

Rising Sun

Women Proutists
of North
America

January 2013 **INSIDE:**

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Traditional Palastinian Costume: Author and Researcher Hanan Munayyer presents at Fair Trade Festival in White Plains, New York

By Nada Khader

Using an array of carefully chosen slides, Mrs. Munayyer traced the origin of the motifs found in Palestinian costume and jewelry by examining ancient engravings, carvings and other artifacts dating as far back as several centuries BC. Mrs. Munayyer talked about the influence of Arab textile arts and dress on medieval European costume and embroidery, as specified in Western sources. Her very carefully documented work gave us insight into ancient patterns and the history of embroidery and craft in the Middle East over the last millennia. Several workshop participants were inspired to purchase her most recent book *Traditional Palestinian Costume: Origins and Evolution* which offers the reader access to superb photographs of rare traditional Palestinian embroideries from all regions of Palestine alongside a narrative that includes Mrs. Munayyer's research over the last

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Massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary is a Symptom of Societal Violent Conditioning

By Mirra Price

The shock waves of the mass murder at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut continue to spread around the globe. With 28 dead, including the 20-year-old shooter and his mother, it is the second worst mass shooting in US history, second only to the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007 in which 33 were killed. Of course, thousands of First Peoples (Native Americans) have been slaughtered in mass genocide for over 500 years. These slaughters had to do with stealing land, resources, precious metals and imposing American culture and values on subjugated peoples. This new massacre mania, however, is being perpetrated by some of our own children. It is really difficult to stomach. This massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary happens as many are still reeling from the mass murder at the "Batman" movie screening in Aurora, Colorado a few months ago.

NBC, Fox News and the other media outlets portray this horrific incident as the work of a lone shooter, a boy who was a loner and who is unusual, someone who is a misfit and somehow "went wrong". A Columbine shooter was portrayed in a similar way, as was the "Batman" shooter and as was the shooter of the Congresswoman from Arizona, Gabriella Giffords. Anyone who has paid attention to

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Gender Oppression

Guest Writer: Mirra Price

Women Proutists: Who are we?

Currently, the world is in the midst of a growing financial crisis in which banks are failing in record numbers; companies are going under at an alarming rate; major currencies hover on the verge of collapse; unemployment is skyrocketing. And funding for social services has been severely slashed. The prevailing capitalist economic system is based on the unchecked promotion of free markets, unregulated trade, consumer-driven growth and privatization of essential services. A practical alternative to corporate capitalism is urgently needed. In the search for a more people-centered paradigm and its implementation, women are key stakeholders.

Women Proutists are working together to create a world in which all people have the opportunity to develop their full potential. We educate and organize our communities to resist oppression, exploitation and discrimination. Women Proutists support the all-round physical, economic, intellectual and spiritual development of women.

Prout, Progressive Utilization Theory is a holistic social and economic system first proposed by the eminent Indian philosopher, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921-1990). It is a positive alternative to the excessive material inequalities of capitalism and the artificial equality of communism. The model organizes economic democracy for the economic self-reliance of every region and ecological preservation. The minimum necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care—must be guaranteed to all, and meaningful employment with an adequate salary is a fundamental right.

“Prout is a decentralized economic model with cooperatives as its bedrock. In the words of P. R. Sarkar, economic planning must start from the lowest level, from the grassroots, where the knowledge, experience and talent of local people can be applied to solve local problems and build local economies. The goal of world trade must be to protect the local people, not politicians or owners of corporations.”—Garda Ghista

Exploitation of Women

Women, who are at the center of the economic fallout from the crisis in capitalism, need special assistance to overcome discrimination in education, employment, the housing market and in our own families. Economic empowerment, as well as social empowerment, is essential to the true liberation of women. Consequently, women must become equal partners in the ushering in of a new economic

paradigm, based on empowerment of those who are disenfranchised in society.

“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. A bird cannot fly on one wing.”—P. R. Sarkar

The relation between patriarchy and capitalism is that of partnership. Under the capitalist system, women are often degraded by mass media advertising that use them to sell products. Women's bodies become objects for marketing the newest fashions, beauty products and hair styles to set popular trends.

In order to reverse this trend of exploitation, Prout's economic model based on cooperatives, small privately owned businesses and community-owned key industries must be implemented. In this paradigm economic democracy will play a key role. The principles of economic democracy are:

- Everyone must be guaranteed the minimum requirements of life.
- Everyone's quality of life will be enhanced.
- Local people make the economic decisions that directly affect their lives.
- Outside control of local economies will be prevented.

Women's Empowerment

It is essential that women become economically independent by establishing their own businesses. When businesses are locally owned and managed by women, it will give women more control over their finances and will create more job opportunities for women.

The delivery of a quality education to girls and women is vital for the success of women in future jobs. In the U.S., the educational system neglects schools in inner-city neighborhoods both with resources and quality teacher staffing. Many girls drop out of school due to pregnancy, fear of bullying and need to help care for other children in their homes. Fixing our sick economic system will help provide more access to good education for girls.

In U.S. society women often feel isolated and alone, with little support in their lives. The creation of consciousness-raising groups will help women feel empowered socially.

“The way it began [60s women's movement] was small consciousness raising groups. Groups of women talking to each other and trying to break through the general assumption that this is the way it has to be.”—Noam Chomsky

Women Proutists stand for this economic, educational and social empowerment of women. When women are empowered, families will also become stronger and healthier.

