



# AARAMBH WALDORF Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2017

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# TEACHER TALK



## Kindergarten

**Festivals lie at the heart of kindergarten (KG). They mark the changing monthly rhythms for our younger children specially. This year we saw much diversity in KG classes, with some new festivals celebrated, along with old ones, through singing of songs and preparing of food by teachers and children.**

Together we sang a simple Kashmiri lullaby- 'che kus be kus' at the beginning of the year in the month of Shivaratri. Teachers introduced a few Bengali songs to the KG group as well, with 'Phoole Phoole' becoming the favorite and being sung and hummed by children and teachers through the spring season. It continues to be warbled happily by the children.

In keeping with the spirit of the monsoon season, the children learnt a sweet and humorous Bengali rhyme on the frog - 'O kolla Bang O Shola Bang', the recitation of which was accompanied with enthusiastic froggie jumps.

The children also had fun playing in the rain, and sometimes after a wet day

they would make boats with sturdy leaves and little twigs to sail in water puddles.

As we approached the festival months of August and September, as in previous years, children looked forward to the Janmashtami morning circle where they could stand like Kaanha on the shoulder of their friends, making a small 'hill' and then 'pull the matki down from the roof, steal the butter and run away to their homes.

They looked forward to the 'gud gud' sound of churning butter in the morning circle and would mime the action of churning it like grandmother sitting in the raso and pulling the cords around the butter pot to stir it well.

Some children would stand with one leg crossed over the other, like Krishna, with an imaginary flute on their lips, with some children imitating the song and dance gestures during their free play as well.

In August, the children made beautiful rakhis through simple braiding and stringing beads with their teachers. On the Rakhi day, all the KG children and

grade children came together, made date and coconut ladoos and tied rakhis on each other's wrists, while offering sweets to each other.

During Eid-al-Adha we came together and sang a very soothing song on Allah and children and teachers prepared sevaiyan for the school. Then came Ganesh Chaturthi and the children thoroughly enjoyed singing a welcome song for Ganesha, and plodding on all fours like an elephant and stamping the ground like one too. Pretending to be elephants, teachers offered rides on their backs to the children, which encouraged older children to also do the same with their friends and younger ones.

During September, we made murruku and beetroot thoran and sang and danced to a beautiful boat song in Malayalam to mark Onam. Children and teachers both are now eagerly waiting to celebrate other festivals in upcoming weeks.

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- Kindergarten Teacher at Aarambh

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## Grade 1

### Wanderings in the Waldorf World

*“What is this life, if full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.  
No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows.  
No time to see when woods we pass,  
Where the squirrels hide their nuts in grass.  
No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.  
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.  
No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.  
A poor life this is if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.”*

The poem, “Leisure” by William Henry Davies (1911)

**The first 2 lines from the poem are still etched in my memory, even though I must have read it more than a decade ago (no, I am not ancient!). Now why is that I wonder? Is it because we sat memorizing this nature poem confined within a 4-walled room? (Wouldn't it be traumatic**

**if we missed out on 2 marks in the English exam if we replaced the word “cows” with “bullocks”!), Or is it because the meaning of it truly resonated inside me?**

The truth is that then I had forgotten to stand and stare. And now, I get back to those basics at a Waldorf school.

“Stand and stare”- this is one of the ways children and teachers learn here in the Waldorf world. As children, most of us have been too busy staring and cramming details from textbooks, and as adults too busy in the daily grind to stand and stare. One of the first questions I asked my mentor teachers here when I joined Aarambh was “What is the curriculum followed in Kindergarten?” expecting to find a printed sheet with monthly goal objectives. But as I stood, stared, observed, I realized how children interacted with each other here, with nature, with their environment, with a basic set of material and learnt by observing and imitating the environment around them. The children were not being “taught” yet they were learning with joy. They turned 2 dry coconut shells and a stick into a weighing balance, dug deep into the soil to create water routes to feed the

