



Christmas after Christmas the story of Alice Project goes on. It is a time to reflect about our course, successes and failures as well as to better schedule our future initiatives. The moment comes to contact our friends and sponsors and to thank them all for their trust and precious help, without which we would not survive.

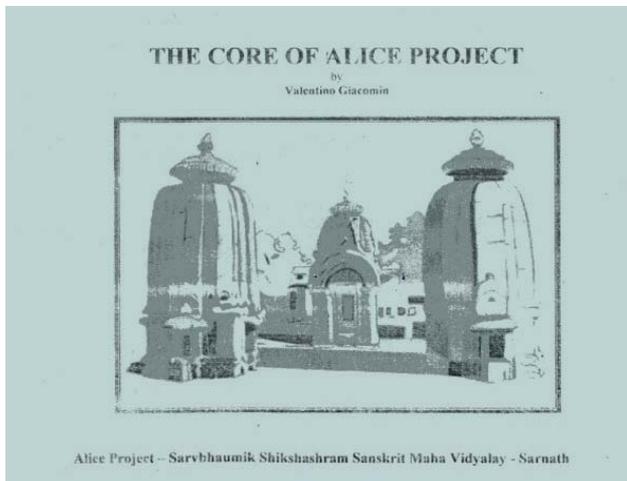
We would like to contact everybody more often, offering more information and news, but we fail, as we are just a few working full time.

However, some volunteers in Italy will now help also with mailing a quarterly Newsletter with news, photographs and letters from the students.

Those having an e-mail address, kindly write the same to the school, so that they can be included in the mailing list. Everybody will however receive the yearly Christmas Newsletter.

Please note that we have two websites ([www.aliceproject.org](http://www.aliceproject.org) - [www.aliceproject.info](http://www.aliceproject.info)) featuring information, interviews and stories about our work. Awfully, [www.aliceproject.info](http://www.aliceproject.info), the most complete and updated of the two, has been attacked and erased by a mysterious *hacker*. We regret a lot the loss of its content, patiently created by Joseph, a very creative former teacher of our school, now resident in Italy. We hope that the site will quickly be re-published thanks to him and other volunteers.

As far as communication is concerned, we are pleased to inform you that our school will take care of publishing a weekly *on-line* magazine in English and Hindi regarding Bodhgaya. Its *target* is the thousands of tourists visiting every year this holy city now protected as world heritage by Unesco. The heading "Bodhgaya - Alice-News" has been registered, after many difficulties and rigorous controls by police and is coming soon on the Internet. As you can see, we are paying much attention to the media, as we realize that it is a useful and effective means to broaden the Project's boundaries, besides taking our research to the attention of a wider public.



As you know, we have already published several books in Italian, English, Spanish and now also in German. If you are interested, please contact Luigina for the books in Italian and our school for the rest. In December three new illustrated stories will be published: "The Core of Alice Project", "The Treasure Island" and "The Story of Creation". For translation and editing of the texts, two volunteers, (Viviana, an English teacher from Italy, and Carlos Benito de la Fuente, a Spanish friend) are working without fatigue.

As far as realizing and promoting our future publications and introducing our educational proposal in the European context are concerned, Valentina, a industrious volunteer from Pisa, has since long been committing herself with lots of enthusiasm and competence.

From this year onwards, a few basic books are being translated into Hindi, aimed at spreading the method in Indian schools; 3 books are ready now for printing. We have published *Analogic English - Vol.II.*, on our new didactic approach for teaching English; this indeed being an integral part of our strategy to help students learn languages in an easy, funny and very practical way.

We have also submitted a project to the Cultural Institute at the Italian Embassy in Delhi, requesting them to finance the introduction of Italian language into the school *curriculum*, teaching it in accordance with our method.