“Let womanhood be the vanguard of a new revolution which humanity must achieve for a glorious tomorrow.”—P. R. Sarkar

A Call to Women of America

By Theodora de Soyza

Let Us Join Hands in Peace Women Opposed to War (WOW)

As many of our sisters before us have struggled to secure their rights, we now have an obligation to continue the struggle to end all the wars that are ruining the lives of our military men, women, their children, families and yes, even us.

Let us have the courage and compassion to stand up to power - as Howard Zinn always said - changes have come through struggle and persistence of the people. Power and money have corrupted our democracy.

If you want a better, peaceful world for our children, grandchildren and future generations, then join Women Opposed to War (WOW).

There are no dues, no fees and no board of directors - only strong women with a passion and commitment to peace and justice.

Theodora de Soyza or Ted was born in Brooklyn, NY on April 11, 1928 to Italian immigrants. Her family came to the U. S. as children. She entered the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill Convent in London in 1949 at the age of 21. She received a BA in Education from Fordham University and taught primary grades in Harlem as well as in Virginia and Pennsylvania for 15 years. She left the convent in 1964.

Part of Ted's social justice work includes working with "gangs" on the lower east side of Manhattan, serving as an advisor at CHILD CARE, INC., teaching ESL at the Correctional Facility in Bedford Hills, New York, and at the Adult Learning Center in New Rochelle, New York, for three years. In 1971, after giving birth to Miriam, who had Down syndrome, Ted and her late husband Dallas founded two schools in the Bronx for infants, toddlers, and pre-school children with disabilities. Ted has been very active in the peace movement in Westchester County, New York, and is an inspiration to countless numbers of peace and social justice activists.

Please call Theodora for more information at 347-449-6818.

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Rising Sun

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Recipe Corner

A regular column by Liina Laufer

I love to cook from scratch. I prefer simple, all natural ingredients, the fewer the better. I was raised on the sentient Margii diet, so I cook without onions, garlic, mushrooms, eggs, or meat. Check out my sentient recipes at recipessdeliina.wordpress.com.

Veggie Soybean Burgers

Almost all of the vegetarian meat substitutes out there have long lists of ingredients, including onions and garlic, which I avoid. So I have been making my own veggie meats. Most recipes I've found for vegetarian meat substitutes include textured vegetable protein or other processed ingredients, so I came up with this recipe that is made with soybeans, which I cooked and baked following instructions from Just Hungry, a great blog about Japanese home cooking. I included toasted nori from She Sells Seaweed for extra nutritional content and flavor. Nori shake could also be added afterwards on top as a seasoning (see She Sells Seaweed's Nori Condiment recipe at shesellsseaweed.com).

Instructions: Grind all the ingredients together in a food processor, adding veggies last – just pulse a bit if you want



chunks of veggies in your burger rather than pureed veggies. Form into patties and fry.

If you are bringing them to a barbecue, you can fry them slightly or bake them before grilling. If you don't have a food processor, you can just chop the veggies finely and mash or chop the soybeans.

Ingredients:

- 1.5 cups chopped veggies – bell pepper, celery, carrots, zucchini, broccoli stems – any veggie that isn't too wet
- 1.5 cups cooked and baked soybeans
- 1 cup corn chips or breadcrumbs
- 2 Tbs soy sauce
- 2 Tbs dashi or soup stock or water or more soy sauce

Spices to taste:

- cilantro
- basil
- cayenne
- serrano chili or jalapeño
- salt
- black pepper
- Italian seasoning
- toasted nori

Please see Liina's blog at recipessdeliina.wordpress.com.

Mission Statement

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Sisters of the Earth

By Suniita



Sisters of the earth, we hear you crying every day.
Sisters of the earth please unite and lead the way.
When will you be honored; when will you be loved?
When will your rightful place on the planet be restored?

If sisters come together, maybe we can stop the wars,
Save the world from all the exploitation gone too far.
So many being trafficked, so many go to war.
So many live in slavery; so many die each day at hunger's door.

You raise the planet's families; you plow the planet's fields.
You raise everybody's minds to a point of love and peace.
The world needs you, sisters, and your wisdom that comes naturally.
Harmony is the way, you know; please lead the world to unity.

Sisters of the earth, take the reins up in your hands.
Stand up, speak out, and help humanity heal these troubled lands.
When will you be honored; when will you be loved?
When will your rightful place on the planet be restored?
Stand up. Speak out Lead the family of humanity.
The world will listen, and we want the way you know,
We want the way you know.

Ten Simple Secrets to a Great Meditation Practice

By Ramesh Bjonnes

From *Sacred Body, Sacred Spirit*

1. Cool body, cool mind.

Before meditation, clean your body and mouth by taking a bath, gargling, etc. If you meditate immediately after taking bath, your body and mind will feel fresh and awake. During the day or evening, you may take a yogic half bath by cooling arms, face, navel, neck and feet with cool water. Also cleanse the mouth and nose with water.

