

Trees Are My Best Friends

Environment • Art • Education









Preface

Dear Readers,

Addressing the threats caused by Global Warming and Climate Change demands a fundamental change in policies and practices the world over. While we look towards our national and global leaders to take these necessary changes forward in order to maintain our life on our common planet, great historic changes have most often been spearheaded by ordinary people.

This also applies to reversing Global Warming and Climate Change. People need to understand the issues and challenges in order to change their own attitudes and practices and to both accept and request the necessary changes in our future to maintain a habitable and prosperous planet for all its inhabitants.

Humana People to People India is immensely grateful to Fondation Audemars Piguet for its support to the projects that has enabled thousands of teachers in the two States of Haryana and Madhya Pradesh to have acquired profound knowledge and understanding of Global Warming and Climate Change, and who in turn have shared this knowledge with tens of thousands of their students. Together the teachers and students have planted and cared for over a hundred thousand trees. In the second phase of the project, the acquired knowledge and practices were further reinforced and developed through the use of art and culture.

While the results in themselves are impressive, we are sure that the project continues to have a profound long-term impact on the teachers, and future teachers' ability to teach and influence the coming generation of students to take a stand on these important issues.

With my sincere thanks,

A. Padmavathi

Dr. A. Padmavathi

Chairperson

Humana People to People India





Introduction

Education, Arts and Climate Change – Inspiration Beyond Facts and Stats

For long, most dominant narratives about Climate Change and Global Warming have been woven around data; be it optimum levels of parts per million or permissible limits of temperature increase. Today, with science irrefutably pointing towards this impending global existential challenge, it has also become clear that science alone is not sufficient to tackle such a gargantuan issue. Facts and statistics by themselves, while crucial, are incapable of motivating people towards concrete actions.

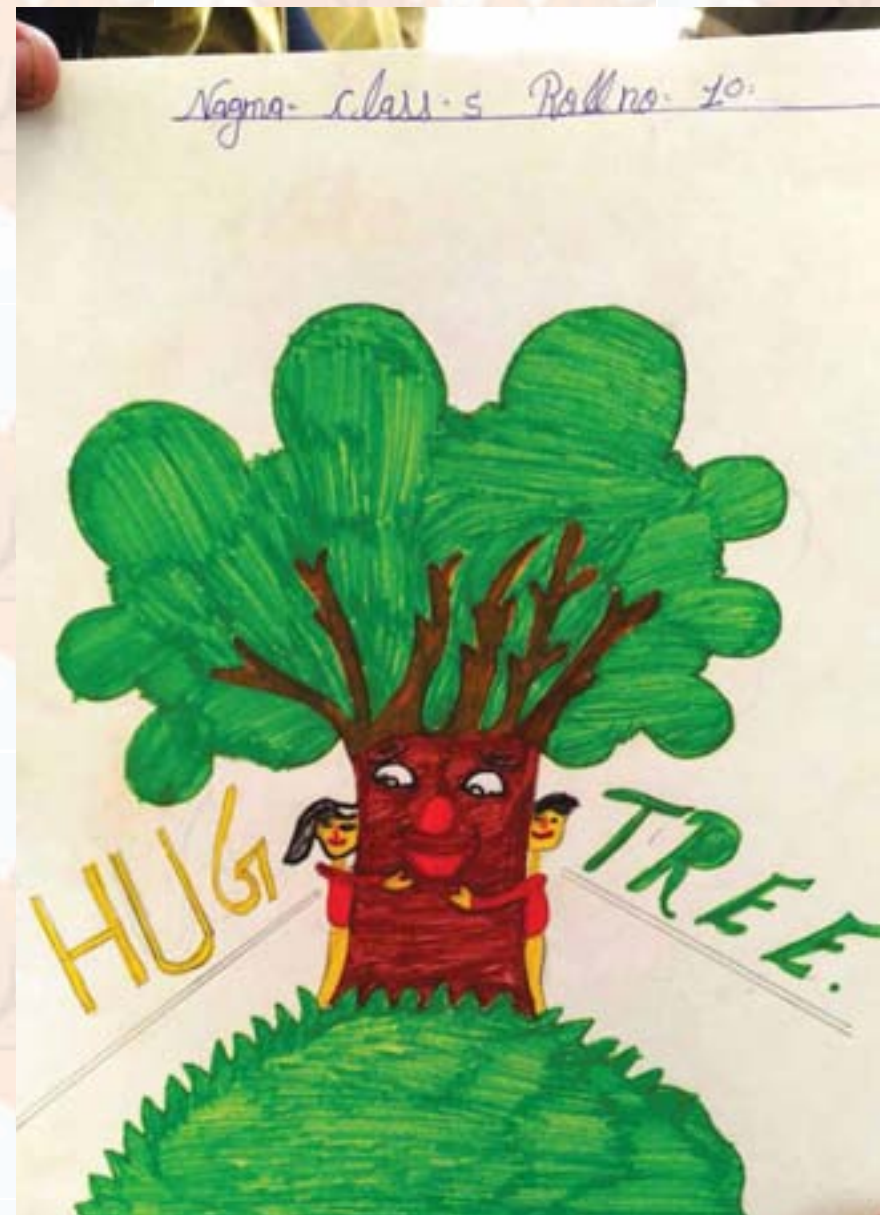
As is the case with most long-term solutions, in this case as well, the emancipation of humanity rests majorly on the fragile shoulders of today's children. As a collective responsibility, empowering the young ones with right knowledge on the issue is the key to bring about a sustainable, productive change in the right direction. For the rapidly developing minds of the young children, the relatively more encompassing and intimate language of Art accomplishes this much more efficiently than most data-driven education methodologies.

