

# Anthroposophy in an African Village

## *All Africa Anthroposophic Training at Kufunda Learning Village*

*Kufunda Village is a an African Learning Village, learning our way into how to create healthy vibrant community in Zimbabwe and beyond. August 27 - September 3rd of 2019 we hosted the second All Africa Anthroposophic Training at Kufunda. A seven day residential conference that brought together 115 people from across Africa. This piece is a reflection on the experience.*



When people think of Anthroposophy they probably don't immediately link it with Africa. But we were recently together 115 people from several African (and European) countries for the second All Africa Anthroposophic Training. It is an intensive introduction to the ideas of anthroposophy as they can serve us in our own personal inner development towards being able to contribute more meaningfully and effectively in the social sphere.

In many ways everything that the Anthroposophic Training was bringing and cultivating are elements that Kufunda Learning Village has already been working with for years - and yet it brings a great clarity and rigour to aspects of human development

that we have been striving for and working with from a very intuitive place. Thus this training and gathering with people from across Africa was a deepening of the originating impulse of Kufunda, and of us learning our way into what it means to be human and how to develop ourselves - each and every one of us - towards contributing to and strengthening the communities and society of which we are part.

### **The seven day training was structured around a simple rhythm,**

We began each day together with **Eurythmy**, an expressive movement art originated by Rudolf Steiner and Marie Von Sivers;

This was followed by **nature observation** - in small facilitated home groups - observing over the course of the seven days the seven life processes as described by Steiner. It was astonishing how much could be learnt by spending 45 minutes each day with different plants and trees looking to learn from them about different essential processes of life, and then reflecting how those relate to the social realm.

#### **In the participants voice - "A highlight for me was:"**

1. *"The main highlight was to observe nature and link it in our daily life as humans.*
2. *"Comparing ourselves with the nature highlighted me into seeing us as humans. We have a lot to do within ourselves to create better healthier constitutions and to bring change to our environment and communities."*
3. *"Observing the nature helped me to understand, who am I? What can I do to awaken my inner spirit?"*
4. *"Learning that studying nature life process helps to understand oneself better and helps one to live productive life."*

In the same home groups participants then continued with **text study** in which we studied chapter one of 'Knowledge of Higher Worlds' by Rudolf Steiner. The depth of learning from this was equally inspiring. In text study we work with eliciting questions that the text opens up for us. By the end of the week the text had taken us on a journey around how we can each come to know our higher self; the role of *reverence* on this path - as a way to truly know and understand the world; and the work we each need to do to make the switch from a way of meeting the world that holds critical judgmental to learning to cultivate love in the meeting. Steiner said: ***"Only if I love something can it reveal itself to me.*** We explored ways to cultivate inner peace and shared experience and ideas around practices to support this. Seven days of going into this domain together was transformative for many of the participants.

### **A highlight for me was:**

1. *Text study brought new ways of thinking, viewing, and respecting life.*
2. *The moment of realising that there is a higher self in me and also the connectedness of Human beings and Nature.*
3. *The in-depth conversation on the texts of Steiner.*
4. *It was that I have to take care of my spiritual being like I do with my physical. I have to acknowledge it.*

After a hearty Kufunda lunch the programme continued with **professional modules**. This was the practical application of anthroposophy. There were workshops for doctors, for nurses and midwives, for farmers, for teachers, and for those seeking to find ways to bring economic development to African communities. Each aspect of the social life has been enriched and enlivened by ideas coming out of anthroposophy and these were detailed and explored during the afternoon sessions.

Again it connects with the impulse of Kufunda. We work with the wealth and wisdom of our Zimbabwean communities. We have been practicing a way of working that is holistic, that embraces the whole, and in that is deeply generative.

This holistic and generative way is also true of the anthroposophical approach. People could choose between modules to go deeper into:

1. A way of farming that connects with the farm as a whole living organism - which our elders and ancestors used to know and practice also;
2. An education in which the child is a whole - not a little adult, but rather a young being who learns through song and play and stories and imitation of the adults. This is also how the young used to learn in the African villages.
3. An approach to health and healing that works to nurture and strengthen the health of the organism, seeking as far as possible to work with natural medicines to strengthen the body in its ability to maintain health.
4. An approach to Economy that integrates and differentiates with the spheres of governance and human liberty - exploring how to build healthy local economy.



For many it felt like an affirmation and a furthering of a way of working and being that is much more natural to us from our roots, than what has been brought in through colonialism and western reductionist scientific ways. It was perhaps even a relief to discover that people from outside could bring affirmation to a more holistic and spirit imbued view of life.

In the evenings the different groups and workshops offered their insights and learnings from the day, followed by **reflections and teaching by Michaela Gloeckler** who is the core founder and steward of the All Africa Anthroposophic Training. She tied the day together by responding to questions that had arisen through the day and offering key ideas to inform the following day.

## An Intra-Continental African Village

It was the first time we have had such a diversity of people at Kufunda from so many African countries. It was wonderful for the village to be full with people from Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, Botswana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Uganda, and several also joining us from different European countries. It felt like the strengthening of a brother and sisterhood of people from around Africa who are seeking to strengthen a life-affirming impulse in which we work with reverence and care as we tend to the land, educate our young, and develop health and healing for ourselves. It is all based on a willingness to wake up and rise to our higher potential as human beings connecting with our spirit selves. During our week at Kufunda we were in deep learning together for how we can cultivate and develop our relationship with ourselves, so that we can serve the whole.