2. Sacred space, silent mind.

Sit on a meditation blanket or pillow made of wool or any other non-conductive material. Keep one blanket that is only used for your personal meditation. Use a wool blanket, because wool is a good insulator from the electrical currents in the earth. Create a sacred pitha in your place of spiritual practices by only using it for meditation or study of spiritual scriptures. Do not meditate on your bed, as it will tend to make you sleepy. Keep one room, or at least part of a room, where there is no activity except meditation. It need not be a large space—three to four feet square in a corner is sufficient. By doing your daily meditation there, you will gradually create a strong, spiritual vibration, so that merely sitting there will elevate your mind.

3. Straight spine, concentrated mind.

Although meditation is relaxing, it is not the same as relaxation, so maintain alertness by sitting with a straight spine. When your spine is completely straight, it can carry more easily the spiritual energy of the kundalini. By raising your head high and sitting erect, your mind will be alert and awake. Relaxing your back somewhat, allowing your spine to curve even a little, will likely cause your mind to become drowsy and wander.

4. Slow breath, deep soul.

Breathe slowly and deeply. Yogic and Tantric scriptures state that controlling the breath is the key to controlling the prana (vital energy of the body), and controlling the prana is the key to controlling the mind. Do not hold your breath or strain, but allow your breathing to naturally become slower and deeper. This will gradually induce a deeper and deeper state of calm, concentration and bliss.

5. Sacred books, sacred spirit.

Maintain spiritual flow by reading spiritual books daily.

6. Open eyes, focused mind.

Repeat your mantra or sing kirtan as much as possible throughout the day. Repeating your mantra with your eyes

open is called ardha iishvara pranidhana, or half meditation; it gives the benefits of mantra and motor organs. It is not a substitute for full meditation, but it will maintain the vibration of your mantra in the mind, and thus will give you deeper meditation when you do sit.

7. Mantra dance, mantra flow.

Dance kirtan daily by singing loudly. When we dance kirtan before meditation all our sensory and motor organs become stimulated with the spiritual wave of the mantras. Let yourself go!

8. Lonely space, silent mind.

Perform meditation in a quiet and lonely place in the forest, mountains, or by the ocean on a regular basis.

9. Spiritual friends, spiritual flow.

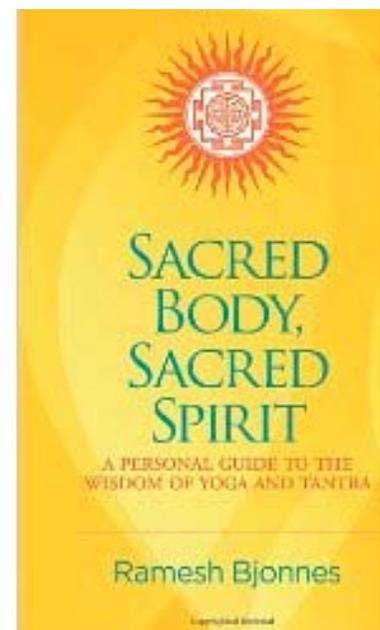
Enjoy satsang (the spiritual company of friends) as often as possible. To be in the company of other yogis sharing experiences and stories helps in keeping our mind in a spiritual flow.

10. Hatha yoga for mind and spirit.

Perform asanas daily. Practicing yoga postures daily is essential in maintaining healthy glands and balanced secretions of hormones. Slow asana postures, breathing slowly and holding the breath at particular intervals, is the most conducive yoga practice to meditation. (Hot and fast flowing yoga is not!) The gradual flexing of the body that takes place during asanas helps greatly in sitting motionlessly in meditation for longer periods.

Bjonnes, R. (2012). Sacred body, Sacred Spirit. Pages 160-161. San German: Inner World Publications.

Ramesh Bjonnes is cofounder of the Prama Institute, a holistic retreat center in North Carolina. He is a certified yoga health educator, a yoga columnist for the Elephant Journal and a lecturer on yoga philosophy.



Economic Democracy Conference in Madison, Wisconsin in October, 2012

A year ago, a group of 15 Proutists began organizing a conference on Economic Democracy. Our goal was to “unite the moralists” around the need for economic democracy. We chose Madison, Wisconsin as our site and created a web site www.economicdemocracyconference.org with all the 12 talking points written by Proutists to accurately convey our ideas. I am highlighting some of the contributions of Women Proutists at this conference. Beth Wortzel of Madison was Conference Chair.

Miirabai (Mirra Price) wrote some of these talking points, helped edit others and was Co-Chair of the Media Team for most of the organizing period. She was also on the Steering Committee of the Conference for several months. Nirainjana (Nada Khader) was on the Logistics Team and on the Steering Committee for a couple of months initially. Sunanda (Susan Deckhart) was our webmaster for most of the conference organizing, doing a fantastic job with the website. Jody Wright created the conference brochure.

Over 200 people attended the conference, about half from the Madison Area, including 35 Proutists (about 15 percent).

Well-known keynote speakers included *The Nation* correspondent John Nichols, Gar Alperovitz on cooperatives, Ellen Brown on public banking, David Cobb of Move to Amend, and David Schweikart, author of another book called *After Capitalism*.

In her inspiring opening talk, Nirainjana said: “Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, the founder of the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout), said that we must elevate the status of agriculture, that agriculture and agricultural work should have the same status as industry. Think about the car industry and how over time auto workers accrued decent compensation packages, worker protections and benefits. Imagine how our food system would be transformed if we applied the

same standards to agricultural work. We need federal and state policies to promote the welfare of family farms and agricultural cooperatives which will enhance food security for all.”

