

# Slumdog Rock Star

By [Lavina Melwani](#) • Sep 12th, 2009 • Category: [24/7 Talk is Cheap - The Blog](#)

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Global Lingo

**Watch the video! [Global Lingo and the story behind it](#)**

Ganesh Barriya is a young rag picker from the Ahmedabad slums who's donned headphones in a recording studio to perform on Global Lingo, a cool CD which is featured on I-tunes. Indeed, for several children in the slums, be it in India or Nicaragua, this has become a real life scenario, thanks to Project Ahimsa which has opened up a whole new world of music education for them.





### Ganesh with Global Lingo

Started by California-based Vijay Chattha, Tejas Patel and Nihal Mehta right after 9/11, the organization is a second generation response to violence. "Our chosen medium through which to raise the awareness for non-violence?" says Robin Sukhadia, director of Project Ahimsa: "Music." The organization initially provided financial grants to families and victims of hate crimes in America and later evolved its grant giving process to include arts empowerment, connecting with students, artists, corporations and donors.

'Global Lingo', produced by Project Ahimsa, is a CD which traverses many worlds, showcasing children from impoverished communities. Sukhadia, who is co-producer on the CD, traveled to India with a Zoom H2 wave recorder, accompanied by JBoogie, who featured on 2 tracks: "Together, we visited programs where Project Ahimsa has donated musical instruments and provided salaries for music teachers. Everywhere we went, children were eager to share their immense talent."

Back in the US, these musical samples found their way into the hands of noted music pros who melded their talents with those of the kids on the CD. Says Sukhadia: "Three years later, I was able to take Global Lingo as a finished project back to India. The look on the children's faces when they heard and saw themselves via the CD was priceless."

Ganesh has left the rag picker's life behind and is looking toward a musical apprenticeship, and indeed, over 70 grants by Project Ahimsa have helped 10,000 children in 14 countries. This year Cuban and American children will be brought together to make music via a live video, and while they will learn about music, hopefully the viewers will learn about the value of co-existence.





Robin Sukhadia with young musicians

## A CHAT WITH ROBIN SUKHADIA OF PROJECT AHIMSA

### Q: How did the idea for Project Ahimsa come about?

A: Project Ahimsa was founded in 2001 by Vijay Chattha, Tejas Patel, and Nihal Mehta in response to the violent attacks on South Asians after 9/11. The impetus behind forming the organization was to transcend socio-economic and religious boundaries to create a unifying force bridging all cultures, religions, regions, generations and classes. The intention was to create a progressive 2nd generation movement based on non-violence.

Ahimsa itself is a principle based upon non-violence towards all living things. This principle was followed by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. as they peacefully worked to address injustice and evolve society towards peace. The name 'Ahimsa' was thus chosen to effectively describe a movement and organization through which non-violence and cross-cultural understanding could be spread. Because reaching perfect non-violence is an ongoing process for us individually and collectively, the organization was given the title Project Ahimsa.

Our chosen medium through which to raise the awareness for non violence? Music.  
The organization initially provided financial grants to families and victims of hate crimes

across America. In 2002, Project Ahimsa evolved its grants giving process to create a circle of arts empowerment by raising funds through performances to create and support innovative music education programs for violence affected communities around the world.

Operating in many violence affected parts of the world, Project Ahimsa believes that music can be a outlet for creativity and can create cross-cultural understanding that ultimately brings people together to communicate and heal in a constructive and peaceful way. Since its inception the Project Ahimsa family has grown wider to include many talented and passionate music teachers, students, performers, DJs, artists, partner organizations, corporations and donors. Project Ahimsa's website, newsletter and blog communications reach over 10,000 people worldwide and are the primary methods for sharing the organization's impact and progress in the areas of arts and music education.

**Q: Robin, I believe you actually traveled to India and interacted with the kids? Tell me about the experience and any anecdote that has stayed with you.**

A: Apart from serving as co-producer for the Global Lingo album, I was closely involved with the actual capture and sequencing of the incredible audio recordings of children performing in India. I also coordinated the capture of samples of children impacted by our programs in Nicaragua and here in the United States.

