

# The Children of Shanti Bhavan: *"The Best We Can Be"*



"If one child is successful she will carry one thousand more forward."

*Abraham George*  
Founder, Shanti Bhavan

"...people who gaze upon a classroom of untouchable kids and not only see the greatness in each of them but, more importantly get them to see the greatness in themselves while endowing them with the tools to bring that out."

*Thomas Friedman*, Pulitzer Prize Winning Author  
After visiting Shanti Bhavan

**SHANTI BHAVAN** is a unique institution that serves children from India's lowest caste - "the untouchables". These children come from families who, like many in rural India, live on less than 50 cents a day. They have no access to clean water, and their education is inadequate or simply nonexistent. Shanti Bhavan is the only place for these children to build a future beyond the limitations of their social class.



**BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY** There are many consequences of poverty. From a very early age, impoverished children are treated as though they are less than human - worthless. They come to believe that they are unworthy of decency, unworthy of compassion, unworthy of hope for their future. We strive to break that ideology through education and an abundance of love. Shanti Bhavan has evolved from the recognition that the innate abilities of impoverished children are no different from those of their more fortunate peers. Given quality education and constant encouragement, these children have the opportunity to realize their full potential as successful, socially conscious members of society. Shanti Bhavan serves as a symbol of hope to children from socially and economically deprived backgrounds and provides a means to attain their dreams.

**DEVELOPING THE CHILDREN COMPLETELY** The programs at Shanti Bhavan address the holistic development of a child. Our multi-faceted approach focuses on emotional health, intellectual stimulation, physical fitness, artistic expression, and cognitive growth carefully developed within a strong moral foundation.

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### PROVIDE A COMPETITIVE EDUCATION

The first element of Shanti Bhavan's approach to development is its commitment to academic excellence and experiential learning. The core subjects are Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, two Indian languages, English (language and literature), and world events. In addition to the rigors of the curriculum and dedicated teachers the students acquire a global acumen, cross cultural cultivation and, adaptability through their exposure to volunteers from around the world. Volunteers range from visiting artists who encourage expression across all mediums to teaching experts in the fields of business, science and law.

### FOSTER SELF ESTEEM AND EQUALITY

Shanti Bhavan is the children's home, providing a climate of love, warmth, and respect. Many children come to Shanti Bhavan having survived unthinkable living conditions and various abuses. We take great care to address their emotional needs, instilling in them the belief that their lives have value and dignity. The staff is rigorously trained to work with children at different stages of their lives and is qualified to handle issues in an understanding and non-judgmental way.

### INSTILL A GOOD SENSE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ETHICS

We strive to convey certain principles and concepts to our students with the hope that they become good citizens of their society and the world. Our children are nurtured in the values of honesty, integrity, tolerance and responsibility. They often discuss and debate local and global events and their effects. Most children openly express a desire to extend themselves in the service of others. We want them to be wholesome, conscientious, compassionate people who in turn are inspirational and become role-models for others through their actions.

### ENSURE A SAFE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

The physical setting at Shanti Bhavan is conducive to growth with adequate space, clean, comfortable rooms and other amenities. From nourishing meals and clean clothing, to their very first toothbrushes and teddy bears, all of the children's needs are addressed with meticulous attention. We benefit from a low staff to child ratio with continuous expert supervision of the children. The staff focuses on developing warm relationships with the children to endow them with trust, confidence and happiness.

### CREATE A CURRENT OF CHANGE

Empowered by the skills Shanti Bhavan provides, the children return to their communities as educators and decision makers, often serving as the lone literate member of their household. They are active symbols of hope creating awareness of the possibilities beyond the confines of their caste. A competitive education allows for new economic opportunities and as a result, the social subjugation dissipates. This enables the children to break the cycle of poverty.



### IGNITE THE INTELLECT

Our curriculum emphasizes personalized attention by nurturing talent and channeling it in the direction that will be most beneficial for the child. Children receive hands-on instruction to develop their curiosity and passion for learning. They are encouraged to ask questions and to be active learners and critical thinkers. At Shanti Bhavan, hope is planted, innovation is encouraged, and the children's dreams and ambitions are actualized. This is in keeping with our goal to create future leaders of society and ensure the children acquire the necessary skills to succeed in life.