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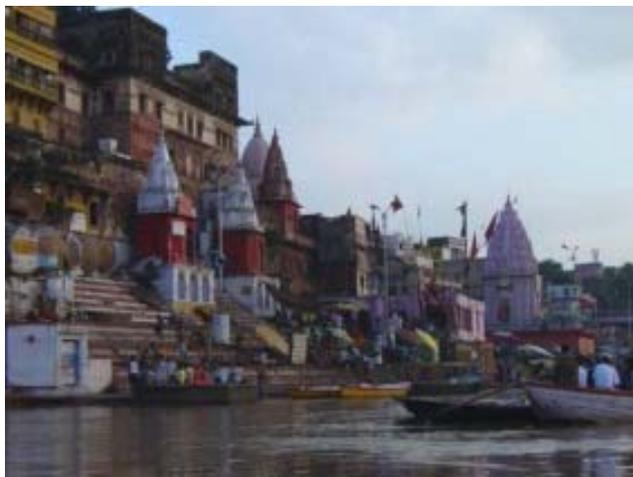
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You may wonder at the scope of it. In fact, our students themselves asked for this, aware, as they are, of the importance of learning other languages in places like Sarnath and Bodhgaya, visited by so many tourists, including Italians often not knowing English. In Varanasi there are only two authorized tourist guides speaking Italian at present. Thus, there would be very good chances for students interested in this.

For the same reasons (lack of interpreters and good job opportunities) we have encouraged our students to learn Tibetan. Two of them are completing in Dharamsala an intensive two-year course of this tough language, that should enable them to work as tourist group leaders and interpreters.

We would like to highlight once again that our educational project is not offering only introspection, meditation, yoga ... but practically thinks also of the students' material needs, especially in such a competitive environment as the contemporary Indian society. The Alice Project University proposes, encourages and prepares "élite, against-the-stream" careers, as counsellors, senior helpers, social assistants for alcohol –addicts, drug-addicts, environmental experts (especially for programs like watershed management).



Of course, among all vocations, first comes teaching in accordance with the methods –always against-the-stream- of Alice Project, that require a long *training* and a few years of field experience before getting certified. About ten of our students, now attending University, have decided to follow the three-year course in Alice Project didactic and pedagogy. After completing it, they will be entitled to work in our schools with a regular wage. (For the time being we are supporting them with assignments in the preliminary classes and we invite you to "adopt" these promising teachers for the future!).

It is indeed not an easy task, because we go against the mentality of the villagers, unable to see in the long-term. The majority of

Indian students prefers to study computer education, mathematics, science, economics, medicine, as if all could become professionals in these subjects. The obvious result is high rate of unemployment among those graduated in these disciplines. But the parents dream their children becoming professionals in these most eyed professions.

Will there be enough jobs for our students willing to become teachers? Will they be too many?», we used to wonder a few years back, when only a few hundreds of students attended our school.

The time once again changed the scene and answered on our behalf. In the course of years, the number of students increased reaching nearly 1.000 this year. This year we didn't know at the beginning where to find enough teachers (that know our didactics and pedagogy well enough) to cope with the demand for new kindergarten and primary school classes. Our students turned teachers, in fact, are not enough to meet the needs of the school now. What will we do next year, when more children will seek admission at our school?

We hope that more students of ours may join the teaching mission of Alice project, against the temptation – often a 'mirage' of a white-collar job in a bank or as "improbable" engineers, doctors etc... Such professions, in fact, are still at



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the reach of only those socially higher strata with a higher income, because the excellent results at the state exams are not enough (100% promoted both in Xth and XIIth from our school) to get access to a college that guarantees a career of prestige. One needs strong 'recommendations' only to get an admission, 1000s of Euros in donation (or better, bribe) or passing the very difficult admission/entry tests to which one gets access to after intense special coaching at costly and specialised institutes for months. Even when one manages to get admitted, the expenses don't finish there: there are the taxes and fees to be paid, the textbooks, the hostel fee... None of our students can afford all these expenses. Notwithstanding



all these, as we said earlier, many parents continue to dream and bequeath their ideas to their children.

We hope that in the course of time the university of Alice Project will also be recognized at the same level as those of the prestigious institutes guaranteeing brilliant careers and earnings of *nawabs*. This should be clear: what we want to obtain just like these institutes is only the same level of prestige, even when we don't share the means and the end. We would like to help the students become aware of the fact that the self realisation (also spiritual from one point of view) is more important than any type of job, no matter if it were for a multinational of Bangalore!

Something is happening: the state universities of Varanasi have shown active interest in this research. In fact, the Alice project was awarded, in December 2005, in a specially organised ceremony by the Academic Council of the Sanskrit University in the presence of numerous professors, journalists along with the students and teachers of our school. Dr. Annamaria Ceci represented the Italian Embassy in Delhi in the function. The award ceremony was well covered not only by the Indian newspapers but also by some of the dailies and TV in Italy.