This book presents the achievements of nearly three-year long ongoing intervention by Humana People to People India in spreading environment education, conducting successful tree plantation drives and sensitizing children, educators and community members about the concerns of Climate Change and ways to tackle it.

Implemented in India with active financial support from Fondation Audemars Piguet, the project started in the year 2014 and in its first two years worked with sensitizing thousands of practicing teachers, student-teachers and primary school students across the two Indian States of Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. During this period, students gained from focused classes on Environmental Education and large scale tree plantation drives organized with active support of the community members. The young students and community members learned about the much-needed significance of nurturing a sapling into a full grown tree by developing an intimate bond of friendship that only matures with time.

Presently in its third year, the project is focusing on promoting and enhancing this bond among young primary school students through the creative expressions of art. The dynamism of the artistic medium, coupled with the voracious appetite of children to learn and express their ideas, has produced the most vivid artworks that reflect their profoundness through their simplicity and innocence.

The five themes comprising this book - Potential, Nurture, Growth, Bloom and Regeneration - symbolize the parallels between the existence and life cycle of a tree and that of a human being. It imagines the two as symbiotic co-passengers on



a journey through time, realizing their respective potential through mutually nurturing each other, growing together, blooming to realization and regenerating to a new beginning, and in the process passing on the fine tradition of their collective memory to the next generation.



Potential



Potential is both a liberating and an intimidating concept, simultaneously holding opportunities as well as risks for the future. While we can't claim to fully control the future outcomes of even the most well thought out plan, what we do with the potential of today, colours our future.

While a single seedling has the potential to develop into a lush forest, creating shelter for millions of animals and insects, food and resources for humans while purifying the air we all breathe, a child carries the potential to restore these life giving eco-systems, ensuring life not only for her own generation, but for many more to come.



Perceiving the potential rather than the obstacles is a challenge for almost every human being. To learn to see what can grow out of even the dullest situation is an art in itself. If teachers teach their students to go beyond realizing their respective potentials through planting a seed and watching it grow, the future could look much different.





A child plants a tree, puts a tag with his name on it, and from that day onwards the two take care of each other. When the tree is still young and fragile, the child will ensure it gets water, and when the monsoon thunders over the land, he'll make it a shade so it doesn't get washed away. When the time comes, the tree will grow so big, it can give back, providing shade, clean air and at times even food or medicine. It's a friendship to be cherished.





The potential of teachers is a key component in handling the challenges we are already facing due to Climatic Change. Most changes happening right now occur faster than humans and animals can adjust, especially those without access to much resources. Teachers are not only mentors, but mobilizers and problem solvers, who can lead communities towards sustainable solutions.





The more children are taught to acknowledge and value their own and nature's potential, the more healthy interdependence of growth humanity begins to experience.



Growth



Growth happens only under the right circumstances. A seed can be planted but without access to the right nutrients it will simply turn into the earth it once came out of. Nature in itself has created a perfect system to promote growth, and we humans used to adjust ourselves to these systems, living off what nature provided us and nothing more. Today, our lives are not always as simple. Making a tree grow requires protection, nurture and dedication until it is big enough to stand its own. Even after that, we might need to keep it from being cut down like so many others. Though, if we don't only focus on nurturing the tree, but also the environment around it and everything in it, re-igniting humans' close connection and understanding of nature, growth is bound to happen.



The more a teacher grows in her profession, the more it sensitizes her towards growth of her students. The more humans grow in nature, the more it sensitizes them to understand how they're an integral part of it.







Much of future problem solving depends on our ability to get creative with what we have and looking for innovative and more sustainable possibilities for growth – be it personally or in society.



The task of combatting global warming is a big one. Some consequences are already at our doorsteps, and many more are yet to come. All communities will improvise in the face of challenges, but there is no better day to start than today.