plants, pointed at and named the trees and plants, listened attentively to the vocabulary rich with tales of nature and fairies, of the busy bear, the prince, princesses and the seasons, figured out how much they needed to pull that red coloured thread to match with the yellow one to complete their mandalas, collected tomatoes from the farm to concoct a simmering tomato soup for the winter, made the tip of their paintbrushes dance with the colour yellow on a white sheet, sung songs to welcome the King of all Fruits in summer....The children were beginning to shake hands with Math, Science, Languages, Music and Art already at the tender age of 4-5. As they learnt, their hands were active. Their head was curious. The heart was filled with wonder and excitement. The H trio worked in symmetry, as the teachers too “stood and stared” observing each child in action.

I joined Aarambh Waldorf School only this year, but what struck me first (even before the famed 3Hs-Head, Heart, Hand education here) were the 3 Ss: the **Silence**, **Simplicity** and **Serenity**. Let me elaborate a bit here as we do with the 3Hs.

1) **Silence**: As a newbie teacher I unlearned and learned some things. Teachers here never raised their voices, whether it was to communicate or discipline. I noticed how silence (or its distant cousin soft voice) could speak louder than words with more emphasis on body language, eye expressions and gestures to express a ‘no’, a ‘boundary’, an encouragement, enthusiasm to and with children.

2) **Simplicity**: There were no fancy/flashy toys or swings or loud blaring rhymes from audio systems, clamouring for children’s attention. Logs of wood, tyres, dupattas, etc were used in a 101 imaginative and resourceful way by the children without being given any instruction. One day, a dupatta could be the sari of a little boy, the next day it could turn into a curtain of a machaan. While there was no electronic music, there was a song or even a little verse for every occasion and transition - to begin their day, to go back for storytelling, to begin their lunch. Who needs ringing loud ghantis to signal ‘next class’, when softly humming tunes by the teachers magically calmed down the children and

prepared them for the next activity.

3) **Serenity**: The location and the area around the school struck me as serene, away from honking cars and chaos. The subtle browns and greens of the trees and the woods, merged harmoniously with the bright colours of the mandalas, flowers and the birds in the vicinity.

Kindergarten looked like a picturesque postcard, helping the little ones to silently absorb their surrounding and then again openly expressing it with their senses, ie breathing it in sometimes and then breathing it out. It was this balance that was the key.

With both nervousness and excitement, I stepped into the Waldorf grades with the children. It was a transition for me too. A transition where I get to teach and learn in a different way. But that would be another adventure to narrate. For now, it’s breathing out time

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[Grade 1 Teacher at Aarambh](#)

# NEWS FROM THE SCHOOL

**Our Universe helps us to unfold and look at each day as a new beginning and learn and grow with each passing day.**

This year began with our older Kindergarten children stepping into Grade 1. They had eagerly been looking forward to the day when they would move up, creating space for more children becoming part of our younger Kindergarten group. They crossed this threshold, bubbling with enthusiasm and trying hard to 'look' like 1<sup>st</sup> Graders.

Their KG teacher helped them cross over as they moved through the hurdles - jumping and crawling. They also enjoyed the dabbing of tilak on their foreheads, and flowers being given to them by Grade 3. They touched their teachers' feet, who will take them on a new journey ... and one by one they all entered Grade 1, brimming with curiosity to learn. Our little KG children watched the ceremony with wonder and joy.

Grade 3 was also welcomed with flowers as they entered their new class. This year we have been able to create an extra space for our Grade 3 children to have a farming experience. They visit a farm in Gurugram once a week, where they have been busy preparing the field, sowing seeds, removing weeds and patiently waiting for their plants to grow.

Each year brings new excitement and joy with children growing and reminding us of the important task we have undertaken, and parents too are on this journey, providing support in diverse, meaningful ways.

Our Teachers continue to nurture the sense of goodness, beauty and truth in our children.