## *Life*

Life is not what it seems to be  
 In this unpredictable world  
 With its ups and downs, twists and turns  
 Life is a strange mystery.  
 Everyday goes on without us knowing  
 What will happen next.  
 But we have the power to shape the  
 road ahead.  
 We have our own stories, written for a  
 cause.  
 We have our own backgrounds, from  
 where we were born.  
 We are different in many ways  
 We are humans certainly we are,  
 But till the end we live for a good  
 cause.  
 We share the same purpose ahead.  
 Until the end, we shall live to make this  
 world a better place,  
 Even though life may get in the way.

*Shilpa, 10th Grade Student*



## *Listen, My Dear Friends...*

Listen my dear friends  
 to the message I have to say.  
 I stand beside you as a friend known for  
 years.  
 Just to say  
 That we are one big family.  
 We might not notice  
 Nor believe  
 Because there are too many members  
 Of this big, big family.  
 So just believe  
 And all I have to say, is to treat all as one.  
 Make this world  
 a better family.  
 Listen...  
 Listen dear friends  
 to a message I have to say.  
 And that all I have to say  
 is that I love you all.

*Tara, 9th Grade Student*



## SHANTI BHAVAN SCHOOL SONG

This is a precious moment  
 We've only just begun  
 There's a long, long way to go  
 Before our day is done  
 We cannot see tomorrow  
 Yesterday's but a dream  
 Today's what really matters  
 We want to dream our dream  
 I might be a movie star  
 I might be president  
 A dancer or a gymnast  
 Or a world champion

Children of Shanti Bhavan  
 We have a chance to share  
 To be someone, do something  
 We are glad you are there

If you would just stay with us  
 Through all the years to come  
 You will see us blossom bright  
 Like flowers in the sun  
 I can be what I must be  
 Because people like you  
 Will always believe in me  
 We hope you share our  
 dreams too  
 I might be an astronaut  
 I might be a physician  
 An artist or designer  
 Or a great musician

Children of Shanti Bhavan  
 We have a chance to share  
 To be someone, do something  
 We are glad you are there.

*Namaste.*



“When we talk about the poor, so often it is talk about getting them off the streets or getting them a job so they don’t starve. But we never talk about getting excellence for the poor. We need to deal with the issue of inequality...if they could break out of the barriers imposed upon them.”

*Abraham George*  
 Founder, Shanti Bhavan



The best we can be.



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“[In the villages] alcoholism is rife and female infanticide and crime are rising. Yes, the upper and middle classes are taking off, but for the 700 million who are left behind all they see is gloom and despair. They are born to fulfill their destiny and have to live and die this way.....”

Excerpt from Thomas  
 Friedman’s  
 The World is Flat

“Shanti Bhavan fully embodies its name as a “haven of peace”. The children are taken from the grips of malnutrition, abuse and neglect and are given the loving, gentle care every child deserves. They are nurtured emotionally and educated with expectations of excellence. The result is insatiable intellectual

curiosity, a deep sense of compassion for others, optimism in their future, and a desire to use these tools to help others in abject poverty.”

Michelle Miller  
 Volunteer

“Shanti Bhavan is so nice. Everything is clean and there are gardens for us to play in. We have fun and work hard.

We learn many new things from volunteers from all over the world.”

Sumati  
 2nd Grade Student

“They teach us many beautiful things and are so kind to us. They tell us that dedication is the key to success. If you study hard you can go anywhere.”

Shashi  
 8th Grade Student

“Our goal is to give the children a world-class education so they can aspire to careers and professions that would have been totally beyond their reach and have been so for generations.”

Lalita Law  
 Principal, Shanti Bhavan

“The children come from below the poverty line...they don’t know what it is to have a drink of clean water...”



Help us break the cycle of poverty.

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