There were 38 workshops on subjects such as cooperatives, grassroots organizing, and indigenous rights.

A few Prout workshops were offered. Among them were “Prout: A Holistic Approach for Social and Economic Empowerment” by Nirainjana, Miirabai, Ambika and Tapan Mallik, “The Ethical Need for Revolutionary Change” by Bill Ayers and Dada Maheshvarananda, and “Health Care for All” by Pashupati (Steven Landau), who wrote and circulated an excellent “Prout Medical Manifesto”.

Miirabai gave a power point presentation on overcoming

women’s oppression. See it at: <http://economicdemocracyconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Overcoming-Gender-Oppression-1.pptx> In her talk, she said,

“The status and self esteem of women is attacked by advertising that uses women’s bodies to sell products. Underlying stereotypes serve to perpetuate the image of women as being inferior, weak and not equal to men. In order to eliminate unfair biases in society, we must unpack these stereotypes. We must increase the prevalence of positive female role models in the media, provide better day care options for families, decrease the wage gap between men and women, and eliminate discrimination in the workplace, school, housing and government. Above all, we must assure women’s safety from abuse, attack, domestic violence and rape.”

There was an inspiring Saturday night cultural program hosted by Dada Vedaprajananda. The conference ended Sunday with an Action Summit with 70 participants working to create and implement a master plan for Economic Democracy.



Economic Democracy Conference

Gardening for Survival, Health and Happiness

(continued)

By Jivadhara

Gardening can be hard work, but even when we put minimal efforts in, we still could not eat all the food we got. We even have tomatoes now. What was particularly nice was finding out how easy it is to make pesto. Just mix, basil, lemon, olive oil, salt and perhaps some thyme, oregano and sunflower seeds, and mix it up. Freeze it in ice cubes and melt when needed for salad dressing. My friend Kamala and I had so much fun making pesto. It is hard to get good pesto without garlic, but now we have made so much that we can share that, too. Also, we cut and dried cherry tomatoes that when packed up in little jars, make a nice gift for the Holidays.

It is good to keep busy with the practical things in life so we can feel empowered. Perhaps this will help us to establish a community of gardeners, which will help to feed the community when it is needed.

We all need to have these survival skills. During the depression, our grandparents had land and knew how to repair things. Land is harder to come by these days, and much has been taken by huge corporations. It is wise to get together and learn how to garden even if it is on a balcony or indoors. The rewards are infinite. Never in my life have I been so rich that we could give things away so effortlessly.

A good side effect is that one gets healthier. The fresh air and the sun are so good for us. Nature is a wellness and detox spa that is of one-of-a-kind. A greenhouse can also be used for meditation, yoga postures, playing music, or just hanging out.

Make yourself a sitting place, set up a fountain and bring your musical instruments. I loved to see the plants growing along with my I phone music which I brought to them. It seemed to speed up their growth because, eventually, these plants grew so fast that I had trouble harvesting all of them. Anyway, we have to eat something right? When we give love to our plants, how happy the universe becomes. Try it and see for yourself.



Women Proutist Profile: Jivadhara

Women Proutists: Where were you when you were first introduced to Prout (Progressive Utilization Theory)?

Thank you for your interest. I believe I was in Düsseldorf when one of the monks gave a lecture on Prout. It was clear to me that in order to change society, one has to realize one's own spiritual potential. The interface of economy and spirituality was attractive to me. As we near the collapse of our monetary system and perhaps even our human industrial civilization, the interplay of the economic system with our individual spirituality becomes even more important. After that discourse in Düsseldorf, several of the participants went to Copenhagen for a three-month PROUT Local Full Time Training, which was very beautiful and spiritually charged.

WP: In what projects, activities, and service did you participate?

Well, I was very social and pretty much supported everything coming my way. I lived in Copenhagen, in Hannover, in Frankfurt, in Sicily and in Asia. I taught asana classes and organized group meditations. In Hannover we had weekly study circles, tea houses, and we worked for the German Samaj (local economic bioregional affinity group). The unity of Germany was considered a dangerous issue because of the mass media's psychological warfare against the German culture going back over 100 years, really. We let the issue rest as the climate was too hostile.

We also had a center in Sicily in which we taught many classes, including Prout. Back then we showed Didi Ananda Mitra's slide shows a lot. We organized vegetarian cooking events, followed by art, poetry and collective singing to which many people came. Spiritually charged Cultural Centers were the highlight of my life. At one point

we had regular TV shows and radio shows.

WP: What is your involvement with Prout and Women Proutists?

We had Women's study circles Germany in which every week somebody different offered a topic and a speech; then we shared out insights. It was wonderful having the women together, meditating, practicing asanas (yoga postures) and share food. Our study circle often lasted four hours. We also had retreats and wrote newsletters. I remember that we managed to finish a paper in a couple of days, or even one day - much faster than today with all the technological advances. Times were simpler, yet it seemed that we got more done that way. We also organized many speeches and seminars.

WP: What are some goals toward which Women Proutists might work?