Growth happens both inside and outside the classroom. The two cannot and should not be separated. If we bring the world into the classroom, or a class out into the world, it is just two approaches to the same belief – what we teach should be relevant to the ones we teach.



Nurture



Nurturing is a persistent process, driven by a wish to see something develop or unfold. We nurture what is closest to our heart. A farmer will nurture the fields that produce food and income for his family. A child might nurture a pet he wants to see grow big and strong. Though when it comes to nature, we often misplace this inherent instinct that motivates us to take care. A tree gives us breath, it gives us life. If each child learns how to nurture a tree, treat it as a friend instead of an object, we will eventually save all the other beautiful things we have in life.



Both information and connection is vital for one to nurture something. If we don't know why something needs to be nurtured, or how to nurture it, it's likely to be put second in line. Teachers and children alike are excellent torchbearers, to carry out the message of nature conservation.





The ability to nurture is an extremely important skill, but also a challenging one. It takes patience, persistence and determination. When a child learns how to nurture a tree, and then watches it grow, he also practices how to nurture his own ambitions and wishes in life.



There are many skills to be learned in school, but school is just a small part of a much longer life. A teacher can give his students the right tools for life, by nurturing their growth in the classroom and equipping them with skill to face the future.



Sometimes we need to show the way, inviting the people around us to plant a tree, before they see how important this action is.

Most parents want nothing else but to teach their children everything they know, for the times they might not be around. Though, sometimes the tables get turned, and the children become the teachers, showing their parents what they value and why they should too.



Bloom



Bloom is a particularly beautiful moment in life. Thankfully it doesn't only happen once, but several times in our lives if we just observe carefully enough. Any flower, be it of the world or of the soul, can bloom if nurtured. Ideas can bloom into successful interventions; inspiration into historic masterpieces. A teacher will see his student's bloom every day in the classroom if he keeps a close eye - when they make a new friend, learn a new skill or finally understand something that never made sense before.



It can be a captivating moment for any teacher to see their students bloom in front of a crowd. When they stand with confidence, trying to convey an important message, letting the audience see a little part of them and hopefully making them hear what they are trying to say.





Children should be key participants in any dialogue that concerns their future. How it's sensitized to fit their age is only a matter of preparation. Most children will bloom in the process of solving real and important issues, and we might just be surprised as to how much value they actually have to contribute to the conversation.





SAVE
TREES



Blooming is both an internal and external process. It can be a big action, easily noticed and admired by others, but it can also be a subtle change in the way we view the world, and ourselves in it.





A blooming idea is like ripples in the water, spreading to bigger and bigger spheres of our life.

Regenerate



Regeneration happens naturally, once an eco-system is restored, ensuring an eternal source of life. The way nature regenerates, similarly the human mind has the ability to regenerate knowledge and learnings for a more positive and sustainable approach to life. By teaching children how to regenerate their own learnings, to sort out bad habits, adopting new better ones and reviving the best traditions from the past, we ensure a generation able to take responsibility and action for a better future, that will restore rather than destruct, and respect the ever-evolving wisdom of nature.



Not every ecosystem can be easily regenerated, and neither can all hazardous habits we humans have adopted be easily done away with. Millions of people are dependent on work that damages nature, and there will be a transition period into a different way of life. The good news is that we have much knowledge about the available solutions to the challenges we all face.





When a new tree is planted, there is still a long journey ahead, but if properly cared for, it will one day regenerate into many more trees.





The world keeps evolving, and it always will. To regenerate into new realities might be the most important skill of the future, together with problem solving.



राधा - सखना जादूच
कुला - न की
विद्यालय - शा. मा. वि.



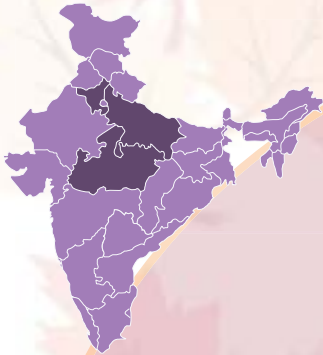


If a seed can turn into a forest, and a forest can regenerate life till the end of time – every seed is worth the effort.





Project achievement Since 2014



Number of states: 3
Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh



Number of Primary schools:
231



Number of Community members:
89190



**Number of Teacher Training
Colleges participated: 14**



Number of Student-Teachers:
4437



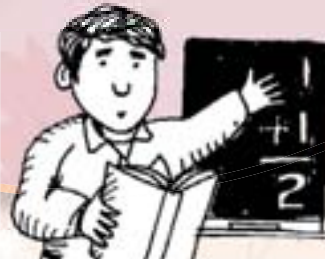
Number of trees planted: 115,875



Number of Out of School Children:
1500



Number of Primary school children:
82622



Number of Primary school teachers:
2748



अमरीका

संयुक्त राज्य अमरीका

उत्तर







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