'Oh, the tower of culture, egregiously high! The end of it lost in the clouds!'

The scribes, with light hearts, hurried home, their pockets heavily laden.

The nephews were furiously busy keeping the cage in proper trim.

As their constant scrubbing and polishing went on,

the people said with satisfaction: 'This is progress indeed!'

Men were employed in large numbers, and supervisors were still more numerous. These, with their cousins of all different de-

grees of distance, built a palace for themselves and lived there happily ever after.

Whatever may be its other deficiencies, the world is never in want of fault-finders; and they went about saying that every creature remotely connected with the cage flourished beyond words, excepting only the bird.

When this remark reached the Raja's ears, he summoned his nephews before him and said: 'My dear nephews, what is this that we hear?'

The nephews said in answer: 'Sire, let the testimony of the goldsmiths and the pundits, the scribes and the supervisors, be taken, if the truth is to be known. Food is scarce with the fault-finders, and that is why their tongues have gained in sharpness.'

The explanation was so luminously satisfactory that the Raja decorated each one of his nephews with his own rare jewels.

The Raja at length, being desirous of seeing with his own eyes how his Education Department busied itself with the little bird, made his appearance one day at the great Hall of Learning.

From the gate rose the sounds of conch-shells and gongs, horns, bugles and trumpets, cymbals, drums and kettle-drums, tomtoms, tambourines, flutes, fifes, barrel-organs and bagpipes. The pundits began chanting mantras with their topmost voices, while the goldsmiths, scribes, supervisors, and their numberless cousins of all different degrees of distance, loudly raised a round of cheers.

The nephews smiled and said: 'Sire, what do you think of

The Parrot

This one story — written by Indian Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in 1924 — says it all.

it all?'

The Raja said: 'It does seem so fearfully like a sound principle of Education!'

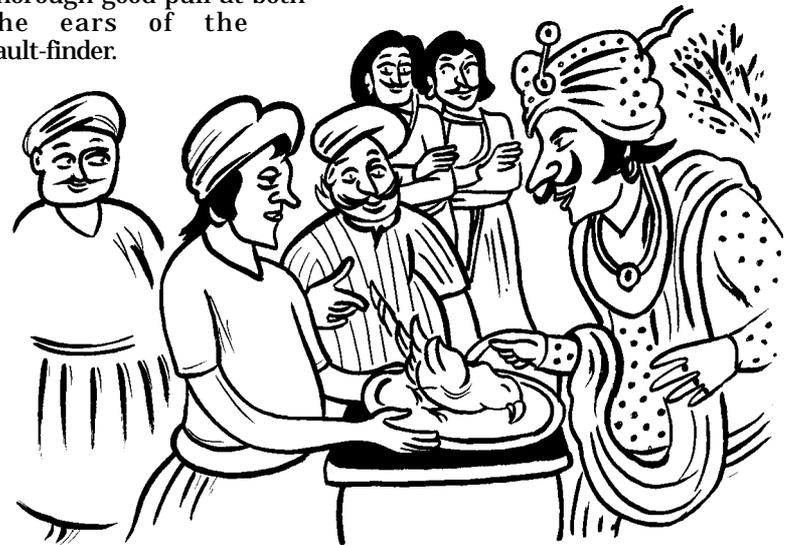
Mightily pleased, the Raja was about to remount his elephant, when the fault-finder, from behind some bush, cried out: 'Maharaja, have you seen the bird?'

'Indeed, I have not!' exclaimed the Raja. 'I completely forgot about the bird.'

Turning back, he asked the pundits about the method they followed in instructing the bird.

It was shown to him. He was immensely impressed. The method was so stupendous that the bird looked ridiculously unimportant in comparison. The Raja was satisfied that there was no flaw in the arrangements. As for any complaint from the bird itself, that simply could not be accepted. Its throat was so completely choked with the leaves from the books that it could neither whistle nor whisper. It sent a thrill through one's body to watch the process.

This time, while remounting his elephant, the Raja ordered his State Earpuller to give a thorough good pull at both the ears of the fault-finder.



The bird thus crawled on, duly and properly, to the safest verge of insanity. In fact, its progress was satisfactory in the extreme. Nevertheless, nature occasionally triumphed over training, and when the morning light peeped into the bird's cage it sometimes fluttered its wings in a reprehensible manner. And, though it is hard to believe, it pitifully pecked at its bars with its feeble beak.

'What impertinence!' growled the kotwal.

The blacksmith, with his forge and hammer, took his place in the Raja's Department of Education. Oh, what resounding blows! The iron chain was soon completed, and the bird's wings were clipped.

The Raja's brothers-in-law looked black, and shook their

heads, saying: 'These birds not only lack good sense, but also gratitude!'

With textbook in one hand and the baton in the other, the pundits gave the poor bird what may fitly be called lessons! The kotwal was honoured with a title for his watchfulness and the blacksmith for his skill in forging chains.

The bird died.

Nobody had the least notion how long ago this had happened. The fault-finder was the first man to spread the rumour.

The Raja called his nephews and asked them: 'My dear nephews, what is this that we hear?'

The nephews said: 'Sire, the bird's education has been completed.'

'Does it hop?' the Raja enquired.

'Never!' said the nephews.

'Does it fly?'

'No.'

'Bring me the bird,' said the Raja.

The bird was brought to him, guarded by the kotwal and the sepoy and the sowars. The Raja poked its body with his finger. Only its inner stuffing of book-leaves rustled.

Outside the window, the murmur of the spring breeze amongst the newly budded Asoka leaves made the April morning wistful.

About Kamiriithu

Kamiriithu will appear six times a year. The next issue will appear on March 1, 2003. Guest editors are welcome.

The three logos for the three sub-themes have been prepared by Orijit Sen. Illustrations, drawings and cartoons are by Nicky Thomas.

The newsletter has been printed by Multiworld at Maureen's, Rua de Ourem, Panaji, Goa, India. It is designed for private circulation and is also posted on the Net at multiworld.org. It is published from:

*Multiworld Network,
G-8 St Britto's Apartments,
Feira Alta, Mapusa 403 507
Goa, India.*

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