

## IHC Annual Lecture by Sonam Wangchuk – Feb 24,2017 at 7pm

Sonam Wangchuk is a mechanical engineer turned education reformer from Ladakh. He has been mostly working in the field of education reform for more than 27 years. He founded SECMOL which aims to bring reforms in the government school system in Ladakh and as a result the pass percentage at 10th grade (matriculation) rose from the dismal 5% to 55% in seven years and 75% these days. For students who still fail their state exams, he founded the SECMOL Alternative School Campus near Leh, a special school where the admission criteria is failure in exams and not grades. However with the supportive and creative environment at the school, the so called failures have excelled in their chosen fields and risen to international acclaim as entrepreneurs, film makers, politicians, teachers and so on.

As an engineer Sonam Wangchuk has been teaching innovation at the SECMOL Alternative School, where together with the students he designed and built solar heated buildings that are low cost, made of earth/mud but maintain +15 C even when the outside temperature is -25 C in Ladakhi winters. In order to solve the water crisis facing mountain regions due to climate change and fast melting glaciers he invented the Ice Stupa artificial glacier which stores the wasting stream waters in winter in the form of giant ice cones or stupas and release the water in late spring as they melt... just when farmers need water. It is said that he specializes in turning problems into opportunities and innovating using the simplest principles of science and technology to help fellow human beings and to heal the mother earth.

He was granted several other awards and titles, such as UNESCO Chair for Earthen Architecture for India 2014, 'Real Heroes' Award by CNN IBN Channel in 2008, 'Green Teacher' Award by Sanctuary Asia Magazine in 2005, Ashoka Fellowship in 2002, 'Man of the Year' by The Week magazine in India in 2001. Recently, he was awarded the Rolex Award for Enterprise 2016 for his work on Ice Stupa project..... [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WC\\_JPSIoTPc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WC_JPSIoTPc)

Currently, Sonam is working to transform higher education system by making it hands-on & relevant for current times. Ladakh does not have any functional university and therefore 15,000 youths have to go as educational refugees to big cities in the plains where they learn little that is of relevance to the mountains. This is true of many mountain regions in the Himalayas and the world. So he wants to start an alternative university that would serve not only Ladakh but many mountain countries in the world and engage their youth in finding many Ice Stupa like solutions to their peculiar problems. The concept *of this ambitious Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL)* is explained in this 5 min video..... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8IBXYbe7j8> .

**Come for his lecture at IHC and learn more about this remarkable man, his innovative ideas and the great Institutions that he is building**