

May 2007

Dear friends of the Alliance,

Spiritual people aspire to be in both places, timebound and timeless. In India this is sometimes expressed as "the lamp at the door"; your soul is poised, as if on a threshold between the everyday events that occur in time and the background of the unchanging, infinite absolute. The reason this is important is that if you can live from the level of the soul, you are doing something very special. It doesn't matter what actions you take. The important thing is how much consciousness you add to the whole of human existence, for that is how eternity expresses itself, like a lamp shining in through the window of eternity.

Deepak Chopra, Author

Peace is the Way

Published by Harmony Books

Alliance Action

The theme for this month seems to be how brilliant the Internet is at making connections across the planet: empowering, supporting and inspiring us to make a difference. Keep the stories coming in!

Hometown Baghdad

Hometown Baghdad is an ongoing documentary web series following the lives of a few Iraqi 20-somethings trying to survive in Baghdad. It launched about four weeks ago and has already had over 347,000 viewers to its web series and has also featured on YouTube's homepage. Iraqis and Americans have been talking on line since the site was launched.

The everyday life of the Iraqi citizen has been the great untold story of the Iraq war — partly because it's so hard to do. The brave Iraqi civilians and crew risked their lives every time they turned on a camera to make this series. They wanted to show the world what life is like when your hometown is a war-zone. So please — watch the videos, rewatch them, tell friends about them, comment on them, and link to them.

Laurie Meadoff

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www.hometownbaghdad.com.

Planet Why

Anouradha Bakshi launched Project Why seven years ago, providing care for slum children in India. Now the project is to be extended, as Planet Why is launched.

Planet Why will be located in the sleepy village of Goyla and like Project Why, will work with local needy children. Unlike Project Why, it will also reach out to the wider community, something that was not feasible in an urban slum. Environmental projects, rainwater harvesting, health-related activities, imparting new skills, adult education, empowerment of women and civic responsibility are some of the projects the team intends to launch.

The project will also include a guest house for travellers on their way through Delhi. Anouradha writes: "Tourism with meaning seems to have come to stay as many friends and supporters have expressed their desire to spend some time with children and local people before setting out to discover the country. Hence our rooms seem almost booked in advance! We invite you to join the exciting journey we have already embarked on and would love to hear your thoughts and ideas."

Anouradha Bakshi

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<http://projectwhy.org>

Oxford Bridgemakers

Oxford Bridgemakers, which featured in an earlier issue of the newsletter, now has a website: www.bridgemakers.org.uk

Make a Difference Today

You're likely to be familiar with micro-finance, in which very poor people are given very small loans to start and grow businesses.

There's no downside to micro-finance. Everyone wins, and the payback rate on these loans is phenomenal. Muhammad Yunus, last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner, is the mind behind the micro-finance revolution. Till now, micro-finance was a project that only banks and non-governmental organizations could support. Recently, however, a group of ingenious activists set up an online system in which you and I can participate. It's called Kiva, and here's how it works.

First, any one can go to kiva.org and learn about individuals around the world with small businesses that need infusions of capital. We get to know about all the potential loans in development, and how close they are to complete financing. We choose what projects we want to support, and where. Our own contribution is then pooled with similar contributions from other people until the loan goal is reached. Best yet, they're loans are all administered and supervised by local agencies that have great reputations and community involvement. And these are loans, remember, so our contributions get paid back in full over time! Then, we decide whether to withdraw our money or reloan it.

I can't think of a better way to celebrate all of our good fortune by giving back in this way. Please visit kiva.org to learn more and join the personal micro-finance revolution. So if you're inspired like I am, please take part. And don't forget to spread the word! Happy investing!

The website is: <http://www.kiva.org/>.

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Disclaimer: The Alliance for a New Humanity is not responsible for the content of external internet sites. Letters are edited.

AFRICA: Microfinance Tackles AIDS Head On

by Adrienne Appel

BRUSSELS (IPS) - With two-thirds of the world's HIV/AIDS victims living in sub-Saharan Africa, sickness and death is too often a part of doing business in the region. But now microfinance institutions have found ways to reduce financial risk while attacking new infections.

Debrework Zewdie, Director of the Global HIV/AIDS Programme for the World Bank, calls this approach "the missing link in the fight against AIDS."

"Microfinance can be a powerful tool for addressing the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the short term and for removing the causes of the disease in the medium to long term," said Strobbe.

More...

CHILE: Celebrating Multiculturalism

by Daniela Estrada

SANTIAGO (IPS) - As a tangible way of appreciating diversity, tolerance and non-discrimination, and in order to launch a debate about migration policy in Chile, university students are organising the First Multicultural Festival to be held in the capital on the weekend of May 26-27.