In 2006, I traveled to Kolkata, India and to Ahmedabad, India with a Zoom H2 Wave recorder. JBoogie, who is featured on 2 tracks on the album, accompanied me on that trip. Together, we visited programs where Project Ahimsa has donated musical instruments and provided salaries for music teachers. Everywhere we went, children were eager to share their immense talent. We captured these performances and brought them back to the USA. Many of these samples found their way into the hands of the artists featured on the CD. In January 2009, three years after the inception of this project, I was able to take Global Lingo as a finished project back to India. The look on the children's faces when they heard and saw themselves via the CD was priceless.

**Q: How was the music mixed and how did the noted names get involved?**

A: Global Lingo is a reflection of Project Ahimsa's full circle approach to empowering youth through music. Our work begins with identifying NGOs worldwide that already do an amazing job of serving youth through healthcare, nutrition, education, literacy and more. What may be missing though is music. Many of these NGOs are seeking to offer children their sense of creativity and play. Music is one way that is possible.

Project Ahimsa provides these organizations with musical instruments and salaries for music teachers. We also offer guidance in how to establish music programs. Site visits

over a period of time along with extensive blogging, video capture, and communication help to strengthen the reach and impact of the programs. When the children themselves express interest, their performances are captured in local recording studios. These samples are then distributed to all of the amazing professional artists that have supported Project Ahimsa over the years.

These artists then remix the samples, and an album like Global Lingo is produced. The album is then taken back to the children, and it serves to further build interest in the programs. More children want to be involved, they want to practice, and they want to perform. They want to stay in school and continue to come to the NGO where classes are offered. The result is children overcoming differences through music non-violently.

From the perspective of the professional artists, it has been amazing to see how excited all of them have been about being involved unconditionally. They immediately grasp that the story is compelling, and the quality of the children's recordings is very high. These two elements had a lot to do with synergizing artists to be involved. Musicians tend to be very giving souls, and so for these artists to give their time and talent to elevating these children further validates that music truly is about empowerment at its core, and not just about profit or self-promotion. These are important messages underlying Global Lingo, and Mahatma Gandhi's message of non-violence overall.

**Q: Have the kids in India and Nicaragua who participated personally benefited from the CD?**

A: For the children who are involved, Global Lingo involves the experience of going to a professional music studio, donning headphones, and singing or performing into a state of the art microphone. For many of these children, this is a truly mind blowing experience. It helps them to validate that they have immense talent, and that there is great potential in them. Visiting a real music studio is an educational experience for them, and then hearing the final product gives them insight into how music and music production really works. It teaches them discipline, and it teaches them their passion and commitment to music can result in something greater than themselves.

**Q: How has money been raised from the CD and how has it been used by Project Ahimsa?**

A: Money has been raised through the sale of the CD physically and through iTunes. Project Ahimsa also welcomes individual and institutional donations. Proceeds generated from the sale of the album are being used to directly support existing and new music programs worldwide. Project Ahimsa staff work closely with grantees to provide new music instrument donations as well as salaries for music teachers.

**Q: When was Global Lingo launched and how is it being promoted.**

A: Global Lingo officially launched on August 11, 2009 and the CD is available for download in its entirety through iTunes. Global Lingo was produced for an audience that is seeking an intelligent and progressive story in music. That encompasses everyone, of every age and possible background. Project Ahimsa went into this project simply to share the incredible talent of the children we have been supporting for the past 6 years. The album is a collection of dynamic and inclusive songs, all with a story of empowerment behind them. That said, we chose to promote the album to attract as wide an audience as possible. Interviews on public radio, television supplemented by a video that tells the story of the children have been crucial to promoting the album

**Q: What's next for Project Ahimsa?**

A: Project Ahimsa is currently reviewing a wide range of new grant applications for music education programs around the world. Most recently, Project Ahimsa donated funds to Project Por Amor (<http://projectporamor.com/>), a music education program based in Cuba. In December 2009, Cuban children will play musical instruments with American children via a live video feed. The process of bringing children together in this way aims to show the power of music and art as a means to transcend boundaries and nationalities. Project Ahimsa has also been working with grantees on new audio recordings of children supported by our grants. We hope to continue the momentum of Global Lingo with new releases and new albums featuring their talents.

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