I think it is very important to create working opportunities for all people. We need to discuss examples of cooperatives and visit them to get an idea of how to plan something like that. It is important to stay healthy as women; we need to take better care of ourselves so we can take better care of our small and big families. Hence, coming together to nurture each other and teach each other healthy ways of living, matters and increases the quality of life and our true happiness. I see women overworking themselves, but what they need is more nurturing. It is important not to forget that we as women are not just revolutionaries, but also healers and nurturers. It is important to plant good seeds so we have healthy plants growing into a beautiful garden. It is really up to us women to create a healthier society, feed our kids healthy food and get them out to nature.

WP: What are some of your hobbies?

I love to study. Period. I am drawn sometimes to controversial, politically incorrect topics. Our society, with its privately owned media tries to tell us what we have to think, research and what we can say and cannot say. That seems simply weird to me. We think we have freedom of speech and thoughts, but there are things about which one can't talk or even raise questions. I find it courageous to investigate societal taboos. The Idea of being brainwashed seems uninspiring, and hence, I try to educate myself more and more. It's a hobby of mine to question things in the spirit of Buddha: "Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."

<http://www.csudh.edu/oliver/smt310-handouts/buddha/buddha.htm>

On a lighter note, I love art and hiking and people, kiirtan,



The Word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greening, and all creativity. This World manifests itself in every creature." Hildegard von Bingen, German medicinal (healer and nun).

meditation and reading spiritual books.

WP: How could Women Proutists do good work in the United States?

We could write our own blogs to share what we see and what thoughts come to mind. We do not even need to agree with one another because that is just another way to feel separated. Our opinions seem eternally ephemeral. We can in fact have totally different opinions and insights about an issue. However, when we serve others, we turn the pieces of the puzzle over, piece by piece and we can see, if we are lucky, maybe pure consciousness at the end - only. Hence, we can choose to share ourselves light heartedly and not weigh every word on a scale of political correctness. Then we apply benevolent healing speech and can create our own transformation and the transformation of others, as well.

We could also do a lot of trust games-- teaching much more about coordinated cooperation. I think there is a lack of trust in an individual culture like the U. S. as we live too isolated from one another. We really do not know one another very well. Hence, trust games can become an important tool to create a balanced society. As long as we are living our separate lives, in our little families, we are trapped on sad, lonely islands of isolation. It is important that we find ways to connect with other women to create a world we can all feel good about living in. In this way, we can create a society of trust instead of a society of fearful political correctness and hiding from one another.

WP: Who are some of your heroes? (A term that one

of the Madison Economic Democracy Conference women uses for women heroes. I think it is stronger than heroines.)

Hildegard von Bingen was a great female healer, herbalist and medicinal cook. She knew how to cook medicinally similarly to ayurveda cooking. The female poet sages of India like Miirabai are also near to me. Then some of the women who work day and night in children's homes all over the world in order to nurture and educate forsaken and traumatized children are really my sheroes. The poor women all over the world who struggle so hard to feed their children are my heroes. Their suffering is always in my heart. Women who build up war torn countries of untold suffering are indeed heroes. For instance, when Dresden was bombed with phosphor, the fire was a mile high over the entire city and the fire was worse than the fire of Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined, so I read.

Women came together and built up Germany after the war with bleeding hearts. These women remain till today unloved because they are from Germany. Imagine these women would have been from a country of victory? Wouldn't they have gotten a memorial? These types of women, forgotten, forsaken and despised are my heroines. All the nameless women and people in war zones are my sheroes. Collaterally damaged women and all people are my heroes, the people, we are not allowed to love are my heroes for they are also my family. All the people in countries whom we are not allowed to love because they are labeled as something they are not, are indeed my heroes and with them their families. All people who die violent and unjust deaths, I wish to love and never forget. Women who embrace unconditional compassion to one and all alike are my heroes like. Women who try mastering their attraction and aversions and can control them are my heroes for they decrease suffering and increase happiness through balance as they surrendered the need to want to be right.

WP: What words of encouragement do you have for women who are struggling physically, socially or spiritually?

My grandma said to me when I met her in my teenage years, "Girl, just always try to keep loving no matter what happens in this world. Please, never stop loving and don't believe what anybody tells you how bad a person is. Just keep loving. Only then can life flourish again after terrible wars. Without our love there will be no life on this earth. When you get hurt, love even more. Just try, my girl and be patient." I have tried to listen to these words in my life. Or better, love comes naturally with such an amazing grandma; hence no trying is necessary-- only honoring the process of loving authentically. Loving simply happens on its own terms - we do not need to worry about love. It is always there.

WP: Thank you. It has been a pleasure.

Traditional Palestinian Costume

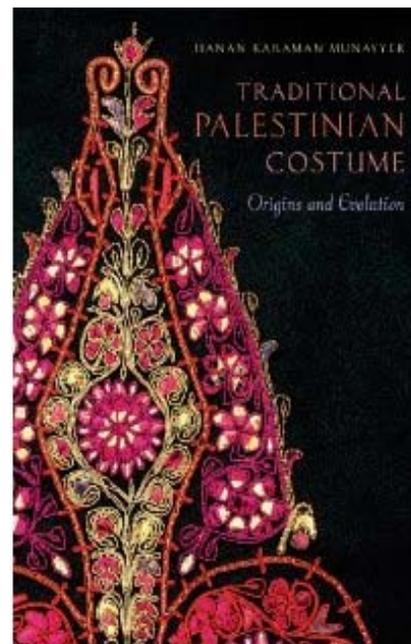
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twenty-five years on the origins of textile arts in the Arab world.