Our Mentors/friends and teachers from around the world continue to help/guide and support us in every possible way. We had visitors from Brazil, Germany, Netherlands, Israel, Chennai and Bangalore.

Our Universe helps us to unfold and look at each day as a new beginning and learn and grow with each passing day.



# PARENT TALK

**I**t was when my daughter turned two and I was ready to return to work that we started searching for a school for her. Being a working mother, I preferred my daughter to be in a play school / nursery (whatever be the nomenclature) that provides a secure and healthy social environment rather than staying with a caregiver at home for the whole day.

On searching over the internet for an alternate school in Delhi, I came across Aarambh, a Waldorf school. I had never heard of this kind of school or of the Steiner philosophy before. I started reading up on it. The more I read, the more attracted I was towards it. We attended our first orientation program at Aarambh in June 2015. The teacher told us that our daughter was too young for the school and asked me to wait till she turns 3. In the meanwhile, I attended more than one orientation program to familiarize myself with the system and train myself to the Waldorf philosophy.

There are quite a few things that we

found very captivating about the Steiner approach. The most important one is the concept of 'freedom within the boundary'. Somehow it was missing in my approach towards my child. I was giving her lots of freedom to realize her 'own self', but now I learned that setting limits is an important factor too. What is important is how to set the boundaries.

Attending the parent teacher meetings, training programs, interactions with the teachers, etc. has helped me a lot in integrating the Steiner philosophy into our day to day life. It is an on-going process.

Earlier I had wondered how small children get connected to stories and what they understand when stories about abstract ideas are told to them. I myself was far away from fairy tales. I mean, trusting a magic wand was almost impossible for me with all these years of rational thinking. However, slowly I started to regain my belief, and realized that in fact 'mother nature' is a beautiful fairy who performs magic in

our daily lives! If you believe in the story that you are narrating to the child, the child simply connects to it and lives through it. Children live in an imaginary world, the fairy tales makes their world more colourful. Yes, one needs to keep away his/her adamant logical thinking if they want to adapt themselves to Steiner's anthroposophy.

My daughter joined Aarambh (it is perhaps better to say that I joined Aarambh!) last summer, a year and half ago. The schooling is mainly for me. I am learning. Whether it is in terms of selecting stories, doing household chores or leading a holistic life, I am going through the learning process. The Waldorf way is all about living close to nature and thereby realizing one's destiny and connecting with the spiritual world through inner development. When you live in a city like Delhi, where you don't even get clean air to breathe in and pure water to drink, the real Waldorf life style is far away. Despite this, I have seen a group of people, teachers and parents at Aarambh, consciously trying to



make a better environment for their little ones. Our family is also on our journey towards the Waldorf valley.

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**Golda**

Mama to 4 year old

**W**hen I walked into Aarambh 3 years ago, all I understood was that this was the sort of place I would be comfortable leaving my rather shy child. There would be no academic pressure and no insistence to sit through a long day of classes for my restless 4-year old.

Through the first two years, I didn't know much about what my child was learning directly, he rarely told me what's happening in school. But he was happy. If he missed a day, he would be upset and ask why. That in itself was a huge deviation from how I've seen children respond to school. I saw him getting more and more comfortable with himself, and the once shy child was now coming into his own.

Last week I attended his first parent teacher meeting for Grade 1, and for the first time the full impact of my choice hit me. I'd walked in a little nervous because he'd been telling me he'd been being naughty. I expected to hear that he's fidgety and inattentive. Instead I got a detailed five page write up of my son's school life. The loving attention came through in each word the teacher read out, letting me know how much interest she took in his well-being and

learning. For the first time I saw the lesson books the children work in and the little tidbits my son had started sharing with me fell into place. The way in which he is being taught the alphabets and math, I know it's going to be a part of him. No learning by rote for him. The beautifully drawn out letters, the handmade skipping rope, which he is so proud of, his curiosity and love for learning - all these are being shaped every day in school.

