

Where the Past and the Present Come to Learn

By Christine Soucy

“OM Shanti Mandiram played an important role in my life. I wanted to do something in the field of education but was not sure what and how. Om Shanti Mandiram gave me direction and confidence that a lot can be done. There is a huge opportunity in Sanskrit and its teaching that should be available to the world for a better tomorrow. The United States is rich in technology and science and India is rich in philosophy, spirituality and its ancient discoveries. We need a partnership to bring the best of both things to the world.”

~ Ashish Dabral

In the perfect example of cross-cultural collaboration and the balance that Om can help to achieve, a new kind of Sanskrit school is soon to take India by storm.

OMSOHAM Human Welfare Charitable Trust is working to improve the education system in rural India. Rural schools face high student-teacher ratios, teacher absenteeism, poor teaching and learning atmospheres, poor school infrastructure, no camaraderie between the community and school, high drop-out rates and a plethora of other problems. A large number of studies conducted by different organizations in different parts of the country reflect this situation, OMSOHAM says.

The Universal Gurukul (Shri Timli Sanskrit Paathshala) was first born in the year 1882 in Garhwal Himalayas. In 1952 Universal Gurukul introduced English as a second language to its curriculum in order to meet the needs of its students. The

school was operational until 1969, when the government of Uttar Pradesh adopted it and converted it to a higher secondary school. The first Sanskrit School funded by United Provence, it offered high school completion programs in Sanskrit to hundreds of Indian students. It carries with it a history of forward thinking that OMSOHAM is bringing back into the light.

Ashish Dabral, an Om devotee, is fulfilling what he feels is his calling, to revive Universal Gurukul with OMSOHAM. He wants to retain the school's history and spiritual strength, but at the same time bring it into the 21st century. “This school is going to be different from other traditional Sanskrit schools,” Ashish says. “Traditional schools focus on Sanskrit Language, Grammar, Jyotish (astrology) and Karmakand (Ritualism). We are trying to build a bridge between traditional teachings and modern science and technology.

The Sanskrit Philosophy

“Sanskrit is rich in philosophy and science. Sanskrit teaches us preyas (knowledge of external world) and Shreyas (knowledge of internal world or self.)”

The translation would be: Thinking of people in terms of “This one is a relative; this other one is a stranger is for the mean-minded. For those who are known as magnanimous, the entire world constitutes but a family.” ~ V.3.37 Panchatantra, in the 1.3.71 of Hitopadesha

The translation would be: “Om. That is Full, This also is Full, and from Fullness comes that Fullness, Taking Fullness from Fullness, Fullness Indeed”

This shloka can be related to the modern law of energy conservation or $E=mc^2$