Women's hand work has a universal appeal that is able to connect people together across ethnic, religious and national boundaries and is an important part of building bridges of understanding and appreciation across both generations and cultures.

Mrs. Munayyer's workshop attracted a diverse array of holiday shoppers, including African Americans and Asian Americans who were curious to learn more about the hand embroidery. Women's hand work has a universal appeal that is able to connect people together across ethnic, religious and national boundaries and is an important part of building bridges of understanding and appreciation across both generations and cultures. Participants were so impressed with the presentation that invitations were made to bring Mrs. Munayyer back to Westchester County in early 2013. We are also very grateful for all the help and support provided by Farah Munayyer to make these presentations possible. We wish Hanan and Farah much success in their continued mission to preserve and exhibit Palestinian costumes, jewelry and other artifacts. We deeply appreciate this very important work. All our good wishes for 2013.

Nada Khader is the director of WESPAC Foundation, a peace and justice action network based in Westchester County, New York.



Massacre at Sandy Hook

Continued from front cover

this jarring similarity of shooter profiles may begin to believe that there is more to the story than a bunch of similar mass murders by disturbed young men.

Could it be that the violence in the media that engages so many of our youth could be connected to the violence that more and more of these youth act out in real life? Bandura, Milgram, and a host of more current researchers have conducted human experimental research studies which show that when subjects watch violence on screen, they are likely, over time, to be anesthetized to actual violence in real life situations.

Going a step further, there is a growing lack of positive male role models in many lower income communities, especially, whose men are not participating in their children's lives for many reasons, one of which may be incarceration. Due to pressures of work and other responsibilities, many parents find themselves using television and video games to babysit and entertain their children these days. Whatever we feed into our brain affects us. It stays there in brain cells. As you think, so shall you become.

Very young children have not developed the discrimination to be able to discern if violence on the screen is real or not. According to Educational psychologists Piaget and later Kohlberg, before age five, children don't know if someone on screen is actually committing violence or if it is make believe. The parts of the brain that register this distinction have not developed fully. Similarly, even children a few years older that may not know if the events in a crime show on television are actually happening or are made up. It depends on the development of the brain of the individual child. The stages of development may happen at different ages.

Carol Gilligan, who had been Kohlberg's graduate assistant and with whom I studied at Harvard in the 1990s, did comparative studies between girls and boys, finding that there are differences, according to gender in these stages of development. Girls are more focused on trying to keep harmony in relationships. Boys are more apt to want to compete. Of course, there are as many variations as there

are children. One's upbringing in the family, social class, race, place of residence, etc. are key variables. It is not that girls do not exhibit violence or do not have the potential to become mass murderers. I am merely referring to a tendency. These shooters have all been boys. The macho ideal, too, may play a part in this chain of violent murders.

Society is sick. It is violent. We must provide a positive way out for today's youth. We need to get control of the media and rid it of the gratuitous violence. We need to go beyond that, of course. Nothing less than creating a new society based on Prout ideology, will provide permanent relief from the deadly sickness spreading like a computer virus to our youth whose faces are glued to the screen.

It is no coincidence that young, impressionable youth whose minds absorb horrifying episodes of violent mass murders, may, one day, perpetrate mass murders themselves. Between the viewing and the reality is a nowhere land of uncertainty and anomie, isolation that more and more people experience in this society. We must inject meditation, positive role models, uplifting art, inspiring television and computer games, more jobs for youth, clubs, service projects and on and on. The educational system is in desperate need of drastic overhaul. We need government funded day care centers and higher salaries for teachers. The choice is ours. Will we try to purge this society of the artificial violence that can create actual violence? It is all connected. We live in a web of life, an overarching ecosystem. Everything is linked.

I am cringing, waiting for the other shoe to drop. When will the next mass murder occur? Where? Will I or someone I know be there? It is chilling. It is time to act. Will someone you know be the next Adam Lanza, the Sandy Hook mass murderer?

If you want to see the kind of video games that our young people are consuming in mass quantities, scroll to the bottom of the attached article. It was hard to watch.

http://www.naturalnews.com/038354_violent_video_games_children_mass_murder.html

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The Minimum Necessities of Life

By Dada Maheshvarananda

The first requirement of Prout is to guarantee the minimum necessities to everyone:

“The minimum necessities of all should be guaranteed in any particular age.”
(Sarkar, 1992)

Guaranteeing the right to live has to be the first priority of every country. The Brazilian spiritualist Frei Betto called attention to this need when he said,

“The degree of justice in a society can be evaluated by the way food is distributed among all citizens.”
(from a letter to the author).

Prout recognizes five fundamental necessities of life: food (including pure drinking water), clothing, housing (including adequate sanitation and energy), medical care, and education. Supplemental requirements are local transportation and water for irrigation. According to the principle of Neohumanism, this birthright transcends citizenship -- meaning that every human being, whether native or visitor to a country must be guaranteed these necessities.

Providing the basic necessities should be the primary function and duty of any economy. Human beings require these in order to realize their individual potentialities, to develop culturally, to achieve inner fulfillment. Without necessities, the “pursuit of happiness” remains beyond the reach of the world’s poor.