The importance of this pedagogic research as a contribution to the solution of educational crisis in general and the success obtained until now not only in the sector of pedagogic experiment, but also in the sectors of social commitment to women, the less fortunate, child labour etc.. is highlighted, above all, as the motivation for this award to the Alice Project.

As regards the social involvement running parallel to the school, we must say that the requests for intervention have been on the increase year by year. It may appear a paradox: on the one hand we often read that India is in the midst of an economic boom, that it will be one of the economic super-powers in the coming years, while, on the other hand, we notice an increasing impoverishment of the economically weaker sections compared to 10 years ago. The parents of our students (farmers, small artisans...) become poorer every year. The farming community in particular, is on the verge of misery and hunger, due to the drastic climatic changes leading to draught and other natural calamities.



By necessity and choice, our commitment increases day by day in favour of girls, students falling ill, widows, environment and so on. We have always paid a special attention to the education of girls, so that more and more of them can get out of the clutches of misery and segregation women are subjected to in villages. For the first time, last year and this year, many of these girls passed out the high school in flying colours. Some of them, having obtained excellent scores, received substantial State funding (a scholarship worth around 200,00 €, corresponding to several months' wages of their parents).

**Several classes at the elementary level have been formed for girls coming from less fortunate economic backgrounds.**

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**One of these classes (see photo) has been adopted by an Italian parents' and children's association. There are several other classes that don't enjoy such a continuous support.**

We do hope that the legal questions on a considerable hereditary condition donated long ago to the Alice Project in favour of orphaned and very poor Indian girls will soon be resolved, so that we can guarantee lots of them a better future: a diploma, vocational training and at last "dowry" (a terrible burden for Indian families).

We can only mention, to be synthetic, a few cases in which the economic support from our friends and sponsors saved lives. Many children bitten by mad dogs were treated and cured. We are helping a boy from Bihar affected by a terrible illness, caused by wrong medicines. We don't know yet if he will be saved, but he is still battling for life thanks to the many transfusions of blood donated by our teachers and senior students, besides the financial assistance. Now, in response to requests and pressure from our school, the Unicef intervened and the boy has been transferred to a hospital in Delhi. A really true, great chain of solidarity and support led by "Mandibole Allenate" (literally "Trained Jaws", an Italian association of adoptive families) saved the life of Sovonath, one of our high school students who had developed a deadly infection in the stomach. He had to undergo two major surgeries and is now slowly recovering thanks to the timely intervention, adequate care and continued assistance made possible by the generous help received. Then, the desperate case of a girl struck by leprosy, that is now being cured thanks to our sponsors.

**Please, allow us to make the latest emergency appeal: we are trying to help a boy with acute leukaemia, imprisoned at the Juvenile Home (jail for minors) in Varanasi. The doctors say that there is 50% chance of saving this boy, provided he gets cures available only abroad.**

As regards the Juvenile Home, you may recall that the School has been engaged for 3 years with a programme to reduce the pathetic conditions of the children, mostly innocent, imprisoned there: with initiatives of education, health, psychological support besides striving through all possible channels to liberate as many as possible.



We can say of having succeeded at least partially in our aim, that the secretary of our school was recently nominated by the district magistrate (equal to a Prefect in Italy) as supervisor of this prison for minors, with ample freedom to operate.

The lives of the inmates improved a little within a few months: now they have running water,

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bathrooms and toilets, more space to move around, and above all medical assistance at last! Some of the boys were freed after having made the research to trace their parents and relatives. Instead, the situation of women at the "Destitute Home" continues to be dramatic, but we hope to be able to better the situation of this place too in the near future. We will keep you informed of the developments in this regard on our website.



For what concerns the hostel facility in the premises of the school at Sarnath, there will unfortunately be only about 40 resident boys this scholastic year (instead of 75 last year), due to scarcity of funds destined to this demanding project.



For the organic agricultural project, a piece of land was purchased near the school, both in Sarnath and Bodhgaya. We are trying to make the students conscious of the importance of becoming self-sufficient in their lives.

We remember, in this regard, two of our long-term friends, Valeria and Ivonne from Belgium, who with a generous contribution helped us, many years ago, to go beyond the initial boundaries, allowing us to expand in such a way as to obtain State recognition.

In concluding this letter, we would like to dedicate some time and space to remember and thank all our friends, from every part of the world that continue to help and support us, even though we know that many would like to be discreet and not mentioned. In particular, our special thanks go to all those who are near to us right from the beginning of this project, for their constant help without interruption, as for instance the Porters' Cooperative of Florence.



