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## PRERANA WALDORF SCHOOL

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### **Waldorf Education and Biodynamic Farming: Kindred Philosophies**

Rudolf Steiner, the visionary behind Waldorf education, also laid the foundations for the biodynamic agriculture system. Both approaches share an ecological, ethical, and holistic philosophy that extends to farming, gardening, nutrition, and education. Social responsibility is a common thread woven into the fabric of Waldorf Education and biodynamic farming.

In Waldorf Education, the focus is on developing intellectual, artistic, and practical skills, nurturing imagination and creativity through age-appropriate methods. Similarly, in the realm of biodynamic agriculture, a farm is seen as a living organism with interconnected elements such as fields, plants, animals, forests, soils, and people. The holistic approach of biodynamic farmers fosters the health and dynamics of the entire farm.

#### Biodynamic Farming Practices: A Symphony of Nature:

Biodynamic farmers view soil fertility, plant growth, and livestock care as interconnected tasks. Inspired by biodiversity, farms create compost by combining diverse materials, enhancing strength and fertility. Observing natural rhythms, guided by the earth, moon, sun, and stars, dictates optimal times for sowing, harvesting, and planting, promoting harmony with the environment.

The cultivation of biodynamic compost involves locally available medicinal herbs to restore healing qualities, stabilise nitrogen, and foster microbial diversity. Horn manure and horn silica further enhance soil health and plant immunity. These practices extend beyond farming; they are a way of nurturing a sustainable relationship with the Earth.

#### Connecting Children with Nature:

At our school, we embrace the philosophy that children benefit significantly from connecting with nature. This connection to plants, soil, and animals enables them to grow, not just as individuals but as contributors to the well-being of the world around them.

#### Switching to Natural Products for Children: A Gentle Transition:

As parents and educators, transitioning to natural, organic, or non-toxic products for children becomes a natural extension of our commitment. However, it's crucial to navigate between the marketing term "natural" and the regulated label "Certified Organic." Our approach is gradual – replacing one product at a time, considering children's feedback, and checking ingredients to ensure authenticity.

#### Encouraging Well-being and Global Citizenship:

Parents and educators play pivotal roles in encouraging children to consider the planet's well-being and become responsible global citizens. Introducing them to organic choices in food, beauty products, and cleaners fosters awareness and responsibility, aligning with the principles of Waldorf education.

#### Biodynamic Farming in India: A Growing Movement

Biodynamic farming in India is gaining momentum, with over 500 small and large farms practicing it nationwide. Approximately 100,000 farmers engage in some form of biodynamic farming, particularly in states like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, West Bengal, and Assam.

Biodynamic farming in India is commonly adopted for cultivating herbs, spices, tea, and coffee. Certified organizations, including Darjeeling Organic Tea Estates, Selim Bong Tea Estates, Mother India Farms, and Ambootia Tea Exports, adhere to biodynamic practices. The focus extends beyond tea, encompassing a diverse range of crops such as fruit, mangoes, cardamom, quinoa, medicinal herbs, oil crops, essential oils, vanilla, ginger, turmeric, cloves, and more.

Biodynamics goes beyond organic farming, relying on practices such as biodynamic seed production, field and compost preparations, and a planting and harvesting calendar based on lunar and star alignments. The movement opposes GMO foods, recognizing the need to counterbalance the unbalanced state of modern agricultural practices with a holistic, whole systems approach.

Rooted in the 1920s, biodynamics, as the oldest organized organic approach to farming, emphasizes self-sufficiency, aiming for a diverse ecosystem with a variety of plant and animal life. In India, the integration of the ancient "panchanga" calendar with biodynamic principles showcases the blending of traditional and indigenous knowledge with scientific practices.

The fundamental principle of zero use of chemical fertilizers distinguishes biodynamic farming in India. Instead, natural materials produced on the farm are utilized for fertilizers, manures, and sprays, creating a harmonious system that supports both crops and livestock. The use of biodynamic compost, enriched with protein-rich materials and diverse organic waste, contributes to soil health and humus formation.

Biodynamic farming in India is a sustainable and holistic approach, promoting ecological balance, self-sufficiency, and the well-being of farmers and the environment. As the movement continues to grow, it aligns with the principles of Waldorf education in fostering a deep connection with nature and nurturing responsible global citizens.