Most governments provide a safety net to help guarantee that the poor and most vulnerable do not fall below a minimally accepted level of poverty and destitution. Unfortunately, most government safety nets provide a very low bar that prevents only the worst suffering. Increasing numbers of citizens face great hardship without access to housing, health care, and food.

As many as 3.5 million people in the United States experience homelessness each year. (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2004). More than 60 million Americans have no health care insur-



ance and many more have only limited coverage, causing millions to fall into poverty when their family is hit by a medical emergency (Cohen & Martinez, 2011). And 46 million Americans are receiving food stamps (US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service).

The right to meaningful employment with fair wages is also a fundamental human right. The minimum requirements should not be handed out by a government agency, as in the current welfare systems of liberal democratic countries. Rather, people should pay for them with the income they earn from honest work. It is the responsibility of all levels of government to pursue policies which achieve and maintain full employment, with jobs that utilize each worker’s skills and capabilities. A just minimum wage, often called a “living wage,” must be set high enough so that people can purchase the necessities. Increasing employment will reduce the numbers requiring the safety net.

Welfare systems create disincentives for their recipients to work. In the United States, for example, those who receive welfare must immediately report any dollar they earn, which is usually deducted from their next welfare check.

They are not allowed to borrow money to start a small business without immediately sacrificing their monthly assistance. In this way, welfare recipients sometimes become emotionally dependent, prisoners of both poverty and the welfare system which seeks to alleviate it. Thus a whole class of people who should be employed remains jobless or becomes part of the underground informal economy. Prout, on the other hand, by guaranteeing a livable minimum wage, would limit welfare as a special contingency for those who are physically or mentally unable to work.

The determination of what are the minimum necessities should be done in a progressive way; there must be continual adjustment of these basic requirements depending upon the available resources and scientific standard of the locality. As with all the principles of Prout, the standard for minimum necessities will change with time and place.

For example, staple foods are different in different cultures, yet they must meet adequate nutritional standards. Clothing varies according to climate and culture. Minimum housing standards appropriate to the climate and culture must also be determined. The availability of better housing will also be an incentive—such incentives will be built into the system, unlike in the Soviet Union, for example, where “dacha” vacation homes for the Party elite were kept secret. Everyone, however, will be guaranteed a roof over their head, regardless of their social standing.

In a Proutist framework, the people’s purchasing capacity will be taken as the measure of economic advancement.

In order to facilitate a continually increasing purchasing capacity, a number of factors are required. These include the guaranteed availability of basic goods and services, stable prices, appropriate wage increases, and increasing collective wealth and productivity.

Imagine a world in which no one need worry about getting enough money to buy food, clothes, housing, education and medical care for his or her family!

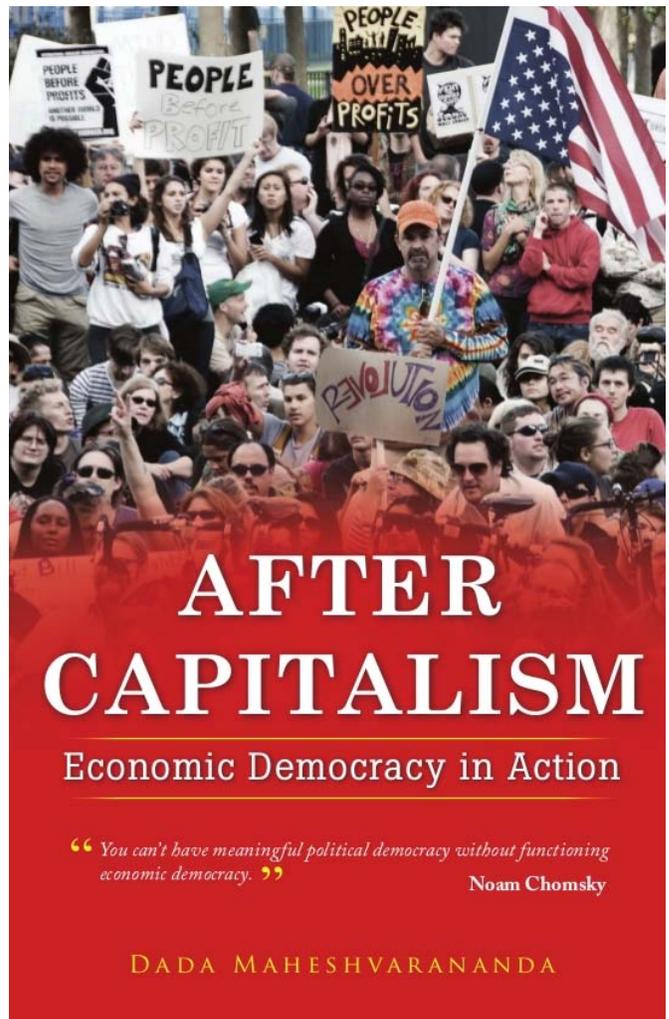
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Prout Study Group in Eugene, Oregon

By Jivadhara

We started a Prout (Progressive Utilization Theory) Study Group here in Eugene, Oregon recently at my home. It has been great fun. We start out by singing a song or two, play kiirtan, watch a movie and discuss directly from the Prout writings by P. R. Sarkar, Prout's founder. I like to keep it simple. My motto is to "share like the sages of the past". In this way, we create an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance so nobody needs to agree or disagree. We explore possibilities. We then have a dal soup, ginger lemon tea and spend some casual time with one another. In this family setting it is easy for people to relax.