We can mention, for their originality, a few initiatives, though they are not the only ones. A newly married couple opted, as wedding souvenirs, for products that are authentically hand-made and produced with respect to workers' rights from our textile workshop, instead of traditional ones, thereby supporting this project managed by some of our students (ex-textile child-labourers).

Other friends organized fund-raising memorial celebrations for their dear ones, conscientising and involving friends and relatives, as Caterina did in memory of her late husband Danilo.

We can't forget the medical doctors that gave us free professional advice and assistance in some cases and those professors in psychology, graphology and so on, that have been giving us their professional advice for free over the years. Then, there are all those who help us raise funds by selling lottery tickets and articles from India, those organizing exhibitions and markets for handicrafts during their free time, the children and teachers of many schools that collect and send their contributions, those who regularly send their contribution to sponsor a student (distant adoptions). We thank also those retired people that save even from their meagre pension in order to help a boy or a girl to study here. Many small and big touching stories that guarantee life and continuity to this original educational project. We would like to make all of them known but it is not easy.

Thanks to all, on behalf of our students, teachers and all those who have received, are receiving and will receive benefits through this educational and humanitarian endeavour.

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Last but not least we can't forget the volunteers of this year and of the past years (some of them recently became parents, like Cristina & Beppe and Moira & Matteo), who worked and are working to sustain the Alice Project in Italy, in other countries or here in India:



Caterina (who coloured the school in Sarnath), Massimo, Alessandro, Franco, Idalia (when will you return to lead your counseling sessions?), Chiara, Mali (where are you now?), Jimmi (we await the third course!), Joy (energetic animator of her students in favour of the school), unforgettable Tina (the pioneer of volunteers...: "alone against the bulldozers", title of a daily newspaper in Sardegna – Italy, when one of our schools was demolished), Clara (how are you?), Sonia, Mariarosa, Diego, Emanuele - Alida (hearty condolences from us all for the sad demise of your dear mother), Luca ("lost" in Japan), Luca (5-star chef), Viviana (brilliant interpreter and fund kaiser), Carlos (who translated almost all our books into English, Valeria (living in Belgium, pillar of the school right from the beginning), Yvonne (thanks to her we overcame the initial boundaries and began a long, steady process of expansion), Moreno (the students still remember his *karatè* sessions!), Pier (the good-hearted baker) and ... no, we have not forgotten other, ... we'll tell of them in the next newsletter.

Thanking you once again from the bottom of our hearts and wishing you all a Merry Christmas and promising New Year 2007.

*Valentino and Luigina*

**It is possible to support the Alice Project in several ways: through sustaining the various projects, distant adoptions, sharing the experience as volunteers for a minimum stay of 1 month, offering one's competence to help the researchers and promoting cultural exchanges and initiatives with other schools and educational projects.**

Regarding financial support, as it is quite difficult for us to obtain information on time from the bank authorized to receive donations in foreign currency, we kindly request all our sponsors to inform us directly of their donations or yearly renewal of distant adoptions of our students. Please, write all draft details to both addresses [valentino1@rediffmail.com](mailto:valentino1@rediffmail.com) ; [v\\_giacomin@hotmail.com](mailto:v_giacomin@hotmail.com) (as fax lines are fragile), so that we can check with bank and provide receipt confirmation (approximately it may take 1-2 months). In case you don't receive any feedback after 2 months, please remind us by e-mail again. Without such notice from the sponsors we are unable to identify from where money comes, as banks in India do not disclose such information to the receiver.



**Those interested can effect their contributions IN EURO to the following bank details:**

"Please, pay Bank of India - Paris Branch (SWIFT ID BKIDFRPP) for further credit of A/C No-4317000646 of Bank of India Kolkata Overseas BR (BKID INBBCOS) for further Credit of beneficiary Account No-CD-10 AWAKENING SPECIAL UNIVERSAL EDUCATION with Bank of India - Bodhgaya Branch (Gaya, Bihar - India)"

**Those interested can effect their contributions IN US DOLLARS to the following bank details:**

"Please pay J.P. Morgan Chase Bank (SWIFT ID-CHAS US33) for credit to Bank of India New York branch account 544774311, for further credit to account no. 300025009 of Bank of India Kolkata Overseas Branch for credit of beneficiary account no-CD-10 AWAKENING SPECIAL UNIVERSAL EDUCATION with Bank of India- Bodhgaya branch"

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