While our journey has had its highs and lows, after this PTM, I knew I had made the right decision three years ago. Waldorf education and Aarambh have given my child and I an irreplaceable gift.

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**Priya**

Mama to 7 year old

# Understanding Waldorf

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## Daily Rhythm at home and its lifelong relevance

HELLE HECKMANN

As parents of little children, you are often very tired and you get too little sleep, and when you have too little sleep you also have too little energy and then often you give in when you think you should not have done, or you get angry or irritated so you are not present and when you are not present you lose the children and you do not like yourself.

To make it easier for you to deal in the daily life with your children there are three important considerations:

- To be flexible
- To set limits (borders)
- To observe the same routine everyday

You may train your flexibility through an inner work where you learn about yourself.

In relation to limits, you have to find out them for yourself. You have to decide what the limits are for your child in your house: time to go to bed, time to eat, what to eat, what language to use in the family and so on. You have to make up your mind about limits beforehand, so, instead of saying “no, no, no...” and becoming angry, you simply do not allow the children to go beyond the limits. You know this is your decision and do not need to be angry. If you are ahead of the child and you see a certain situation coming, with humor and the right gesture or word, you can move away from the situation, and this will be possible if you train your flexibility. Knowing more about yourself will give you the possibility to also be ahead of yourself. When you catch this tool you can start working with your children in a much freer way, because the limits are set.

The third recommendation, to make a routine which is the

same every day, gives the child rhythm. All Waldorf families probably know how the daily life is in the kindergarten. The children go through the day in alternate periods of concentration and expansion, as if in a breathing rhythm where there is inhaling and exhaling.

In the inhaling or breathing-in phase the child directs his attention to an activity that basically relates him to himself. For little children each breathing-in period (drawing, water painting, and knitting, eating...) is very short because little children can only concentrate for short periods of time. In the exhaling or breathing-out period, the child relates mainly to the surrounding world (free play, free running etc.). For each breathing-in period the child needs a breathing-out period and so a pattern is established. This rhythm is something that you can bring into your home. You have to try to find out when the children breathes-in and when they breathe-out. And when the children are in the breathing-in period, you have to make sure you are present, so the child feels ah, here I feel my parents, they are there for me. After that, for very short time, you can do what you have to do at

home and you can tell your child you have to wait because I need to do this. And this will be all right because you know you have been present with the child. As an example, look at the situation when parents pick up their children from the kindergarten. At the very moment you are picking up your child: Does the cell phone ring and you answer? Do you greet your friends and engage in intense talk? If yes, then you are not present for the child. In my last visit to Mexico I saw very few parents really greeting their children, the majority were talking to other parents or engaged in school affairs or talking in their cell phones, or arriving late or in a hurry.

But, for your child who has been gone for five hours and who really wants you... you are not there. So the child screams I want an ice cream! I want this or that! or he starts running around, or falling, or getting into little conflict because he is confused, because he has not really met you. On the contrary, if you take the time (and it is five seconds perhaps), you bend down, give him a hug and then smell him (so lovely!) and really you are there, his eyes will tell you more than words, how his day was.





He cannot tell you with words because he cannot remember, but his eyes will tell you everything. And then you take his hand and walk together (of course in a tempo that the child can follow), and this is really lovely because you are making a new nice situation, a “you and I situation.” Now, if you need to greet people you can do it, very shortly, but together with the child because your child will feel I am where I belong, with my parent. This was a breathing-in situation

where you were present.

Then you go to the car and go home (breathing-out) and it is probably time for eating which brings again a breathing-in situation. How do you eat? Do you sit down together with the child? Or is the child sitting by himself and you are walking around talking on the telephone? If you give yourself the time and sit down with your child you will teach the child manners at the table by your example. Many of the children

today do not sit with their parents and they do not learn to hold utensils appropriately. However, this is important, otherwise when they are seven years old they cannot hold a pencil and to learn it at that age is so difficult compared to when they were one or two years old.