Often I practice listening skills. One time we did five minutes of positive listening in which we practiced agreeing with the speaker, then we have five minutes of negative listening in which we pretended to not show any interest. Lastly, we just listened-- neither agreeing nor disagreeing. We explore how it feels to let things just "be" without wanting to be right or needing to have things our way. This exercise helps to develop tolerance as we become aware of our preferences, our attractions and aversions.

Teaching Prout is like gardening work. You plant many different seeds which sprout at their own time and become beautiful plants when they ripen. Now, we are living in the final period of capitalism in which decadence is reaching its limit, in which bankers get social welfare and the people are left to their own devices. With ever less good quality food, water, shelter, and medical care, it is even more important to find ways to help one another outside the system, so we can be as healthy on all levels as possible. When we present Prout, it allows us to interact with students and others we would not usually get to know. Studying Prout and socializing creates happiness for everyone.

Just start by cooking a dal soup, make tea, sing kiirtan, enjoy silence and then... the flower of PROUT opens up. If there are only a few people, it doesn't matter. What matters is to continue the practice of offering this flower of PROUT, so it has a chance to open up and shine.

Women Prout Study Circles and Prout Study Circles

Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar propounded the Progressive Utilization Theory (Prout) in 1959 as an alternative to capitalism and communism. Jivadhara has started a Study Circle for both women and men. This is a valid type of meaningful learning in which families and individuals can provide an introduction to Sarkar's philosophy of spiritual humanism called Neo-Humanism, and the political-economic theory of PROUT which addresses the practical application of this value system.

Women Proutists may wish to form Women Proutist Study Circles, as well, which would facilitate sharing and networking by helping women to grow spiritually, intellectually, morally, and physically. Often in the presence of other women, women may feel more comfortable to express feelings and experiences. In all-women groups, we have a unique opportunity to enjoy what is special about being women, women who are learning, sharing and growing together. Studying Prout and its applications for the upliftment of women in society is an important aspect of Women Prout Study Circles. Consider starting one or joining one in your community. We plan to create a curriculum guide in the near future which may be used as a basic structure for the groups.

Although socializing is an important part of these groups, we want them to have a wider focus, and to use them to be a unique tool for consciousness raising among all women in the society. A change in societal structure cannot be accomplished by merely mouthing philosophy. It requires that we first transform ourselves. We can do this through spiritual practices and by studying and working together for the greater good. In this way, we put meaning into our lives and the lives of other women and all our families.

When the Time Comes

By Suniita

When the time comes
All of humanity will have its place
On this earth.
It was meant for the human race
To grow together
Like plants toward the sun.
In our love for our Father
May we all live as one.

Why do some think they're entitled
To what's meant for all?
The harm they cause others
Without caring--
The masses hopes fall.
The annihilation, the starvation,
Oh, the people's desolation,
All those who are suffering--
May we hear their call.

All we need is a little hope
And a place to call our own...
A little shelter, a little food
For our minds and souls to grow.
Why is it so hard, so hard
Just to survive...
So many humans don't even stay alive.

The planet's pain is so hard to bear,
But we must bring life to those in despair...
Restore hope for the future.
May the time come right away.
Every heart will open, every face will smile.
Will it be today?



Gardening for Survival, Health and Happiness

By Jivadhara

For some time in this country, many have experienced a slow degradation of government infrastructure for delivery of aid when unexpected crises strike. When there is a crisis it can be hard to help others and to get help. Due to global warming, acceleration of natural disasters and the worsening economy, we expect things to change drastically. In an attempt to prepare for such occurrences and to become more self-sufficient, we have tried to develop some gardening skills in our local meditation group so we may feed ourselves to promote better health collectively. When a bunch of kale or chard costs five dollars, it is time to grow your own food.

Many people in U.S communities are now going to bed hungry. I have heard of stories about kids at Thanksgiving who say they wish to have enough to eat for the next year. Many American children now are experiencing hunger.

So we decided to build a greenhouse on land owned by a family in our local meditation group. To build the greenhouse, we spent \$5000 in addition to installation, water systems and supplies. Perhaps altogether we have spent \$12,000. The men set up the greenhouse and fertilized the soil while the women planned out what to plant. In the beginning, we all knew nothing about gardening. We all learned while going through the process and are still learning every day. Many of us can only go once a week to our garden and greenhouse. Still, because of the water systems, things started growing. Often we had way too much food to eat ourselves, so we started to distribute the food to our friends and neighbors, many of whom are living on food stamps.

It was an amazing experience. Sharing the food we distributed was worth more than any money or gold. The people started to eat more healthily while they learned how to cook various items well. We also started canning some food and drying vegetables. It kept us busy. We had to come together outside of our weekly meditation to share more time together. It is such a family feeling. My husband, who is more intellectually inclined, was working so hard in the garden that his cheeks turned red. If people could only experience how healthy earth smells and how healing it is to work in the garden, they would eagerly learn to plant their own food again. It is like a remembrance of our ancestors and is extremely healing for the heart.

On average, at various times of the year, we managed to share our food with more than eight families. If I think about how much food we harvested, it must have been worth a lot, far more than what I could donate with money. Suddenly, the abundance of nature felt so rich. One simply keeps giving; along with this giving came a smile of recognition that that we are all a family.

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