In the participants words:

*How amazing it was the coming together of so many exceptionally wonderful people: the pollination of ideas and realisation of ideas.*

*"I had so many takeaways! The broad horizon of different nationalities. The depth of conversation, the networks and connection with other people from different organisations."*



## Strengthening an inner journey

In subsequent conversations as well as evaluations a majority of people shared how this training really was a gift to themselves on their personal inner journey. Many connected with a sense of a part of themselves that has not been nurtured and that needs to be. Together with the sense of community and connection across the many African countries, this was perhaps the biggest impact of the AAAT: *The planting of a seed of personal inner work*. Many arrived for the professional modules, biodynamic farming, nursing, teaching but found themselves additionally in a strong journey of inner work, of exploring together who this inner being is, to whom we can all wake up and find guidance and direction. We recognized together that the work of nurturing this inner me is not just for me - it is so that I can reach out and connect from a more whole and connected place in service to the people and world around me.

*"I realized that it's only me who can work for my inner self to have the inner tranquillity and to be in a position to set myself free."*

*"I discovered a longing to not only to focus on myself but the whole society, and I now see the need to devote time to grow my soul and spirit: Learning to be present in the environment in a physical, spiritual and emotional sense and not only the physical sense. Learning to spend time with myself."*

*"Lessons drawn include: enduring in the journey to higher knowledge, and understanding that it is a gradual process. I also learnt that we can take charge of our inner person and in the process could manage control of my anger and emotions. I have seen that forgiving is possible."*

Michaela shared a poem which speaks to an essence of this discovery and exploration of someone inside me who is I, but is so much more than our everyday busy selves:

*I am not I.*

*I am this one  
walking beside me whom I do not see,  
whom at times I manage to visit,  
and whom at other times I forget;  
who remains calm and silent while I talk,  
and forgives, gently, when I hate,  
who walks where I am not,  
who will remain standing when I die.*

Juan Ramón Jiménez

## Being held by Kufunda and Africa

Many people remarked on how wonderfully held they felt by Kufunda as a community and learning village. It is my sense that much of what happened was in fact enabled by this meeting of the anthroposophical impulse and knowledge that was coming primarily from the North (Germany and Switzerland) with some contributors also coming in from South Africa, hosted and held in the cradle of Kufunda, a learning community that has been committed to learning and deepening of the human spirit for over 15 years. Something more became possible in this respectful and reverent meeting of very different ways of being. After several days of intensity a few participants

requested morning dance - a tradition of Kufunda, and so this was added to the program as an option for people before breakfast to enter into conscious movement connecting body, heart and mind. The rocks and the trees of Kufunda were also a part of the deep holding of this place, and what a gift it was to give back to them with the depth of silent honoring nature observation which we practiced each morning.

There was a sense of wanting to more fully bring the African ways and contribution into this Anthroposophical offering. Hopefully next year in Tanzania we can take a next step on that path, inviting in African wisdom keepers to see how their knowledge and ways connect and complement what is moving here.

## Planting Seeds

This was not simply a week of inspiration and inner work, although that would have been well worth it. This was a week to deepen our capacity to return home and improve and continue our work in service of our communities and professions.

Already at Kufunda much has deepened from the week we spent together. We are in strong exploration around how to support the creation of healthy local economy. Our biodynamic work continues. The teachers have been inspired and their teaching deepened. We are exploring the possibility of setting up a primary health care centre at Kufunda (in the medium term future), which is deeply inspired by African and Anthroposophic natural remedies and medicine.

Others went home with their own inspiration and impulses too. Time will tell which seeds are planted, which sprout and grow. May they find rich soil and good nourishment for the journey.

### **Here in the words of some of the participants: What are my next steps?**

- *Not to let this journey that I had begun to die with the training but to feed that good wolf that has awoken in me to grow spiritually. To let my community also know about anthroposophy.*
- *Listen to the inner me. / Follow my thoughts. / Read the text and poems that can help me grow the inner person.*
- *To hold onto depth I have experienced here: development of my spiritual path. / To strive to interconnectedness in my village. / To tackle the injustices of economic imbalances through my personal engagement in a project.*
- *Making and applying the B/D preparations.*
- *I will share my experience with my co-workers and friends. Most importantly I will seek earnestly to always allow my inner self the opportunity to guide me to my highest potential.*
- *My next step when I get back home is to strengthen the network that has been born with members from different places and to practise deeply what I have learnt.*
- *I hope to find more moments of conscious reflection and inner peace.*
- *To share the text with my husband and what I have learnt and to meditate Steiner style.*
- *I am going to tell my community that especially under bio-agriculture. Bio agriculture brings people, plants, and animals together to conserve the soil. / I am going to tell my community that Bio Agriculture also brings more carbon into the soil helping to restore balance to the environment.*

***Thank you to Michaela Gloeckler, all the workshop leaders, Iona Stichting, Mahle Stichting and the Kufunda team for making this transformative week possible!***