In addition, to sit at the table and to have a beginning, a process and an end, is important because this is how you should live the whole of life. Everything has a beginning, a process and an end. It may take you only fifteen minutes to sit appropriately, to check how the child holds and drinks from cup (children from one year onwards do not need a sip cup), to eat with closed mouth, and everything you are given and so on, being, in this way, an example for your child to follow, but more importantly you have taken this short moment to make again a “you and I situation” and at the same time you also help the child to find a social form of how we are when we eat together.

When you finish with the meal you remind the children they need to help with the table so that they also learn that when they are a part of a social environment they

also take part in the cleaning up. In this way you have made and create a situation where you have been present and now you can say to the child go and play (breathing-out) because you have been there, and then you can do what you need to do but you have to be visible to your child. This is so, because a little child cannot play by himself if the



center is not there and you are the most important person for the child. You are his center, and if you leave the room the little child will follow you.

When you are doing your things, the situation may occur where children will say I am bored. In this case you, of course, don't turn on the television or music. When you are occupied with other things, you can tell your child now you play by yourself. If you know you have been present you can actually expect them to find something to do themselves. It is very important that you are not afraid of your children not knowing what to do or being bored. It is very important that you feel it is right: I have been there with them now they can be by themselves.

Nowadays, parents often use media or adult-directed activities for their children because they are afraid of their children being bored and assume that they are not able to do anything themselves. This is a tricky situation. If you think you have to entertain your under-seven children all the time, with media (films, TV, videogames, computers and so on), after-school classes, and/or other adult-directed activities,

then they do not learn how to play by themselves. They will not have a moment where they can be in a state of not knowing what to do and from there progress into a state of finding images inwardly and thus creating things from inside out. By letting them to be bored you help them, because being bored represents the opportunity the children will have to go into this process of inner creativity. The fact that children are able to be by themselves, to create their own play without adult direction is of great importance because during the first seven years of the child everything is about being able to create.

If all the activities come from outside (electronic screen, video-games, adult direction, etc.), then not much happens in the sphere of inward creation. That is why in Waldorf kindergartens, teachers do not sit down and play with the children but do real work, from which the children draw inspiration to use it in their own play. In these kindergartens you may find teachers sweeping, cooking, sawing, tending the vegetable patch, taking care of farm animals, cutting wood, and whatever the particular setting of each school allows

to do. Equally, you, as a parent, in the breathing-out phase, may do your work and the children beside you should be able to do their work (i.e. their own play). This is possible only when the children feel that they have met you in a previous breathing-in phase.

It is the same when children go to bed in the evening. What the child loves to hear are stories from your life. No book, no radio, no music, no film nor cartoon can make the same impact on the child as you. And to find your own story to tell means so much and it is, in addition, a tool with which you can change very stuck situations. It is so difficult for children to let go of you if they have not felt you present. But, if you have hold your child, blown a little in the ear, told her a little story from the heart, so you have really been there, then you can kiss her and put her to bed and feel I can leave because I have been there. And then you can expect that your child is able to sleep by herself, which is healthy for your child.

In Denmark, where I come from, many parents are in a situation where they have to lie down and hold hands with

the child, read 20 stories, sing 50 songs, and all this takes one, one and a half, two hours and when finally they go out quietly of the bedroom they hear 'Mum, water, Mum!' and then become annoyed. You can avoid this by setting limits and finding a comfortable way to leave because you have been present in different situations during the day. Otherwise the child has not been filled enough with your love and, if in addition, he has not been given opportunities to do his own play, to work from inside out, you cannot expect he will be able to sleep by himself.