"We are sure that this event will have a big impact, because it is inviting us as a country to discuss migration and its social implications, and to reflect on tolerance, non-discrimination and integration," Nelson Contreras, one of the festival organisers, told IPS.

Performances will be put on by Chilean and immigrant bands and dance groups, and documentary films will be screened. Round table discussions will be held on discrimination, human trafficking and migration policy issues.

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EARTH DAY: Happiness Is a Smaller Eco-Footprint

by Stephen Leahy

BROOKLIN, Canada (IPS) - Today's children will live in a new world of climate change and greatly diminished natural resources, which may give way to a nightmarish reality, or it could give birth to a happier and lighter way of living on the Earth, say environmentalists.

More...

ARGENTINA: Digital Library for the Blind

by Marcela Valente

BUENOS AIRES (IPS) - Armed with a computer and their passion for literature, a group of blind people in Argentina have created the first digital library for Spanish-speaking people who are visually impaired. It already has some 20,000 volumes and over 3,000 subscribers in 40 countries.

Tiflolibros, as it is named, was created in 1999. It first operated out of the home of its coordinators, a blind couple who wanted access to books via their computer. "The project grew, and so did their family, so we threw them out and kept their apartment," Marta Traina, in charge of public relations, joked to IPS.

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Deconstructing Dawkins

In response to Richard Dawkins's new book, *The God Delusion*, Deepak Chopra challenges the notion of a world without God and presents five arguments for God's existence.

"For thousands of years human beings have been obsessed by beauty, truth, love, honour, altruism, courage, social relationships, art and God. They all go together as subjective experiences; if God is the delusion, then so is truth and beauty. God stands for the perfection of both, and even if you think truth and beauty (along with love, justice, forgiveness, compassion and other divine qualities) can never be perfect, to say that they are fantasies makes no sense."

In this article, Chopra presents insights to guide us in an understanding of the world that incorporates both science and religious experience.

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Mid-course Correction

Businessman Ray Anderson recounts how one book changed the course of his business and set him on a mission to climb 'Mt. Sustainability'. The challenge he has given to himself and to his staff is to run his business with zero environmental impact, in a way that is sustainable "taking nothing, doing no harm".

"The amazing thing is that it has been incredibly good for business! What started out as the right thing to do quickly became clearly the smart thing as well. We are leaner; our costs are down, not up."

Ray Anderson's experience dispels the myth that sustainability costs more and exposes the false choice between economy and environment.

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A Journey of Self-forgetting

Deborah Ravetz explores the work of Craigie Aitchison and the magical, child-like qualities of his paintings.

"They are refreshing, not because they let us escape from reality, but because they take us into a deeper and more real place: to the source of life and imagination, to the source of eternal youth."

Discover more about a painter whose work encourages us to be true to ourselves and simply rejoice in our existence.

More...

In brief:

MediaSnackers

"The world has changed. . . and it's not turning back" MediaSnackers is a site/weblog/project/call to action for people interested in how young people consume and create media across the globe. The new WWW generation (Whenever, Wherever, Whatever) now spends more time in front of the computer than they do the tv. MediaSnackers offers a forum for young people (check out the Young Tubers Earth Day on the report page!) and provides training in new media and

technology to young people, youth workers and corporations.

More...

China goes solar

After a decade studying solar power in an Australian lab, Chinese born Physicist Shi Zhengrong realised that a growing demand for clean power together with China's fast economic development offered an amazing opportunity. He moved back to China and set up Suntech Power Holdings Ltd in 2001. Now his company is the fourth largest solar cell maker in the world with annual sales growth is predicted to be 20 to 40%, and Shi is advising Chinese leaders on renewable energy policy. Suntech's key markets are Germany, Spain and Japan, with a fast growing market in China.

Low Carbon Tour

Mukti Mitchell is sailing around Britain in a zero-emission microyacht to promote low carbon lifestyles. He will be visiting forty UK ports including Swansea, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, London, Southampton and Exeter, hosting talks and events on low carbon lifestyles at each destination. Catch up with his progress online.

More...

Energy from the Desert

Countries of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa are collaborating to take advantage of the truly monumental quantities of energy that fall as sunlight on the world's hot deserts. Dr Franz Trieb, from the German Air and Space Agency, explains: "We can tap into this energy by using mirrors to concentrate sunlight and create heat. The heat can be used to raise steam and drive a generator in a conventional way. This kind of Concentrating Solar Power has been successfully producing electricity in California for nearly 20 years."

More...

Send us your news!

Are you a change maker? We want to hear from you!

We'd like to share your stories of positive change in this newsletter. If you have a story to tell, email it to Rachel Marsh, editor of The Alliance e-newsletter, Resurgence: <mailto:rachel@thecupoftea.co.uk>