There is an additional aspect I would like to draw attention to for the after-kindergarten time you have with your children. If you take your children from class to class or entrust them to the media in its different varieties you have less time with them. Children are small for very short time. At present, you may be thinking it is a long time to go but, in no time you will see it went so fast. By letting your child to engage in his own play while you are around doing your own chores, and being really present in those breathing-in situations, you build trust





In this context it is important how the kindergarten and the home relate to each other: there must be a bridge from one world to the other. In a way, it is a little hard for families who choose a Waldorf education for your children as you become different from the mainstream, but this is your choice. You cannot do both. Once you have taken the road of consciousness, you are concerned about the food, their upbringing, everything. To make the bridge from having the children in the Waldorf kindergarten and at your home is, of course, important so the child can see that everything fits. That is why it is incredibly important to build up trust between the kindergarten and the family, through which the kindergarten teacher is able to support the family's choice but also for the family to respect what is brought in the kindergarten so one thing without the other is nothing. So you need to find a way together.

I have three children who are 29, 26, and 23 and now I can harvest the 25 years of hard dedicated work with my children, and it is so fantastic because I can see how they can go out in life with freedom

between your child and you. And this trust will be important when they get a little older and get into pre-puberty and puberty because with this, they will come to you when they have problems and listen to you when you tell them what and what not to do. But they will only do it if they trust you, if you have been there for them. And that is why the first seven years of children are so important, because their whole trust, their believing that the world is good, is the basis of their future lives.

After that first seven years, it is

their friends who become the focus. Their choice of friends has a lot to do with the morality you have shown them and built up through the first seven years. In addition, if children were given the opportunity to work inwardly, they will know themselves and then they will be able to say "no" when they meet something they do not like and "yes" to what they want. You can make a choice if you know yourself and a human being who can make a choice has healthy self-esteem.



and also I can move around in the world with freedom and wisdom, because they don't need me anymore but they like me and they like to be with me and also their friends. And this is, I think, the highest thing we wish as parents, that when our children are adults, they actually, by their own free choice, choose to be with us at certain moments. We can find with our children a new way of building social relationships because we have another consciousness by which we can meet our children better.

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#### Helle Heckmann

Waldorf kindergarten teacher in Denmark. Books and a DVD about her work at Nokken near Copenhagen are [available from WECAN](#).

## Live a Day the Waldorf Way!

The Aarambh Winter Fair is a unique family event. Time slows down, the winter sun radiates mellow golden light and the fun begins. Come and connect with your child, engage in Waldorf related activities, listen to magical stories, sing at the top of your voice and maybe do a jig or two. Sample unusual sweet and savoury treats prepared by the diverse Aarambh community.



**A A R A M B H**  
W A L D O R F S C H O O L

# Winter Festival

**Live a day the Waldorf Way**

**Sunday . 3rd Dec 2017**  
11 am - 7 pm

2 A/9, Block-A Shanti Kunj  
Church Road  
Behind D-3 Vasant Kunj  
New Delhi

98730 00240 . 99719 68969  
aarambhwaldorf.events@gmail.com

### Day Long Family Fun

Waldorf Games and Crafts .  
Organic Handmade Products  
Home Cooked Delicacies .  
Live Music

### Activities

Finger Knitting . Mandala .  
Community Weaving .  
Story Telling . Coloring .  
Gardening . Doll Making .  
Dreamcatchers

### Stalls

Handcrafted Products by  
Aarambh .  
Aindriyaa Art and School  
Supplies .  
Holy Cow Foundation .  
Millets for Health .  
Jamghat .  
Indigree Angels Trust .  
Organic Matti .

Entry fee INR 50 per person;  
Children below 12 years free

## Parent Orientations

We usually hold parent orientations once every month where interested parents can come for an hour and meet the teachers at Aarambh, understand more about the philosophy and see the school on these dates. The orientation is usually on a Saturday, from 9-10:30 am.

### NEXT PARENT ORIENTATION

Tentative Dates

- 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2017
- 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2018
- 18<sup>th</sup> February 2018

### REACH US



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Nikita +91 9971968969  
Namita +91 9560060441 (1 pm to 6 pm)



Block A . Shanti Kunj, Behind D3 Block,  
Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

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